

On the Recruitment of “comfort barmaids” for the North China Expeditionary Army

Author: Gunji Takei, Governor of Yamagata Prefecture (Chief of prefectural police, Yamagata Prefecture)

Recipients: Nobumasa Suetsugu (Minister of Home Affairs); Gen Sugiyama (Minister of the Army); Superintendent General; prefectural governors (Each prefecture's chief of police except the Shinjo Police Office)

Date: January 25, 1938

File: Documents for Approval, Office of the Minister of Home Affairs (1938), Vol. 1, pp. 23-24.

Location: Northern China, Yamagata (Japan)

Keywords: Mobilization

Annotation Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation

Annotation Link: http://contents.nahf.or.kr/id/NAHF.iswc.d_001_0040_0030

Annotation:

This document is an official letter sent by the Governor of Yamagata Prefecture on January 25, 1938 to the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of the Army, Superintendent General, and prefectural governors regarding the “comfort women” recruitment activities in Yamagata prefecture. The gist of the letter is as follows:

A recruiting agent for professional female entertainers and barmaids in Yamagata Prefecture was commissioned by Ouchi, proprietor of a licensed brothel in Kobe City, to recruit 500 prostitutes out of the 2,500 prostitutes to be recruited across the country to render services to the Expeditionary Army in northern China. Women between the ages of 16 and 30 were recruited, offered a two-year contract with advance payment ranging from 500 to 1,000 yen. The commission for the recruiting agent was 10 percent of the advance payment, which was paid by the military authority. The Shinjo Police Office detected this suspicious recruitment activity in the region.

The Police Office cast doubt on whether the military planned for the recruitment process. The spread of information on the recruitment activity was expected to have an enormous negative effect on public sentiment, particularly the women whose family members enlisted in the military; not to mention that it would go against the spirit of preventing trafficking in women. Therefore, the Chief of the Police Office in the area persuaded the recruiters to stop the recruitment activity.

This document illuminates that the local police attempted to regulate recruiting agents' activities due to a lack of credibility in their recruitment process despite their alleged coordination with the military authority. After this incident, the military implemented a systematic recruitment process in cooperation with the local police.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Police_003)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, pp. 23-24.

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, A05032040800

Notes:

This document was attached to the larger report “On the Treatment of Women Traveling to China (from the director of the Police and Security Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, February 18, 1938).”