# The U.S. Army Photography and the "Seen Side" and "Blind Side" of the Japanese Military Comfort Women : The Still Pictures and Motion Pictures of the Korean Comfort Girls in Myitkyina, Sungshan, and Tengchung

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### Abstract

This study focuses on organization and activity of the U.S. Army's 164th Signal Photo Company in the CBI Theater and the still and motion pictures related to Japanese military Comfort Women captured by army photographers. With attention to related documents and testimonies, this study addresses the "seen side" and "blind side" of the photographers, as well as the intent and nature of the army photographers' activities. Moreover, these images help to uncover the stories of individual Korean Comfort Women who became subjects in these still and motion pictures. Nevertheless, these still and motion pictures do not easily reveal the entire truth. Rather, they appear to be concealing something. The voices of women are silenced in the still and motion pictures. As a result, this study was only able to access their voices through interrogation reports, news articles, and personal accounts by the interrogators who interviewed the women.

**Keywords:** Comfort Women, Comfort Woman, Comfort Girl(s), 164th Signal Photo Company, war photographer, still picture, motion picture, seen side, blind side

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#### Introduction

Is photography a faithful depiction of reality? The reality captured in the camera viewfinder is only a fragment of the entire reality, and particularly, a selected part. In other words, there is always a "blind side" 死角 to the photograph, which conceals a certain reality. The "seen side" and "blind side" are structurally determined by the photographer's position. Combat photography is constrained by the war front 戰線. Although the primary purpose of war photography is to visually record the reality of war, certain aspects are visually represented while others are relegated to the "blind spot" (Kang and Jung 2014, 270).

The military is a central subject of combat photography. The U.S. Army combat photographers documented close-up of combats, strategic meetings, breaks, and mealtimes of "our" troops. When the subjects were inanimate objects, photographers captured weaponry, military bases, Prisoner of War (POW) camps, airfields, roads, bridges and other facilities, and various results of strategic operations. Enemy troops often became subjects as well, in which case atrocities (abusive treatment, massacre, etc.) committed by the enemy (the 'others') or the enemy POWs were captured on camera. Civilian subjects were also featured, often portrayed with shifting identities representing either "us" or "them" (the enemy) and occupying in-between spaces. Allied civilians detained by enemy troops, civilians and refugees from combat and occupied areas, and civilians accompanying enemy troops captivated the interest of the army photographers. Through their camera lenses, the U.S. Army photographers reveal a confused perspective toward the civilians whose political positions cannot be determined. Among these photographs, several stand out. In these photographs are Japanese POWs and female civilians at the war front. Who are these women? With what intention or purpose did the army photographers focus on these women through their camera viewfinders? How did the army photographer perceive and understand these women? How were these photographs used, and what were the consequences?

Yet, there has not been much research on the photography of Japanese military *Comfort Women*. One reason for this dearth of research may be

the privileging of textual documents over visual materials in historical scholarship. Moreover, it is difficult to bring together rich visual analyses of subjects in images alongside supporting textual documents that would vield a historically grounded narrative. Nevertheless, the works of Pang (1992) and Asian Women's Fund (1999) deserve mentioning. Pang was able to examine and analyze materials related to Comfort Women held at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). By treating the photographs as documentary materials, Pang cross-examined the images with documents from military interrogation reports to validate information on the subjects in the photographs (Pang 1992; Asian Women's Fund 1999). Asano Toyomi's research was the first research to privilege the photography on Comfort Women. Asano, who participated in a publication project by the Asia Women's Fund, analyzed eight photographs of Comfort Women taken in Sungshan and Tengchung, China and Myitkyina, Burma. Asano was able to reconstitute historical facts related to those photographs based on Japan's official documents. However, it is essential to include analysis related to army photographers and their units using U.S. and British materials for the full range analysis of photographs. Due to the lack of official documents and witness accounts that could corroborate the photographs, some errors were introduced into Asano's research. While these two works were groundbreaking in the 1990s, their research ought to be further supplemented considering current standards of archival research. Moreover, the lack of analysis of the context in which the images were produced presents a clear limitation.

This paper takes the photographs and moving images captured by the U.S. Army photographers in China, Burma, and India (CBI) as its central subject. These still and motion pictures were shot during the midst of war along the Ledo Road and the Burma Road stretching from Ledo in Assam, India toward Bhamo, via Myitkyina, Burma, and then toward Kunming via Lungling, Sungshan, and Paoshan. Therefore, it would be remiss not to examine the activities of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the organization of army photographers against the background and development of the war. When the context behind the production of these images is not considered, there is a high possibility that the analysis of the army photographs remains

restricted to already visible and reappearing aspects of the images. To move past this obstacle, this research analyzes in detail the contents and visual properties revealed by the still and motion pictures captured by the U.S. Army photographers in Myitkyina, Sungshan and Tengchung. To this effect, the contents of the images, such as the intended central subjects within the frames, the actions performed by the subjects in the images, and the narratives projected by the subjects, will be discussed throughout the paper.

Beyond the images and descriptions, photographs are also represented by the date of production, the release date, the organization of production, the photographer, and the original number provided in the accompanying caption (Kang and Jung 2014, 273). When production information is taken into account for the interpretation of the content and visual properties of photographs, a more accurate analysis can be made. Furthermore, when the images and production information are cross-examined with related documents (the U.S. military interrogation reports) and witness testimonies of *Comfort Women*, a narrative of the subjects in the photographs and motion pictures can be constructed based on verified historical facts.

### Ledo-Burma Road and the 164th Signal Photo Company's Activities

On the day that the United States and Japan entered war as a result of the Attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8th, 1941, Japan also opened the Southeast Asian theater in the Pacific War. The Japanese offensive and occupation in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malay, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies unfolded simultaneously. Then, the Japanese Army attacked Burma, which was initially not part of the Southeast Asian theater. The British Army in Burma faced a succession of defeats, and the Sino-U. S. combined forces of General Joseph W. Stilwell and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek who supported the British were also defeated. In order to block off the Burma Road, which was crucial to Chiang's supply route, and seal off China, the Japanese Army further invaded Burma. From that point on, the CBI Theater involved repeated advances and retreats between the Allied forces and Japanese Army (Kwon 2015, 581–608).



**Figure 1.** Map of Ledo-Burma Road *Source:* China-Burma-India Theater Maps (Weidenburner 2018).

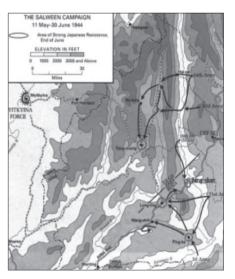
In 1944, General Stilwell who commanded the Sino-U.S. X Force (Chinese Army New 22 Division, New 38 Division) and the 5307 Composite Unit (Merrill's Marauders) advanced on Ledo, Hukawng Valley, Mogaung, Myitkynia, and Bhamo. Chiang's Y Force then advanced on Kunming, Paoshan, Sungshan, Lungling, and Wanting.<sup>1</sup> The largest battlefield took place in Myitkynia on the Ledo Road and Sungshan and Tengchung on the Burma Road. The North Burma Combat Area Command (NCAC)'s main force was the Merrill's Marauders. After pushing through jungles and monsoon season, a feat no easier than breaking through Japanese resistance, the unit reached Myitkynia. The Mauraders engaged the Japanese force in such a fierce battle that reassembling the unit after the fall of Myitkynia was

The Japanese 15th Army launched the Battle of Imphal but failed in large scale. It resulted in a huge vacuum to Japan's defense line of Burma. This is the background context for the success of the Sino-U.S. combined forces operations in northern Burma and Yunnan, China.

infeasible (Chan 1986, 29–102).<sup>2</sup> The attack on Sungshan and Tengchung was carried out by the 8th Army, 53rd Army, 54th Army, 11th Army Group, 20th Army Group of Chiang's Y Force (Yunnan Expeditionary Force). Japanese defended Myitkynia with the 114th Regiment, 18th Division of the 33rd Corps of the Imperial Japanese Army, Sungshan with the 113th Regiment of the 56th Division and, and Tengchung with the 148th Regiment of the 56th Division. Colonel Tsuji Masanobu 辻政信, the chief of staff for operations, issued the order to "defend 'til the last," and thus it became a "die rather than surrender" battle.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the Sino-U.S. combined forces did not completely capture Myitkynia until August 3rd, Sungshan on September 7th, and Tengchung on September 14th (Kwon 2015, 712–716). See the Figure 3.



**Figure 2.** Map for the Battle for Myitkyina *Source:* Chan (1986).



**Figure 3.** Map for the Salween Campaign *Source:* China-Burma-India Theater Maps (Weidenburner 2018).

- 2. Refer to the Fig. 2.
- 3. Refer to the NARA (1944a).



At the time, there were an army photography unit and army photographers who participated in the military operation among the Sino-U.S. combined forces. The U.S. Army *164th Signal Photo Company* was engaged in operations all across the CBI Theater. In December 1943, an echelon of this company (formed by three combat photo units) was assigned to the entire CBI Theater. Thereafter, detachments from this company were assigned to all stations from New Delhi and Calcutta to Chunking.<sup>4</sup>

Hq & Hq Det	New Delhi	Attached to 835th Sig. Sv Bn
Det A	Ledo	Attached to NCAC
Det B	Kunming	Attached to Det Co. B, 835th Sig. Sv Bn
Det C	Kweilin	Attached to Det Co. B, 835th Sig. Sv Bn
Det D	Ledo	Attached to Base Sect 3, SOS
Det F	Calcutta	Attached to Det Co. A, 835th Sig. Sv Bn
Det G	Chunking	Attached to Det Co. B, 835th Sig. Sv Bn

Table 1. Detachments of 164th Signal Photo Company

Source: "Signal Corps Unit" (Website).

The organization and function, as well as the scale of military force, set apart the *164th Signal Photo Company* from other military units. The combat photo units in charge of capturing still and motion pictures composed nearly half of the photo company. The remaining units were the laboratory, equipment supply, repair and administrative teams. The still/motion picture cameramen of the combat photo units numbered 60 at the most, and Table 2 shows a roster of the officers and soldiers who were active in the battle for Myitkynia and the Salween campaign.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4.</sup> Refer to Barker (Website).

<sup>5.</sup> In order to accurately verify specific detachments of this company and their organizations in accordance with operation area and period, the research team consecutively requested box related to the history of this unit of company at NARA II in July and October 2017. However, the request was declined due to following reasons: "This Box is Currently Being Treated in Preservation and Can't be Served at this Time."

164th Sig. Photo Co. A		В		
Combat Photographer Enlisted Man	T/4 Frank W. Shearer (Still) T/3 Daniel Novak (Motion) S/Sgt. David L. Quaid (M) Pfc. Don(ald) E. Pringle (M) T/5 Elton L. Henning (M) T/5 Jackson B. Pokress (M) T/5 Milt(on) Koff (?) (?) Roy J. Yarnell (S) Sgt. Sydney L. Greenberg (S) Pvt. Tom(my) Amer (M) T/3 William C. Brown (S) T/4 William Safran (?)	Pvt. Charles H. Hatfield (Still) Sgt. Edward C. Fay (Motion) T/4 Frank D. Manwarren (S) (?) Baldwin (M) T/4 George Kocourek (S) T/3 Victor D. Solow (M) (Pvt.) William E. Shemorry (S) (?) William J. Randolph (M) (?) Edward McCormick (S/M)		
Officer	Capt. George H. Knight (commanding general) Capt. Herbert Reed Capt. Dave Burman			

Table 2. Combat Photographers	of 164th Signal Photo Company
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Source: Barker (Website).

*Note:* Information was obtained from captions of photographs of 164th Signal Photo Company. T/~(Technical), Pvt.(Private), Pfc.(Private First Class), Sgt.(Sergeant), and S/sgt. (Staff Sergeant) are kinds of military rank.

A minority of the army photographers were recruited from civilian photographers and film cameramen, but the majority were novice combat photographers who received a short training and were deployed to battlefields. These army photographers underwent military training alongside combat documentation and production training at Camp Crowder in Missouri and the *164th Signal Photo Company* Training Camp in Tennessee in 1943. A small percentage also trained at the Signal Corps Photographic Center (SCPC) in Astoria, Long Island. Although these institutions provided practical training and eventually lengthened the training duration, the army photographers lacked experience prior to deployment (Thompson et al. 1957, 394–395). Colonel Kirk B. Lawton, who was in command of the U.S. Army Signal Corps' Army Pictorial Service, decided to deploy the *164th Signal Photo Company* to the CBI theater after receiving a request from the Southeast Asia Headquarters. However, Lawton reported that the company's training was not sufficient.<sup>6</sup>

The photographs and motion pictures taken by the army photographs were put to a variety of uses. Photographs were used by tactical troops to support combat operations. In other words, photographs and motion pictures were produced and provided to meet requests for intelligence on the field's topography, weapon system, and other general information. Furthermore, their activities expanded to include the production of army personnel identification and documentation with microfilming; additional tasks involved press release photography and films, historical records, and other miscellaneous projects (e.g. psychological warfare) (Thompson et al. 1957, 396-397). All images and frames were minutely analyzed to ensure proper utility for the army experts and determine their suitability to the war aims. Therefore, censorship was pervasive, and photography became an indispensable tool for the war machine (Lewinski 1987, 95). Moreover, in many cases, army photographers operated outside of official army photography capacity and filmed images that caught their interest. For such use, army photographers carried a personal camera.

During military operation, small-scale teams of still photographers and film cameramen, usually one or two of each, composed the team. In the CBI theater, the team was further accompanied by a driver who also functioned as an assistant—usually a Chinese soldier. At the largest, they were deployed with a detachment but for the most part army photographers in small teams shadowed active combat soldiers in a dispersed manner as they operated in the CBI theater.

The A and B expeditionary forces that operated in Myitkyina, Sungshan and Tengchung deserve special attention. As an attachment to the NCAC, the Det A accompanied the Merrill's Marauders. Moreover, special attention must be given to T/4 Frank W. Shearer, the still photographer who left documentation of *Comfort Women*, along with film cameramen Sergeant (abbr. Sgt.) David L. Quaid and T/3 Dan Novak who composed the team. The Det B accompanied the Y Force into Sungshan, Tengchung,

<sup>6.</sup> Refer to The National Archives (1943).

and Lungling. In Sungshan and Tengchung, still photographers Private (abbr. Pvt.) Charles H. Hatfield, T/4 George Kocourek, and T/4 Frank D. Manwarren and film cameramen Sgts. Edward C. Fay and Baldwin<sup>7</sup> also warrant our attention.



**Figure 4.** Frank Shearer (left) and Dan Novak (right), 164th photo team *Source:* Novak (Website).



William E. (Bill) Shemorry Photograph Collection

**Figure 5.** William E. (Bill) Shemorry with U.S. Army 164 Signal Photo Company photographers, China. Standing (left to right) are Shemorry, McCormick, Fay. Kneeling (left to right) are Randolph, Kocourek and Hatfield. *Source:* Shemorry (Website).

# The Story of Comfort Women in Myitkyina, Sungshan and Tengchung

The number of photographs relating to *Comfort Women* taken by army photographers in the, *164th Signal Photo Company* that have thus far been uncovered totals only ten, and only two motion pictures feature *Comfort Women* as subjects. Table 3 and 4 provide further details on the still pictures and motion pictures.

<sup>7.</sup> At this moment, it is unable to identify whether he is Edwin H. Baldwin or Willard E. Baldwin.

Fig.	Original # 1	Original # 2	Date	Photographer	Location	Date of Capture
6	CBI-44- 21519	111-SC 262578	44-08-03	T/4 Frank W. Shearer	Myitkyina	44-08-03
7	CBI-44- 21635	111-SC 262580	44-08-14	T/4 Frank W. Shearer	Myitkyina	44-08-10
8	CBI-44- 21636	111-SC 262579	44-08-14	T/4 Frank W. Shearer	Myitkyina	44-08-10
9	CBI-44- 29969	111-SC 230147	44-09-03	Pvt. Charles H. Hatfield	Sungshan	44-09-03
10	CBI-44- 29971	111-SC 230148	44-09-03	Pvt. Charles H. Hatfield	Sungshan	44-09-03
11	CBI-44- 29992	111-SC 230149	44-09-07	Pvt. Charles H. Hatfield	Sungshan	44-09-07
12	CBI-44- 60157	111-SC 247386	44-09-08	T/5 George L. Kocourek	Sungshan	44-09-03 44-09-07
14	CBI-44- 29990	N/A	44-09-07	Pvt. Charles H. Hatfield	Sungshan	N/A
15	CBI-44- 60370	111-SC 212091	44-09-15	T/4 Frank D. Manwarren Tengcl		N/A
16	CBI-44- 60371	111-SC 212090	44-09-15	T/4 Frank D. Manwarren	Tengchung	N/A

Table 3. Information about Comfort Women Still Pictures

*Note:* Original #1 refers to the number registered in the CBI record management system. Original #2 displays the numbers registered in the U.S. signal corps record management system. Date of photo indicates a date when each photo was taken. Date of capture shows the date of women captured as POWs by the Allied Forces.

Table 4. Information about	Comfort	Women	Motion Pictures

Image	Original Number	Photographer	Date	Type of Film	Color	Type of Voice
13	111-ADC-9706	Sgt. Edward C. Fay	44-09-08 (Estimate after)	Film Reel 35mm	B/W	N
17	111-ADC-2417	Baldwin	44-09-15	Film Reel 35mm	B/W	N

www.kci.go.kr

Source: Chung (2018).

Figure 6, 7, and 8, filmed by Frank W. Shearer, are widely recognized photographs of Korean *Comfort Women* in Myitkyina. Considering the date of the photograph, it appears that "Kim" in Figure 6 was the first *Comfort Girl* to be captured in a photograph taken by the U.S. army. There are two works that support the claim that "Kim" was a *Comfort Woman*. Karl Yoneda, who is seen in Figure 6 interrogating Kim to her left as part of the psychological warfare team of the Office of War Information (OWI), left his personal account (Yoneda 1989). In addition, there is the memoir of captain Won Roy Chan who was a G-2 officer for the Myitkyina Taskforce (Chan 1986).



**Figure 6.** Original photo caption: Sgt. Karl Yoneda, Japanese Interpreter, questions Kim a Japanese *Comfort Girl* at the M.P. stockade on the air strip, while Edward J. stands guard in the rear. Kim served as a nurses aid in Myitkyina. Burma, India. August 3, 1944.

Source: Frank W. Shearer (1944).

However, I argue that Kim was not a *Comfort Woman*. Sergeant Yoneda and Captain Chan misperceived Kim as a *Comfort Woman*. Yoneda relates that he briefly interrogated a "*Comfort Woman* who was treating athlete's foot on her hands and feet" at an improvised stockade, but due to the lack of Kim's reaction he decided to send her to Camp Ledo for later interrogation. It is apparent that "Kim" was assumed to be a *Comfort Woman* without any sustained

investigation. Captain Chan also hastily concluded that Kim was a *Comfort Woman* based on her dress. After concluding that Kim "had no significant information to relay," Chan also decided to "put Kim on a plane to Ledo."

The location in Figure 6 was an MP (improvised) stockade that was set up on an airfield in northern Myitkyina by the Myitkyina Taskforce. Army Photographer Shearer, who was accompanying Merrill's Marauders, rushed to the scene after hearing that a woman was captured among Japanese POWs. Chan recalled that POW Kim stirred considerable interest and curiosity among the troops. Interestingly, Shearer's caption to the photograph reads, "Kim served as a nurses aid in Myitkyina."

Kim was transferred to the OWI Ledo Psychological Team compound. On August 8th, T/4 Kenjiro Akune interrogated Kim and submitted a report on September 4th.<sup>8</sup> Based on the contents of the report, Kim's Japanese name was Miyamoto Kikuye and was at the time twenty-eight years old. She had been working as a nurse assigned to Japanese Army's Second Field Hospital. Born in Manchuria, Kim completed six years of general schooling in Pyongyang and received one year of education at Heijō (Pyongyang) Nurses' Training School, after which she arrived at Burma in August 1942. Kim revealed that she faced ethnic discrimination by Japanese doctors because of her Korean ethnicity and received indoctrination by Japanese that she would be raped by Allied troops if she became a POW. Kim also expressed animosity toward Korean collaborators in the colonial police force as well as Japanese.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8.</sup> The OWI installed psychological operation team at Ledo in Assam, India in 1943 after the coordination with General Boatner and approval of General Stilwell. Ledo Psychological Operation Team was organized to incorporate both military and civilian units, and it was simultaneously attached to the OWI and the U.S. Army of entire CBI theater. Inside the team, Nisei were assigned as translators or interpreters to perform psychological operation against Japan. Sergeant C. Kawakami, K. Yoneda, K. Akune, A. Yorichi, H. Gosho were present.

Refer to the NARA (1944c). One researcher recently verified that Kim in the photo was misconceived as a *Comfort Woman* by interviewing Kenjiro Akune. (Deug Jung Kim, "Sesang-eseo gajang seulpeun arirang" (The Saddest Arirang in the World), *Hankyoreh 21* 1190, December 11, 2017.



**Figure 7.** Original photo caption: Capt. Won Loy Chan, Tech Sgt. Robert Honda, and Sgt. Hirbayashi, all of the G-2 Myitkyina Task Force, are pictured with and interrogating three Korean *Comfort Girls* who were captured near Myitkyina. August 14, 1944. *Source:* Frank W. Shearer (1944).



**Figure 8.** Original photo caption: Capt. Chan in charge of prisoners of war at Myitkyina, Burma with the captured *Comfort Girls* of the Japanese garrison at Myitkyina. August 14, 1944. *Source:* Frank W. Shearer (1944).



Figure 7 and 8 feature twenty Korean *Comfort Women* and Japanese "Mama-Sang (agent)" who were captured as POWs in Myitkyina as subjects. In total, there were 63 *Comfort Women* in three comfort stations–22 Korean *Comfort Women* of Kyoei, 20 Korean *Comfort Women* of *Kinsui*, and 21 Chinese *Comfort Women* of *Momoya*. Korean women in the figures were *Comfort Women* stationed of *Kyoei* under Kitamura Tomiko and Kitamura Eibun (Japanese agents), and they escaped Myitkyina by crossing the Irrawaddy River with women of *Kinsui* and *Moyoma* on July 31st. They sought refuge in a jungle near Waingmaw, and on August 7th, Chinese *Comfort Women* of *Moyoma* surrendered to Chinese troops after being caught amid the battles. However, Korean *Comfort Women* of *Kinsui* followed retreating Japanese troops. The *Comfort Women* in the photographs sought shelter in abandoned civilian areas until they were captured as POWs.<sup>10</sup>

The initial interrogation of the Korean *Comfort Women* was carried out at an improvised POW processing point by Captain (abbr. Cpt.) Chan's company. In Figure 8, Cpt. Chan, Sgt. Howard Furumoto, and Sgt. Robert Honda are seated in a row to the left of women. The photograph raises the following question: when was the first interrogation carried out and what was the content?

Although Chan recalled that the women were interrogated immediately upon entering the POW processing point, Shearer captured this photograph on August 14th. In Figure 7, which shows three women undergoing interrogation, Hirabayashi was attempting to gather intelligence by showing the women photographs of the 18th and 56th Divisions (Myitkyina Garrison). Chan who did not speak Japanese is pictured as observing the scene. Moreover, the women also did not speak Japanese fluently. As Chan remembered, "The girls (Koreans all) spoke some Japanese, but it was of the bedroom and kitchen variety and extremely limited." Further, he recollected that the interrogation was further limited due to "their confusion, fear, and general lack of education." Other than one woman identifying Col.

Refer to the NARA(1944d) and NARA(1945a). SEATIC Interrogation Bulletin No.2 is also included in Research Report No.120 Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces, which the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) had produced on November 15, 1945 and reported to Commander of General MacArthur (SCAP).

Maruyama of the 114th regiment, valuable information could not be gained (Chan 1986, 95).

Figure 8 appears as a "commemorative" composition. Was this photograph taken after the interrogation? The expression and gaze of the women draw our attention. Two are bowed over and another two or three are looking at the camera, but the rest are facing other directions. Were they slowly finding relief despite being somewhat hesitant as Chan remembered? Chan mentioned the women's concern over the "bundle of money" stored in the "Obi" (traditional Japanese sash) of "Mama-sang" (far right in Fig. 8). In other words, the women were greatly anxious of being robbed of their "Japanese occupation scrips" (Japanese currency enforced in occupied territories). Chan also discerned that the women were fearing for their own lives. How might the women have felt upon hearing that they would be transferred to India and ultimately back to Korea? Perhaps their feelings oscillated between fear and relief.

Lastly, the caption to Figure 8 written by T/4 Shearer is interesting for two reasons. First, it records that Cpt. Chan had officially requested the photograph and composition at that time. Second, it shows that the term *Comfort Girls* was used to refer the women in the photograph, and that it was a recognized terminology. However, there is a low chance of Shearer having background knowledge of *Comfort Women* specifically *Comfort Girls*, prior to this event. Thus, it is very likely that Shearer had heard of Yoneda and Chan's interrogation. From early 1944, the *Comfort Women* (*Comfort Girls*) system and 'comfort stations' appear directly in the interrogation report filed by the OWI Ledo Team under Yoneda's order. This contrasts with the usage of "prostitutes" to refer to *Comfort Women* and "brothels" to refer to 'comfort stations' in 1943.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11.</sup> Refer to the NARA(1943b). In the U.S. Army's dictionary for Japanese military terminology, which was created in August 1943 at the MISLS (Military Intelligence Service Language School) of the U.S. Camp Savage, "Ianfu (*Comfort Women*)" is translated as "licensed prostitute," and "Ianjo ('comfort station')" as "army brothel." Intelligence unit followed this guideline to translate and interpret captured Japanese documents and POW interrogation reports. In other words, "prostitute" and "brothel" that appear in the official U.S. documents related to *Comfort Women* are historically constructed terms that each indicates *Comfort Women* and 'comfort station.'



Figures 9 through 13 are photographs of Korean *Comfort Women* in Sungshan in Yunnan, China, taken by Pvt. Charles H. Hatifield and George L. Kocourek. Sungshan, located south of Paoshan and eastward across the Salween River, was referred as the "Gibraltar of the Burma Road."



**Figure 9.** Original photo caption: Four Japanese girls taken prisoner by troops of Chinese 8th Army village on Sungshan Hill on the Burma Road when Japanese soldiers were killed or driven from village. Chinese soldiers guarding girls. September 3, 1944.

Source: Charles H. Hatfield (1944).

At the 2000 Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in Tokyo, former *Comfort Woman* Park Yeong-sim (Romanized as "Pak Yŏng-sim" in U.S. military documents) testified that she is the pregnant woman in Figure 9. At the time of the photograph, Park suffered from bloody discharge and had a stillbirth. The woman to Park's right with disheveled hair is looking in a different direction, with no notice of the camera. The woman in the center appears to have sustained a severe burn to her face. To the left of the male soldier, the fourth woman wears a bloodied bandage around her left arm. The four women wear expressions of either pain or disorientation. Moreover, their barefooted image relates urgency. In stark contrast, the male figure returns the gaze of the camera, smiling in a pose. Who are this man and these women?



**Figure 10.** Original photo caption: A Japanese girl captured in village on Sungshan Hill by troops of Chinese 8th Army, when all Japanese men were killed in cave, the Chinese soldiers found this girl hiding in corner of cave. Chinese soldiers calling Army HQ. to tell of the capture. September 3, 1944. *Source:* Charles H. Hatfield (1944).

Asian Women's Fund (1999) speculates that the man in Figure 9 is a Japanese-speaking Chinese student, based on an article by UP correspondent Walter Rundle.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Asano estimates that the four women in Figure 9 were Korean *Comfort Women* interviewed by Walter, and that the woman in Figure 10 was a 35-year-old, Japanese "regular prostitute." Since Pvt. Hatfield took the photograph on September 3rd, there is a claim that the five women were interviewed by Rundle on that day. However, neither the article nor the archives support the assumption that Rundle interviewed the women on September 3rd. Rundle does not appear in any photograph that took Sungshan offensive as the backdrop. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain that the excerpt from Rundle's article, "with the help of a Japanese-speaking Chinese student and now is serving with the Americans, the personal story of five of the pathetic women of Sungshan," is related to women in this photograph.

<sup>12.</sup> Walter Rundle, "Jap Comfort Girls," CBI Roundup, November 30, 1944.

According to Nishino Rumiko's interview with Park Yeong-sim, the man in the photograph was a Chinese soldier with the 8th Army of Y Force who captured the women in Figure 9 as POWs. A Chinese farmer Lǐ zhèng zǎo  $\overline{\Phi}\overline{E}\overline{P}$  also testified to encountering the soldier with the women (Nishino 1995).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, photographs taken by the U.S. army photographers commonly show many scenes of Chinese soldiers capturing and registering Japanese soldiers and *Comfort Women* as POWs.

Beyond Park Yeong-sim, it is unclear who the other women are but there is an archival trail that sheds some light. According to a report created by the Kunming Field Station of the U.S. Office of Strategic Service (OSS), the Kunming Headquarters of the Chinese Army was detaining Korean *Comfort Women* (10 at Sungshan, 13 at Tengchung) at the Yunnan Kunhwa Middle School compound in April, 1945.<sup>14</sup> This report listed names of 23 women, including Park's and the other women in Figure 9 and 10, but it is impossible to specify further at this moment.

Figure 10 and 11 capture the surviving *Comfort Women* in the aftermath of bloody battles with Japanese troops who resisted until death in their stronghold trenches in Sungshan, Huáng gǔ 橫股, and Xīshān 西山. As opposed to T/4 Frank W. Shearer, Pvt. Charles H. Hatifield's gaze reveals his ignorance of *Comfort Women*, and rather conveys a weary observation of a "Japanese Girl" who survived the annihilation of enemy troops. For the most part, the U.S. army photographers could not distinguish between Japanese and Koreans during the war. Nevertheless, Hatfield captured the vacant expression on a woman in Figure 10 who had survived a hellish nightmare. The woman in this photograph also appears in the video footage which will later be discussed. In the video, this woman also fails to conceal her anxious expression and is seemingly withdrawing to hide herself.

<sup>13.</sup> Nishino Rumiko repeated her findings in detail at the research project for analyzing foreign materials related to the Japanese military *Comfort Women* issue, which was sponsored by the Ministry of Gender Equality of the Republic of Korea. Refer to the MOGE (2003).

<sup>14.</sup> Major Joseph E. Spencer, 1945.5.6, See the NARA(1945b).



**Figure 11.** Original photo caption: Tech 5 Myer L. Tinsley gives first aid to Japanese girl wounded by Chinese 8th Army artillery and taken prisoner from cave on Sungshan Hill where Japanese soldiers were all killed trying to hold the cave. Two Chinese soldiers display captured Japanese flag, China. September 7, 1944. *Source:* Charles H. Hatfield (1944).

Figure 11 shows an American technician soldier treating a woman's hand with gauze. It appears that Hatfield was attempting to capture the spirit of American humanitarianism in treating a civilian woman despite being an enemy POW. What is more interesting in this photograph is that Chinese soldiers are holding a captured Japanese flag in the background. A Japanese flag was commonly featured together with Japanese swords as war trophies in commemorative photographs. In other words, this photograph simultaneously represents American humanitarianism for rescuing a "civilian" woman and masculine attitude for treating the body of enemy's woman as a war trophy or spoils of war. For the women, this translated to receiving medical treatment but also military interrogation, and over a year and half of detainment in POW camps.





**Figure 12.** Original photo caption: Capt. Shin Kai, general staff, 8th Army Headquarters and Sgt. Arthur L. Bixler, American liaison team with the 8th Army, question Korean women captured on Sungshan with Japanese, China. September 8, 1944.

Source: George L. Kocourek (1944).

A subtle shift is detected in a photograph captured by George L. Kocourek (see Fig. 12), who was active in Sungshan with Hatfield. Since Kocourek captured an interrogation scene on September 8th, a day after the battle, he knew that the women were Korean. Moreover, Kocourek likely knew that they were *Comfort Girl*. The most noticeable change in the photograph's composition is Chinese Cpt. Shin-Kai, who seems to be interrogating, and the U.S. Sgt. Arthur L. Bixler observing the scene in the background. These two figures represent the Sino-U.S. combined forces. Without their own tactical troops, the U.S. Army led Chinese Army troops in their efforts to recapture the Burma Road through "the Salween Operation" through intelligence and military operations. Therefore, this photograph directly captures the relationship between the U.S. Army and Chinese Army.

The crisscrossed gazes of the two women facing the camera are also meaningful. The woman with the head bandage is glancing at the interrogating Capt. Shin-Kai, and the gaze of the woman to the left falls on

the other two women complying to the interrogation.

Still pictures visualize one aspect of reality. Detailed information gleaned from these several photographs were able to be corroborated by the researcher's understanding of war and military operation, the U.S. official documents, news articles from that period, and in particular, Park Yeongsim's testimony. On the other hand, still pictures nonetheless conceals some part of reality. As a result, the stories of other women were inevitably obscured in the descriptions we have.

The discovery of motion pictures on Korean *Comfort Women* in Sungshan on July 5th, 2017 helped to bring missing narratives of the still pictures to the surface.<sup>15</sup> The video footage is presumed to be filmed by Sgt. Edward C. Fay sometime after September 8th. The footage begins with seven barefooted women standing against the wall of a house (the same house in Fig. 7). Chinese Army soldiers are gazing at the women with curiosity and amusement, while Capt. Shin-Kai seem to be smiling and speaking to a woman (third woman to the right in Fig. 8). As the conversation between these two individuals take place, facial expressions on the other women turned visibly dark. One woman with her head down wears an anxious expression; another woman (fourth to the right) holds the hand of the woman speaking to Shin-Kai; another woman (second to the right) disappears from the scene hiding behind the other women. Neither Park nor the woman with a severe burn to her face can be seen in this moving footage. They are assumed to be sent off to a separate location for medical treatment.

<sup>15.</sup> Kang introduced this film for the first time in his articles. Refer to the Kang (2017) and Kang (2018).



**Figure 13.** Still captures from an 18-second video clip related to Korean *Comfort Women* captured in Sungshan (in a motion picture titled 'World War II In China'). *Source:* Edwards C. Fay (1944).

In this footage, one woman particularly draws the viewer's attention: the woman holding onto the woman speaking to Capt. Shin-Kai. She appears to be showing intimacy to the woman next to her, but at the same time seeking support. She also appears determined to not be separated from the other woman. Her body language generates many questions. What was her story? What was the relationship between the two women? Were they companions who had survived the hellish life of sex slavery together? Did they develop a sisterly relationship that is often depicted in *Comfort Women* films? The emotions evoked by the video prompted a re-examination of the still pictures.

This woman (fourth to the right in Fig. 13) is seen standing next to Park Yeong-sim in Figure 9. In the still photograph, this woman wearing a vacant, disoriented expression with disheveled hair is gazing at a point of interest outside of the frame. She had escaped from the burning trenches and impending compulsory mass death. During the chaos, she had been separated from the woman she is holding onto in the footage. Fortunately, Figure 11 shows that the woman speaking to Shin-Kai in the footage had also survived with minor burns. Returning to the video footage, we now know that these two women had reunited after separation. As moving images more fully convey the affectual ambience, we could surmise that these two women were likely feeling a rush of guilt, relief, happiness, fear,

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and anxiety. Moreover, the narrative pieced together from Figure 9, 11, and the video footage enabled us to assume that the two women huddled together with their backs to the camera in Figure 12 are precisely the two women.

What happened to these women afterward? They were interned at the Kunming Kunhwa Middle School Compound, along with other 13 Korean *Comfort Women* who survived from Tengchung. After being forcibly conscripted by Japanese Army and later discarded, only to be captured as POWs after surviving the war, these women faced another upheaval. In April 1945, the OSS field station in Kunming carried out two preliminary hearings over the women as part of their psychological warfare preparation against Japan. The hearing was attended by a Korean, Kim Wu-Chun (Adjutant to the Gwangbokgun [Korean Liberation Army] General Kim Hak-Kyu), and he did not turn his back on the women. Because of his efforts, the women were transferred over to the Korean Liberation Army in Tengchung and returned to Korea in February 1946 (Kim 2012).<sup>16</sup>

Although these women were forced into sex slavery to service Japanese troops and later became POWs of the Allied forces, they were able to survive from the precipice of death. In contrast, only horror can be ascertained in Figure 14 that depicts only destruction and death. Hatfield documented through many photographs the destruction and death of Japanese defense troops at Sungshan, and Figure 14 is but one of them.



**Figure 14.** Original photo caption: Near village at Sungshan Hill 15 dead Japs including two girls in cave where artillery struck and in which troops of Chinese 8th Army threw hand grenades. September 7, 1944. *Source:* Charles H. Hatfield (1944).

However, there are conflicting explanations for the scene of death captured by Hatfield's photograph. Hatfield determined that Japanese soldiers and women were killed by Chinese Army's shelling and grenades.<sup>17</sup> However, Nishino Rumiko, based on a testimony by a former Japanese agent, contends that the Japanese soldiers themselves threw the grenades in the trenches to execute a compulsory "honorable collective suicide" 玉碎 (Nishino 1995, 136). Japanese troops held many positions in Sungshan and after comparing individual situations in the trenches, it is likely that both accounts could have taken place. More importantly, even if the Sino-U.S. combined forces generated direct causes of many deaths, including the *Comfort Women*, the Japanese Army's is also implicated as responsible. This was because Japanese troops forcibly kept the women with them until the end under the guise of the "live or die as one" 共生共死 philosophy.

<sup>17.</sup> Argument that those "two girls" in the caption of photograph are Korean *Comfort Women* was first raised in 1984 by Moriyama and Ota in Japan. Refer to the Moriyama (1984).



**Figure 15.** Original photo caption: Bodies of Japanese troops (and women) killed in the city of Tengchung when the Chinese troops stormed the town. September 15, 1944. *Source:* Frank D. Manwarren (1944).



**Figure 16.** Original photo caption: Numbers of a Chinese burial party look into a trench filled with women, most of whom were Korean, who were killed at Tengchung, China, while Japanese and Chinese troops fought over the city. September 15, 1944. *Source:* : Frank D. Manwarren (1944).

Figure 15 and 16 are also widely circulated photographs that captured the deaths of *Comfort Women*. T/4 Frank D. Manwarren, who was assigned to the Chinese 20th Group Army, fixed his camera on the military operation

and harrowing battle undertaken by the Sino-U.S. combined forces in their attack on Tengchung Fortress. Manwarren took diverse subjects in his camera, such as the celebratory Sino-U.S. combined troops after their victory, the destroyed fortress, and the mass killing of Japanese soldiers, civilian women, and children. These two photographs, taken on September 15th after the fall of Tengchung Fortress, also depict the corpses of entangled Japanese troops and women.

In Figure 15, Manwarren captured corpses of Japanese troops and women littered in between the castle wall near northeast gate and the outer wall of inner house. There appear to be 5 or 6 bodies, and the female corpse to the center-left of the photograph can be seen with clothes burned to crisps, exposing her breast. Such harrowing image is mirrored by the bulletridden compound to the right.

Figure 16 shows the corpses of women lining the trenches leading out of the fortress. According to the caption, the majority were Korean *Comfort Women*. Their corpses are covered with insects, and Chinese soldiers tasked with burial are observing the gruesome scene with sickles and grenades in hand. While it is certain that this trench was outside of Tengchung Fortress, its exact location is not clear. Asano surmised that the location of this trench was to the south of the fortress in Lái fèng shān 来鳳山 and that the corpses had been disposed for over a month and a half (Asia Women's Fund 1999, 69).



**Figure 17.** Still captures from a 19-second video clip related to killing of Korean *Comfort Women* by Japanese military (in the motion picture "The Battle of Tengchung"). September 15, 1944. *Source:* Baldwin (1944).

Corroborating these two photographs, there is video footage filmed on the same day either capturing the same or similar subjects. Operating alongside T/4 Manwarren was a motion picture cameraman, Baldwin, who filmed an identical composition to Figure 15. However, the footage lasts only 7 seconds. All figures in the frame, including the corpses, are motionless and the only movement is the rising smoke. Despite the short length of footage, it conveys the brutality of the scene.

Interestingly, it was discovered that this footage was connected with two other footages, and they were the preceding and succeeding 6-second footages capturing scenes of Chinese soldiers checking corpses in an open pit outside of the fortress. However, these footages were not taken in identical location with Figure 16. Rather, they depict a pit outside the fortress where Chinese soldiers appear to be moving around, examining the corpses and removing their socks. The naked corpses appear in heaps, recalling the images of Jewish corpses in Nazi concentration camps. Baldwin captured these scenes outside of the fortress before and after the video footage on female corpses found inside Tengchung Fortress. What was his intention? Would it be too excessive to claim that Baldwin wanted to equate the cause of death in the two locations?<sup>18</sup>

The exact cause of the deaths captured in the images are still the subject of dispute. While it is verified that the corpses belonged to Korean *Comfort Women*, there is an allegation that their deaths were caused by the Sino-U.S. combined forces' offensive. In other words, the Allied forces are accused to be

<sup>18.</sup> NARA provides a description card, attached to this film. The full description says "Chinese soldiers strip socks off dead Japanese. Dead civilians, women and children in open pit. Chinese soldier loots Japanese dead." There is a claim that bodies in open pit outside fortress are the Japanese soldiers. However, it is important to notice that the description includes a phrase "Dead civilian, women and children." Moreover, this description card was not written by Baldwin, who filmed these footages. It was written by an archivist of Army Pictorial Center (New York), which later transferred this film to NARA. In other words, an archivist who was not in the actual scene later wrote the description card by summarizing what he saw in the film. This description does not explain the 7-second footage of the site inside fortress. The reason is assumed that the archivist could not understand the whole situation by simply watching one film. In relation to this information, refer to Chung (2018, 72–74).

responsible for the death of *Comfort Women*. Another area of voices argues that Japanese soldiers in fact attempted to protect the *Comfort Women* (Park 2013, 101–102). However, a study of areas where Japanese troops fought "to-the-last-man" reveals that there were cases of mass killings of *Comfort Women* carried out by Japanese soldiers. Such tragedies are documented in the official Sino-U.S. combined forces records (namely G-2 and G-3 Daily Diaries), the Chinese Nationalist Party newspapers Săodàng bào (Eradication, 掃蕩報) and Zhōngyāngrìbào 中央日報,<sup>19</sup> and surviving eye-witnesses from the sites. A report filed by the Chinese 54th Army on September 14th, 1944 at 18:55 states that on the "night of the 13th [before the fall of Tengchung Fortress] the Japanese shot 30 Korean girls in the city."<sup>20</sup>

The atrocities of the war are visualized through these images. Figure 14 was caught under military censorship and stamped with "Negative Shipped to Washington," removing it from possible public access. Figure 15 and 16, however, were stamped as "confidential" and distributed to the War Department of the U.S. Bureau of Public Relations in October 1945. What accounts for this difference in handling? Did they consider whether the combined forces were responsible for the death of civilian women? At the least, the army photographers' knowledge, as reflected in the captions, designated Figure 14 as evidence of the Sino-U.S. responsibility while Figure 15 and 16 unequivocally proved enemy atrocity. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the latter images were used as propaganda to influence positive public opinion toward the war crime trials by the Allied forces.

## Conclusion

This paper analyzed organizations and activities of the U.S. army photographers in the *164th Signal Photo Company* and the still photographs and video footages related to *Comfort Women* found among their works. By reading the visual materials alongside textual sources and witness

<sup>19.</sup> Refer to the Săodàng bào (1944).

<sup>20.</sup> Refer to the NARA (1944b).

testimonies, I parsed out multiple gazes, intentions and natures of army photography in the CBI theater, and the individual stories of the *Comfort Women* who occupied the images as subjects.

Nevertheless, these still and motion pictures do not easily reveal the entire truth. Rather, they appear to be concealing something. The voices of women are silenced in the photographs and footages. As a result, this paper was only able to access their voices through interrogation reports, news articles, and personal accounts by the interrogators who interviewed the women. However, this also is beset with difficulties of interpretation and translation, requiring even more sustained efforts to analyze.

Lastly, I call attention to the Comfort Women subjects in the images who were discarded by the Japanese troops only to be immediately subjected to the Allied forces as POWs. Until now, the narratives of Comfort Women have been dominantly focused on their forced conscription into sex slavery while paying scant attention to the consequences of their abandonment toward the end of the Pacific War. The women were systematically forced to accompany Japanese troops to almost every corner of Asia Pacific region during the war and were eventually subjected to death along with the troops. If they survived, they became POWs as "Japanese girls." And even if they were recognized as "Korean Comfort Girls, [who were] apparently under compulsion and misrepresentation,"21 they still entered the same POW camps with Japanese soldiers. When the war ended after Japan declared "total surrender" on August 15th, 1945, these women still could not claim their "liberation." These women served time in POW camps from between a year and year and a half. Only later did the U.S.-Chinese forces initiate the women's repatriation. However, not all Comfort Women chose to return. While a fraction returned to their homelands, a larger inestimable number of women could not return or chose not to. Although their decisions could be considered voluntary, they were also forced by structural conditions. Fearing the stigmatization of having "impure bodies," many women remained to wander. The patriarchal notion of female chastity and culture situated these women's decisions beyond matters of the individual. For the

<sup>21.</sup> Refer to the NARA (1945b).

women who repatriated, many have stated that they concealed their histories as *Comfort Women* from families, relatives, and neighbors and worked as factory laborers or nurses. Many lived out their lives in social isolation. The longer narratives of *Comfort Women* beyond the duration of their wartime sex slavery highlight their exclusion and abandonment by Korean society.

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