

On Alleged Abductions of Women by Taking Advantage of the Present Circumstances

Author: Governor of Wakayama Prefecture (Chief of Prefectural Police Headquarters)

Recipients: Director of the Police and Security Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs; Chiefs of Prefectural Police Departments

Date: February 7, 1938

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

Location: Shanghai (China), Wakayama (Japan)

Keywords: Mobilization

Annotation Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation

Annotation Link: http://contents.nahf.or.kr/id/NAHF.iswc.d_001_0040_0050

Annotation:

This document is a letter (no. 303) sent by the Governor of Wakayama Prefecture/Chief of Prefectural Police Headquarters to the Director of the Police and Security Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs and Chiefs of Prefectural Police Departments on February 7, 1938. The gist of the letter is as follows:

On January 6, 1938, three suspicious men were arrested in a restaurant district in the prefecture. Two of them told police officer Minakami at the Mori Police Office, Wakayama Prefecture that they came to Wakayama to recruit prostitutes for the “comfort stations” for the Imperial Military in Shanghai. They added that they were requested to procure 3,000 women, 70 of whom already left from the Nagasaki Port on January 3, 1938, on a troop transport, escorted by the Military Police. Minakami instructed an intelligence officer to investigate this suspicious case. As a result, the three suspects were interrogated by the police on charges of kidnapping. The suspects allegedly persuaded prostitutes to move to Shanghai, taking advantage of their ignorance of contract negotiation and convincing them that a good income and the military-supplied food would be guaranteed in exchange for their services exclusively to the military.

According to Kanazawa’s testimony, Konishi (a corporate executive in Ōsaka city), Nakano (a licensed brothel owner in Kōbe city), and Fujimura (a licensed brothel owner in Osaka city) came to Wakayama along with an army contractor whose name is unknown. They met Generals Araki and Mitsuru Touyama through Major Tokuhisa to discuss sending 3,000 prostitutes to Shanghai within a year to boost the morale of the Imperial Army in Shanghai. When Konishi and Fujimura sent 70 prostitutes to Shanghai, the chief of Kujō police in Ōsaka-fu and the Foreign Affairs Division in Nagasaki Prefecture extended help.

Hiraoka who was well-informed of Wakayama introduced two women, 26-year-old Koyanagi and 28-year-old Fujito to Fujimura. Fujimura paid 470 yen and 362 yen in advance respectively to procure the two women, and had them stay in Hiraoka’s house.

The Foreign Affairs Division in Nagasaki Prefecture and the Kujō police office in Ōsaka-fu confirmed the three suspects’ identities. However, they were released without charges due to the difficulty in determining the existence of the the “comfort station” for the Imperial Army despite the suspects’ issuance of certificates to recruited prostitutes.

Despite that the Governor (Chief of prefectural police) of Wakayama Prefecture recognized the activities of “comfort women” recruiting agents as kidnapping, the Governor instructed the police to report on any alleged crimes related to “comfort women” recruitment prior to

investigation taking place. This indicates that local authorities were aware of the relationship between the military and the “comfort women” recruiters.

Details:

1. The process of crime detection
2. The progress of investigation
3. The identification of suspects
4. The progress of inquiries on related issues

Sources:

WAM Collection (Police_005)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, pp. 27-33.

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, pp. 133-135.

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, A05032040800

Note:

The original document was dated February 7, 1937, which is a typo for February 7, 1938.