

“Comfort women” in Songshan, China

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/137>

This video captures 18 seconds of Korean “comfort women” in Songshan, Yunnan Province, China, on or around September 8, 1944 by sergeant Edward Fay of the 164th Telecommunications Photographic corps. In the first scene, there are six women standing against the dirt wall and some men in Kuomintang uniform. The woman in the kimono on the far right appears to be a Japanese. In the next scene, the Kuomintang soldier is speaking with the woman in a kimono with a smile on his face. In this scene, there is one more woman hiding behind a woman in kimono. The women appear to be very nervous, fearful and exhausted, with their bare feet and anxious glance at camera, or their posture uncertain with their head down and clinging to another woman by hand. The women in the video are the same women in the photo of the Korean “comfort women” in Songshan, known as the “photo with Young-sim Park,” but Youngsim Park and another woman with a burn on her face does not appear in this footage. Perhaps they were receiving medical treatment elsewhere. It makes us wonder – how was this video created?

In June 1944, the Y forces (U.S.-China coalition) launched an attack on Songshan in Yunnan Province, a border between China and Burma, because the Allied Forces had to cross Songshan and Salyun River (Lugang) in order to support the Nationalist Army of Chiang Kai-shek in Chongqing. A Japanese garrison was stationed there and 24 Korean “comfort women” including Young-sim Park had been brought there as well. As the Y forces launched attacks on the strongholds of Japanese garrison to retake Burma Road, the Korean “comfort women” were captured by the Y forces. From September 3 of the same year, a military photographer Charles H. Hatfield and a military cameraman Edward Fay of the 164 Telecommunications Photographic Corps. B contingent of the Y forces took the pictures of the “comfort women” in Songshan.

According to the explanation provided by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that owns this video, these women are “Chinese women.” However, based on the cross-analysis of the facts that the women that appear in the two photos taken on September 3, 1944 are the same, related documents, and the testimony of Young-sim Park, we can conclude that some of these women were Korean “comfort women.” The original title of this footage is “World War II in China” and the total video length is 9 minutes and 55 seconds.

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