



PHOTO RECORDING OF CHINESE COMFORT WOMEN

IN JAPANESE ARMY DURING WORLD WAR II

Chen Qinggang



China Intercontinental Press



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图书在版编目 (C I P) 数据

历史的深处: 二战日军中国慰安妇影像实录: 英文 / 陈庆港著; 译谷译. -- 北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2014.10

ISBN 978-7-5085-2927-1

I. ①历… II. ①陈… ②译… III. ①军国主义—性犯罪—史料—日本—画册 IV. ①K313.46-64

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2014) 第 243204 号

历史的深处: 二战日军中国慰安妇影像实录

作 者: 陈庆港

翻 译: 译 谷

出 版 人: 荆孝敏

项 目 统 筹: 付 平

责 任 编 辑: 苏 谦

装 帧 设 计: 丰饶文化传播有限责任公司

出 版 发 行: 五洲传播出版社

中国摄影出版社

地 址: 北京市海淀区北三环中路 31 号生产力大楼 B 座 7 层

邮 编: 100088

电 话: 010-82005927, 82007837

网 址: www.cicc.org.cn

承 印 者: 北京圣彩虹科技有限公司

版 次: 2014 年 10 月第 1 版第 1 次印刷

开 本: 889×1194mm 1/16

印 张: 19.5

字 数: 200 千字

定 价: 98.00 元

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PREFACE:

FACE THE HISTORY FAITHFULLY TO HAVE A TRUE FUTURE

The topic of comfort women is a heavy one. Originally the Chinese language did not have a phrase “Wei An Fu” (comfort women), it is a special term in the Japanese language, and according to the most authoritative Japanese dictionary *Koujien*: “comfort women are women going to the battlefield troops with the army to comfort officers and men.” Obviously, this is a vague interpretation that has intentionally avoided the essence. Actually, the definition given by scholars is: comfort women are women forced to provide sex service as sex slaves for the Japanese servicemen during the World War II, and were sex slaves especially for the Japanese army. With the comfort women system, the Japanese government and its army forced women of different countries to serve as sex slaves to the Japanese army before and during World War II.

What is the total number of comfort women during World War II? It is now quite difficult to accurately calculate the total number, because the Japanese army destroyed massive archives when being defeated. Some research fellows deduced that the total number of comfort women is over 400,000 according to the documents available now, most of them were from China, Korean Peninsula and homeland of Japan, and some were from

Ryukyu, Southeast Asia, Holland and other places. Most of them were Chinese, and at least 200,000 Chinese women were forced as sex slaves of the Japanese army.

The figure 200,000 means that China is the No. 1 victim of the comfort women system of the Japanese army. This part of history, stained with the blood and tears of 200,000 Chinese women, and so painful for us to touch it, is on one hand full of truculence, inhumanity and bloodiness, and on the other hand engraved with fear, despair, disgrace, bitterness and anger...

For various reasons, many victims closely guarded this past experience as a secret, never telling others during their whole life. But as they grew old and passed away one by one, this part of history may quite probably become unknown to the later generations forever. Fortunately, since the 1990s, the investigation and studies of the question of comfort women in China have continued and deepened, and a lot of precious information was obtained in salvage collection. Mr. Chen Qinggang's works *In the Depth of History – Photo Recording of Chinese Comfort Women in Japanese Army during World War II*, is one of the most important results in this respect.

Mr. Chen Qinggang is a journalist by profession. For more than 10 years, he travelled all over the country and searched for surviving comfort women like looking for a needle at the seabed, requested them to stand out to tell that part of history, and recorded their present living status with camera. The exploration to the truth in history is a conscious undertaking for fairness, justice and humanity. I think this is also the deep-rooted reason that Mr. Chen Qinggang's work *Chinese Comfort Women* was awarded with gold prize at the First International Press Photographing Competition.

Today, it is well over half a century since Japan launched its aggressive war in Asia, and the 70th anniversary of the victory of anti-fascist war will come soon. The international society made conclusion very early on

that war, however, Japan, the country that caused grave disasters to its Asian neighboring countries, refused to make profound reflection of history, instead, it made repeated attempts to tamper and gloss over its crimes during the war. Take the question of comfort women as an example, even today in front of all hard evidences in the accusations from “comfort women”, the Japanese Government still denies and repudiates it, with an attempt to cover this criminal fact, and the right wingers in Japan even slander and talk a lot of nonsense on hundreds and thousands of comfort women in various countries.

“History is the best textbook, and also the best dose of sobriety.” We can have a true future only by facing the history with faith. Presenting the truth of history is not only respecting the history itself, but also to remind the later generations not to forget the wounds in the past and not to allow the historical tragedy to repeat again. Defending the truth in history is defending peace!

Gao Hong

(Deputy Director of Japan Research Institute
of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)

Aug. 2014

FOREWORD:

FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

It has been 11 years since I met with the first old woman who was a “comfort woman” and agreed to accept my interview. During these 11 years, lots have changed in the world, but some still remained unchanged, for example, the rude attitude of the Japanese Government towards the question of comfort women, and the painful expectation of the “comfort women”.

To me, this interview started 11 years ago has not ended today. During these years, I got to know some more old “comfort women”, their courage and spirit to testify the history are impressive and moving, and some people still provide me with cues (thank you), some writers and photographers keep contact with me at all times, and discuss with me on the question of comfort women (some of them have now joined in recording of this question). I think that in the years to come, some more tottering old women may stand out, but more of them will leave us (this is the natural law, as time will certainly show us truth some day).

Some of the old women I have interviewed have already left us silently, but their last words have become ironclad proof accusing the atrocity. Lei Guiying passed away in Nanjing, Jiangsu on Apr. 25, 2007; Zhou Fenyong passed away in Rugao, Jiangsu on July 6, 2008, Yin Yulin passed away in Yangqu on Oct. 6, 2012; Wan Aihua passed away in Taiyuan, Shanxi on Sept. 4, 2013; Lin Yajin passed away in Baoting, Hainan on Oct. 17, 2013;

Li Xiumei passed away in Mengxian County, Shanxi on Apr. 18, 2014... we wish they rest in peace in Heaven, as there is certainly justice there.

Even today, I still cannot tell what kind of search it is, polishing some details long ago that rarely known to the people? or concern for a still ongoing realistic suffering that cannot be ended? From Hainan and Yunnan full of sunshine to Hubei and Hunan with piling of rockeries and winding waters, and from Shanxi and Hebei with brisk snow to Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai with warm wind and sunshine... When I stood in the dark ruins of comfort houses and stepped into stout but gloomy blockhouses elaborately built by the Japanese army in those days, I could still hear their miserable cries at that time...

“Comfort women” were sex slaves specially serving the Japanese army during World War II. With the comfort women system, the Japanese Government and its army forced women of different countries to serve as sex slaves to the Japanese army during World War II. The Japanese Government and army headquarters directly planned and the Japanese troops at all places implemented this system. They forced many women from China, Korea, Southeast Asia and countries in European and American countries in an organized and planned manner to their lawful raping centers widely set up in their occupied areas – the comfort houses, for slavery by the Japanese troops.

The first comfort houses set up by the Japanese army in Asia can be dated back to 1931, when the Japanese navy designated four Japanese recreational venues including “Daiichi Saloon” in Shanghai as comfort houses. After that, the Japanese army induced large number of Korean women to China (Manchu) to serve and sex slaves. In Jan. 1932, the Japanese marine corps designated some Japanese brothels in Hongkou as comfort houses for the navy. In Mar. that year, Okamura Yasuji, deputy chief

of staff of Shanghai expeditionary army of Japan required the magistrate of Nagasaki Prefecture to round up prostitutes as comfort women, to set up comfort houses in Shanghai. By Dec. 1932, there had been 17 comfort houses for Japanese navy in Shanghai.

In 1937, after the overall outbreak of the aggressive war of Japan, the Japanese army deployed sex slaves in the army in a planned manner. In winter the same year, many troops of the Japanese army invading China robbed local women in China as comfort women, and the Central China expeditionary army of Japan also decided to set up comfort houses, demanding the Kansai Prostitute Association in Japan to collect comfort women.

In spring 1938, some comfort houses operated by overseas Japanese appeared at Jiangwan Town of Shanghai, in the same period, a large number of comfort houses were set up by the Japanese army in Nanjing, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, Xiamen, Jiujiang, Wuhu, Wuhan and Zhangjiakou. On Apr. 16, the Japanese troop units in Nanjing held a joint meeting with the consulate, specially studying the issue of comfort houses. On May 28, the Education Supervisor of the Department of Army of Japan issued the *War Time Service Outline*, demanding that “comfort houses of the army must have complete sanitary facilities”. In mid July, the Japanese army set up 30 comfort houses in Hankou, with about 300 comfort women. In Dec., the Japanese army started to forcefully recruit women in Taichong and sent them to South China serving as comfort women...

After years of operations, the Japanese army set up comfort houses in all occupied places of China. According to investigation by experts, in Shanghai alone, there were 83 comfort houses for the Japanese army at that time, there were 62 in Hainan, and also over 60 respectively in Nanjing and Wuhan. The Japanese army had dozens of thousands of comfort houses

in the occupied areas of China. After Japan started the war in Southeast Asia, the Japanese army also built large number of comfort houses in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

It is now quite difficult to accurately calculate the total number of comfort women, as the Japanese army destroyed massive archives when defeated, but even though, some research fellows still deduced the number of comfort women on the basis of the documents available today:

In the colonies and occupied areas in Asia and homeland of Japan, the total number of comfort women was over 400,000.

At least 200,000 Chinese women were forced as sex slaves of the Japanese army. The Japanese army set up Comfort houses in over 20 provinces of China. China is the No. 1 victim of the comfort women system of the Japanese army.

It is a general view that the relationship between the Japanese army and comfort women is the collective enslaving and devastation by men of women, especially the women in the enemy states and colonies, which was the only such phenomenon in the civilization history of the mankind for thousands of years. The comfort women system is an institutionalized government crime of the Japanese militarism in violation of the humanity, the sexual moral and the war convention.

The comfort women system executed by Japan was the most ugly, most dirty and darkest page in the history of mankind in the 20th century, and also the most shameful memory of the civilization progress of the world.

Of the Chinese women forced to become sex slaves of the Japanese army intruding China in those years, some died miserably before the end of the war, and most of those surviving passed away over the long period of over 60 years, only very few are still alive today. For various reasons, most of

these victims died without telling others about this part of history they experienced.

The purpose that we recall the history is not to keep the people at the edge of hatred. In a healthy and mature civilization, hatred should never become the center of people's thinking. More than 50 years ago, Mr. Mei Ru Ao, the Grand Justice of China participating in Tokyo Trial, said that he was not a revanchist, he had no intention to record the bloody debt of the Japanese Imperialism on the account of the Japanese people, but he believed that forgetting the past hardships may lead to disaster in the future.

I record here the story of dozens of old women how they were forced to become "comfort women" of the Japanese army in those days, and their life thus changed because of that experience. These old women were actually an epitome of all comfort women enslaved by the Japanese army during their invasion to China, and their bitterness is actually that of our whole nation. And the comfort women represent the most painful and bloody page of our nation in the modern times. That history is a scar hidden deep in the memory of every Chinese.

"When can they (the Japanese Government) make an apology to me? Can I wait till that day?" after telling their hardships and wiping off the tears with their withered hands, almost all old women would ask this question. I don't know how to answer them. Neither can I know whether they can wait till that day. But I believe that day will surely come.

Chen Qinggang

Spring, 2014

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