

Relationship between "Comfort Women" and "Medical Treatment" (Summary)

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1. Introduction

We cannot discuss the subject of the "Comfort Women" without referring to related medical issues. *From Shanghai To Shanghai*, written by Dr. Tetsuo Aso, published in 1993 by Shekihu-Sha and its English version was also published by East Bridge in 2004, contains a series of "Comfort Women"-related photographs. This tells us that the issue of the "Comfort Women" is closely related to medical treatment, and that the Japanese government conducted preventive treatments for sexual transmitted infections in the year 1937.

2. July 30, 2007

Resolution on the Comfort Women by the House of Representatives in the United States and Japan's Position.

1) The reason why this resolution was passed at that time

The crime of human trafficking was emphasized at the time, more so than in older resolutions. The numbers of those involved in human trafficking and sexual exploitation were increasing worldwide, and the involvement by Japanese men was highlighted. This brought up the past issue of comfort women again. The U.S. was under pressure from the Japanese government to solve the kidnapping of Japanese by North Korea. Left-wing South Koreans and North Korea worked together to force the Japanese government to submit to adverse criticism regarding the comfort women. The past issue of comfort women was again brought up because of the kidnappings at that time.

2) Comfort Women:

The Resolution by the House of Representatives stated that the comfort women were "Sexual Slaves". In many cases, the definition of sexual slave includes rape,

kidnapping, enforced as well as restricted movement. The term "Sexual Slave" was a Japanese-English phrase first used by a Japanese attorney, Etsuro Totsuka, when he filed a letter of protest with the United Nations Human Right Committee against the Japanese government. I would like to ask historians if they want to use this type of term, "Sexual Slave," which carries with it the connotation of coercion, to describe the comfort women.

The term "Comfort Woman" was a euphemism for prostitutes during the Japanese Army's foreign expedition beginning in 1937.

3) Relationship between European Countries and Japan

1) The Prostitution and the Human Trade in Japan

From the feudal era of Hideyoshi Toyotomi and Ieyasu Tokugawa through 1957 (32nd Year of Showa), when the Prostitution Prevention Law was established, licensed prostitutes were traded through "human trafficking". Many of the women that became prostitutes were sold when they were between six- and ten-years-old by their destitute parents. When they reached the age of 15, they were forced to work as prostitutes for ten years. During their contracts, one-third of them died because of illness. After the completion of their contracts, some were returned home and were married. The main issue of liberating licensed prostitutes in 1872 (5th Year of Meiji) was to prohibit trade through human trafficking. Following this, cash exchanges were converted to "loans" or "money advances" and licensed prostitution continued till 1957 (32nd Year of Showa) when the Prostitution Prevention Law was established.

2) Foreign Medical Doctors View of Japan

Seventy percent (70%) of foreigners who came to Japan in the late Edo Era were medical doctors and most of them were from the United States. Except for missionary doctors, Britain sent the second-most number of doctors, 39, to Japan. They introduced the newest medical treatments to Japan. They treated illnesses and also reported their experiences to their own countries. Pompe Van Meerdervoort, Rutherford Alcock, William Willis and George Bruce Newton reported on prostitution in Japan. They mentioned that prostitution originated from the trafficking of young girls, which was different in their own countries. The Japanese police were protecting them rather than strictly regulating them. They were very surprised that many returned to normal lives. They also mentioned the lack of sanitation, as there were many cases of syphilis among

the Japanese people.

3) Relationship Between Japan and Other Countries

(1) The Situation in Europe:

Medical examination of prostitutes in Paris began in 1798. In 1878, the European medical community set out to regulate prostitution and the military authorities in each country also emphasized the importance of regulation.

(2) The Response to Russia:

The Russian naval vessel, the *Posadnik*, came to Nagasaki in 1860 (1st year of Manen) and Commander Nicolai Birilev requested access to “amusement facilities” for his crew. At that time, the "Maruyama District" refused medical examinations for prostitutes, so three brothels were set-up to conduct business at Inasa with examinations performed by Japanese doctors. This was the first case of medical examination of prostitutes in Japan.

(3) The Response to Britain:

Britain had many colonies and was expanding their overseas territories at that time. They were faced with the problem of venereal diseases spreading within the Royal Navy.

In 1864 (1st Year of Ganji), the Contagious Disease Prevention Act was passed in Parliament. However, feminists, led by Josephine Butler, abolished the Act and its amendments in 1884. Under the Act, Dr. George B. Newton of the Royal Navy opened Yoshiwara Hospital in Yokohama in 1870 (3rd Year of Meiji). He patrolled the Yokohama, Hyogo and Nagasaki areas and supervised the prostitutes there. In 1872 (5th Year of Meiji), the British legation was worried of the spread of syphilis by unlicensed prostitutes after the passing of the Japanese prostitution law and requested that the Minister of Foreign Affairs introduce their "Contagious Disease Prevention Act" to Japan. (The "Contagious Disease Prevention Act" had military doctors in charge of controlling and treating afflicted women.) In 1881 (9th Year of Meiji), the order to conduct a syphilis examination of prostitutes was given to each prefecture under the order of the Ministry of Home Affairs. In 1878 (11th Year of Meiji), the Home Ministry requested that each prefecture submit a epidemiological report of the examinations once every three months and reported the results to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1881 (14th Year of Meiji), this was ended at the time to allow for military doctors to take over

the task of examinations. The government established syphilis outpatient clinics in various districts in Japan. They improved hygiene and brought standards up to European levels in order to get out from under the control of British military doctors. Japan became to make its own decisions on this issue.

4. Transition to Venereal Disease Prevention

1) Syphilis Examination, Outpatient Clinic and Hospital

The examinations were held periodically, from every other day to once a month. Weekly or bi-weekly examinations were the most common at that time. If patients had symptoms of inflammation, discharge, or purulence in the vulva and vagina, they were suspected of being infected with the disease.

The British government requested that the Japanese government: 1) establish syphilis treatment hospitals where infected syphilis patients were separated from others and received treatments, and 2) promote syphilis examinations of prostitutes in private prostitute houses.

The following are the progressive reports taken by from case in Fukuoka.

1. Fukuoka Syphilis Outpatient Clinic (or Matsubara Prostitute Health Examination Clinic) was founded in 1881 (14th Year of Meiji). It was located in the area of current Chiyo 4 chome # 2 in Hakata-ku. The Clinic started syphilis examinations of 39 brothels in Yanagimachi and licensed prostitutes in Mizuchaya. The Clinic also started examinations of waitresses from 1908 (41st Year of Meiji) and of *geisha* in 1913 (2nd Year of Taisho). They conducted not only examinations for syphilis but also for other infectious diseases. The name of the clinic was changed to the "Health Examination Clinic". At the time, Kyushu Imperial University was established in 1912 (45th Year of Meiji) in Fukuoka, the brothels were moved to Shinyanagimachi (the current name is Kiyokawa) and the Clinic was also moved there.

2. After the move, the name of the clinic was changed to "Fukuoka Kubai-In" or "Sakuramachi Hospital".

3. Thereafter, the Clinic became "Fukuoka Health Clinic" or "Sakuramachi Health Clinic" and continued to conduct examinations until March 11, 1958 (33rd Year of Showa).

2) The Positive Method for the Prevention of Venereal Disease in the Japanese Military

The preventive method required by the British government was also applied to

Japanese troops going overseas.

(1) Troops in Siberia : Japan, the United States and France sent troops to Siberia between 1918 (7th Year of Taisho) through 1925 (14th Year of Taisho) to quell the Russian Communist Revolution. Within three months, 2,012 cases of venereal disease were reported. Those numbers were of the cases that were seriously infected, but would be 5 to 7 times higher if the slightly infected were also added. The large numbers showed that it was very important to prevent troops from getting infected by venereal diseases.

(2) The Second Sino-Japanese War (Japan and China Incident)

In the suburbs of Beijing, Japanese and Chinese troops were locked in armed conflict in July 7, 1937 (12th Year of Showa). Repeated arbitration between the two sides did not settle the conflict. This escalated into major conflict that led to war against the United States and Britain. Once the Japan-China War started, the Japanese government sent women, so-called "Comfort Women," to the war zone to prevent soldiers from committing violent assaults and getting infected by venereal diseases. They were the first "Comfort Women".

Tetsuo Aso, a second lieutenant and military doctor at the 14th Clearing Hospital of the 11th Army Group, wrote "A Positive Method for the Prevention of Venereal Disease". He delivered a lecture at the Jiujiang Chapter of Military Doctors and submitted his paper. He also presented ten photos of "Comfort Women," which he took during his stay in China. The Prevention of Epidemics and Health Committee distributed "Willow (an argot used in the treatment of venereal disease) of Wuchang" written by M. Yasumura, an Army Major and a medical doctor. Dr. T. Hayao, an Army Lieutenant and a psychiatrist, presented "Mental Symptoms (Psychoneurosis) and Crime During War," in April, 1938.

According to research on Licensed Quarters in the Korean Peninsula, the number of traders in prostitutes and prostitutes were about the same, 58 percent of them came from the home country and 42 percent were Koreans. The number of those suffering from diseases excluded Koreans, with most of those counted coming from the home country. In Korea, Taiwan, Sakhalin and Guandong, the number of prostitutes from the home country was beyond comparison with Koreans, which was different in cases of western countries in Asian colonies.

(3) The Pacific War (The Greater East Asian War)

From December 8, 1941 (16th Year of Showa), through August 15, 1945 (20th Year of Showa), Japan fought against the United States, Britain, Holland and the other Western Allied Forces. Tetsuo Aso described the "Comfort Women" in the Kokopo District in his *From Shanghai to Shanghai* and *Rabaul Diary*.

In 1994 (6th Year of Heisei), the tripartite coalition government of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Murayama (headed by then-Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama) Cabinet, Socialist Party of Japan and the New Party, Sakigake, acknowledged Japan's ethical responsibilities on the issue of the "Comfort Women" and established the "Asian Women's Fund" in cooperation with the public. The Fund eventually raised ¥565,000,000. Japan had exchanged agreements of reparations with several countries after the war, so the matter of compensation, including the issue of compensation to "Comfort Women," had already been legally settled.

One of the countries that signed an agreement of reparation and received compensation was the Philippines. Japan subsidized expenses of ¥255,000,000 and ¥380,000,000 for Indonesia and Holland in their building of welfare facilities. Taiwan refused Japan's offer due to complicated diplomatic relations. The offer for compensation further inflamed from Koreans, worsening their relationship with Japan and Japan's image. I learned that giving easy apologies without knowing the truth of the "Comfort Women" damages the national interest. We do not want our children to repeat the same mistakes in the future.

5. Conclusion

There were many prostitutes, called "Comfort Women," who were licensed and private, unlicensed prostitutes and the majority of them were Japanese. Some of them took care of the soldiers up to the last minute, fought with them and died with them under the heavy tinge of defeat. Some came back to the home country. I wish everyone would try to understand the thoughts that ran through their mind at that time.

The history of licensed and private prostitutes in Japan had its beginnings in the selling and buying of young girls. Prostitution at the time was deeply related to the poverty of the people. The problem of women securing work is now a serious matter. We want to build a country, without prostitution rooted in poverty, moral dissolution or ignorance. We want the government to strictly regulate and eliminate the buying and selling of innocent human beings. I am concerned that there are still many people who have not learned or understood this history, both inside and outside of Japan.

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