

Chinese “comfort woman” found in Rangoon, Burma 2

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/98>

Japan, which started war with the Allied Forces in 1941 with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, began to take over Burma (now Myanmar), as well as Southeast Asia colonies of the Allied Forces such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In May 1942, Myitkyina, a major city in northern Burma, was captured, putting the entire Burma under Japanese occupation. Burma was a strategically important area for both the Japanese and Allied Forces, as the only supply route (Rangoon, Burma; Kunming, China) was located here through which the Allied Forces could support China's Chiang Kai-shek.

After Japan occupied the area in 1942, more than 100,000 Japanese troops entered Burma, and the “comfort stations” were established in almost all major cities. Just to count the number of the “comfort stations” that appear in the diary of a former “comfort station” manager, the total comes to 27, including 8 in Rangoon, 1 in Mouulmain, 5 in Pegu, 6 in Fromm, and 3 in Aqap in Burma. The women in the “comfort stations” in Burma included many Koreans, as well as Chinese and Japanese. “Comfort women” were in the “comfort stations.” Meanwhile, the Allied Forces began the offensive in Burma in 1944, and the war continued until July 1945 when Japan was defeated.

British and Indian forces re-occupied Burma by crossing the Sittang River in central Burma into Thailand (Siam, Thailand's former name). In the process, many Japanese soldiers were captured near Sittang River, along with a small group of Chinese women who had been forced to work as “comfort women.”

This is a photograph of Chan Lai Cham, one of the Chinese women captured by the British forces, providing information to a British officer in Rangoon, Burma. The photo was taken by the British but it was shared with the Office of War Information (OWI), a U.S. intelligence agency, that this photo is also in the possession of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

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