

## JUNGSHINDAE AND SEXUAL SLAVERY

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Are you horrified at hearing about the mass rapes of an estimated 20,000 Muslim women by the Serbian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia nowadays? Well, you should be. But, it's nothing compared to the cruel, inhuman suffering and pain inflicted on the estimated 200,000 Korean and other young Asian women who were forced into the Japanese military brothels and served as sexual slaves during World War II. They were called "Jungshindae".

### Shedding Light on the Hidden History

As a result of a growing movement for women's rights and democratization of society in S.Korea, concerned S.Korean women formed a formal group called "Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan" in Nov. 1990 to study and redress the issue. As the group opened a hot line, many surviving elderly South Korean women decided to set aside their embarrassment and came forward to reveal their hidden history. Some of these women even went to Japan to file legal actions against the Japanese government.

Their testimonies show that the Japanese officials--usually the police--rounded up young Korean girls by force or deceit and sent them to various Japanese military camps in Manchuria, China, Burma, and Southeastern islands. Some girls were drafted for labor to work in the military industries and then forced into sexual slavery.

Once these young women arrived at the military camps, the Japanese officers first raped these young girls (from 13 years and up) and then sent them into the military brothels within the military camps. With soldiers guarding the brothel camp, these girls were forced to serve 30-60 soldiers a day on an average, and 70 to 100 sometimes. They had no time to rest and many died of physical abuse or diseases, while some girls committed suicide. When WWII ended, the departing Japanese troops either killed or abandoned the girls.

### Japanese Government's Position

The Japanese government initially denied its direct involvement in running the military brothels. However, due to the increasing testimonies of many surviving Asian women, Japanese soldiers and police who were directly involved in the criminal process of kidnapping or drafting young Korean women as "comfort women" as well as discovery of official documents

linking the Japanese military government to the wartime crime, the Japanese government admitted on July 6, 1992 that "its military had organized tens of thousands of women in a vast network of Government-run brothels for Japanese soldiers during WWII." (NYT, 7/7/92)

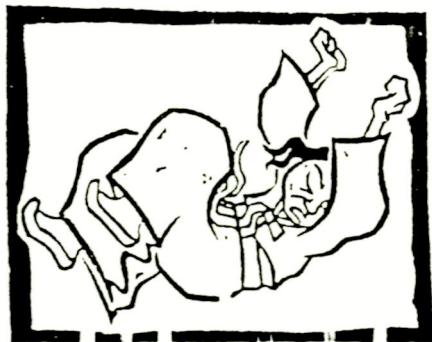
However, the present Japanese government is still refusing to admit the kidnapping/draft charges. It is also refusing to pay any formal compensation to the surviving victims because it was allegedly settled after the War when Japan provided economic assistance to S.Korea, China and other Asian countries. But, this callous position is absurd since this issue of sex slavery was never mentioned or discussed at the time the normalization of diplomatic relations occurred.

#### Justice for the Surviving Victims

The courageous efforts of the elderly surviving victims of the sex slavery by Japan's wartime government deserve a strong support from the people of the world, including the international community at the UN.

Unless there is an international tribunal on the issue and an open condemnation of Japan's brutal policies and actions which violated the lives of tens of thousands of women, other governments may be inclined to repeat this kind of crime against humanity. And we are seeing it happen again to a certain extent in the naked rapes of the Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia. We are pleased to hear that the UN is going to set up a special tribunal to try the war criminals involved in the former Yugoslavia.

Although there was a "Tokyo War-Crime Trial" at the end of WWII, the subject matter of sex slavery was never mentioned or dealt with at the time. That is why we need a full investigation on the subject matter--no matter how unpleasant it may be--and full justice for the surviving victims. Until then, it is too premature for Japan to seek a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Japan doesn't deserve it as yet.



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