

On the Treatment of Women Traveling to China

Author: Director of Police Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

Recipients: Prefectural Governors (except Tōkyō); and Director of Police Affairs Bureau

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Annotation:

This document was a notice sent by the Director of Police Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs to local districts to prevent confusion in recruiting “comfort women” by standardizing pertinent policies.

The gist of the document is as follows: With the restoration of public order in China, an increasing number of business owners and women moved to China to operate licensed brothels (prostitution). Many of those who recruit prostitutes across Japan claimed that they obtained consent from the military authorities. Given the pressing need for women under the current situation of China, the issue deserved special consideration from police authorities.

In principle, “comfort women” recruiters must stop disgracing the Empire and the Imperial Army, affecting negatively the home front including military families, and violating the international treaty regarding the trafficking of women. In light of this principle, relevant authorities should conform to the following rules when enforcing regulations.

Authorities shall condone prostitutes’ travels to Northern and Central China if they are over 21 years and have no symptoms of any contagious diseases including STDs. The certificate of identity shall be issued for those who travels to China with the purpose of prostitution, as per Classified Third Division of American Affairs Bureau Documents, no. 3776, Notice from the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in August 1937. When issuing a certificate, applicants must be informed to return to Japan upon the termination of their contract or whenever required. For the application of a certificate, applicants are required to come to the Police Office in person. The police must inspect all the items related to their contract and make sure there are no crimes involved such as sex trafficking, pillage, or abductions. A strict enforcement of regulations shall be imposed on those who make any statements that may affect the military authorities such as that their recruitment activities are based upon the consent of the military authorities or the military is notified of the recruitments. Any exaggerated or false job advertisements shall be strictly controlled. The police must conduct a rigorous investigation on those who engaged in recruitment activities before issuing a license. Anyone who does not have a certificate issued by consulates abroad or whose identity cannot be verified shall not be permitted.

The attachments include investigation reports or fact-checking inquiries made by prefectural governors on “comfort women” recruiters’ suspicious behaviors. In the WAM collection and the Collection of the Asian Women’s Fund, these are listed separately and organized in chronological order.

Attachments:

- On the Regulation of Recruitment of Women to Travel to China (Governor of Kochi Prefecture, January 25, 1938)
- On the Recruitment of “comfort barmaids” for the North China Expeditionary Army (Governor of Yamagata Prefecture, January 25, 1938)
- On the Recruitment of Prostitutes for “comfort stations” of the North China Expeditionary Army (Governor of Gunma Prefecture, January 19, 1938)
- On the Recruitment of Prostitutes for “comfort stations” of the North China Expeditionary Army (Governor of Miyagi Prefecture, February 15, 1938)
- On the Recruitment of Prostitutes for “comfort stations” of the North China Expeditionary Army (Governor of Ibaraki Prefecture, February 14, 1938)
- On the Regulation of “Bad Elements” who travel to China (Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, August 31, 1937)
- On Alleged Abductions of Women by Taking Advantage of the Present Circumstances (Governor of Wakayama Prefecture, February 7, 1938)

Sources:

WAM Collection (Police_011)

Collection of the Asian Women’s Fund, Vol. 1, pp. 55-67.

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, Tonomura, Vol. 1, pp. 124-126.

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, A05032040800

Note:

The document included in the WAM collection is identical with the one in the Collection of the Asian Women’s Fund: Recruiters’ names and addresses are redacted in both versions. Meanwhile, recruiters’ names are visible in the Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1., which contains a complete set of documents with the attachments. The latter is a typed text converted from handwriting.