

- (1) 米紙ニューヨーク・タイムズ
米紙ロサンゼルス・タイムズ
英紙ガーディアン

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Written Apology of the Asahi Shimbun Company

Since the year 1982 the Asahi Shimbun Company has published many news stories on the kidnapping of comfort women by the Japanese Army and by doing so has disseminating misinformation across the world.

It has now, however, been confirmed that the Japanese Army never forcibly recruited any comfort women and that our news stories on the subject were fabrications.

We hereby repudiate all of our news reports on the subject of the comfort woman, which have been the source of so many misunderstandings, and we urge the people of the world to reassess everything they think they know about the comfort women problem.

(1.) The testimony of Seiji Yoshida was fabricated.

In our morning edition of September 2 1982 the Asahi Shimbun introduced the man named Seiji Yoshida under the headline, "A Former Mobilization Leader Testifies on his Seizures of Korean Women". The article said that "The head of the mobilization unit once in charge of abducting Koreans has spoken out about the true nature of the tragic 'comfort women hunts'", and it claimed that the Japanese Army "'hunted' young Korean women" on Korea's Cheju Island. Afterwards our newspaper repeatedly reported this as fact without attempting to corroborate it in an objective manner.

However, our reporters have now carried out several on-site investigations and have found nothing to back up Mr. Yoshida's testimony. We have discovered that Mr. Yoshida was a compulsive liar who also claimed that his wife copied into her diary a mobilization order from Japan's Western District Army, though in fact she never kept a diary. The Patriotic Labor Association to which Yoshida belonged was an organization created by the Interior Ministry and the Health and Welfare Ministry, and therefore, because it was part of a different chain of command, would never have received a mobilization order from the Army or have sent its staff directly to Korea. Mr. Yoshida also said that in May of 1943, when the abductions are alleged to have occurred, the "unit headquarters of the army" had Cheju Island "under martial law", but this is inconsistent with historical facts as no large army units were stationed on Cheju Island until 1945.

Thus Seiji Yoshida's testimony was never trustworthy, and Mr. Yoshida himself later admitted that his statements on "comfort women hunts" were fictitious.

We should have verified these facts at the latest in the year 1993, by which point their doubtfulness was already known, and long before our retraction of August 2014. As a news organization, it was wrong of us to have not retracted these stories and Seiji Yoshida testimony much earlier than we did.

(2.) The Japanese Army never forcibly recruited any comfort women.

On January 11 1992 the Asahi Shimbun published a news article which contained statements like "Document shows military involvement in comfort stations" and "Korean women were kidnapped under the guise of joining the Women's Volunteer Corps". The article alleged that a document had been found demonstrating that the Japanese Army was involved in every step of the comfort women system, from recruiting comfort women up to the management and supervision of comfort stations.

However, the document in question said the opposite of what we had reported. The document contained a military order to crack down on disreputable civilian brokers who were recruiting comfort women in the Army's name, but it did not say that the Japanese Army was using any coercive means to recruit comfort

women. Furthermore, up to the present day no piece of documentary evidence has ever been discovered to prove that the Japanese Army used forcible means to recruit any comfort women.

It has now been reported that no evidence for forcible recruitment of comfort women by the Japanese Army was found even in the 2007 Report of the Interagency Working Group, though the United States government spent about seven years and thirty million dollars on this thorough investigation of Japanese war crimes. The Group found no such evidence despite probing every American department and agency, including the State Department, the Defense Department, the NSA, the FBI, the CIA, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the National Archives and Records Administration, the United States Army, and the United States Navy.

The Asahi Shimbun now acknowledges that comfort women were well-paid prostitutes and that forcible recruitment of comfort women by the Japanese Army is not a historical fact.

(3.) The Asahi Shimbun is responsible for spreading misinformation worldwide.

Since 1982 the Asahi Shimbun has reported Seiji Yoshida's testimony as fact and, based on that, has given extensive coverage of disproven allegations of forcible recruitment of comfort women by the Japanese Army, as mentioned in (2). Now the deceptive argument equating comfort women with "kidnapped military sex slaves" has been widely circulated, and as a result the scorn of the world has been heaped upon Japan, based on nothing but pure fictions.

For example, the UN's Coomaraswamy Report of 1996 defined the comfort women system as "military sexual slavery" and then the UN's McDougall Report of 1998 stated that, "the Japanese government and the Japanese Imperial Army forced over 200,000 women into sexual slavery in rape centers throughout Asia." Via the United Nations the falsehood that the comfort women were slaves recruited by force by the Japanese Army and the Japanese government was recognized as fact across the world.

However, these UN reports were based solely on books which presented as fact the aforementioned fabricated testimonies that our newspaper had published and promoted. Among the many undisputed factual errors that are now widespread is the mistaken confusion of comfort women with members of the Women's Volunteer Corps who were mobilized to munitions factories, etc.

The inaccurate assumption that the comfort women were sex slaves abducted by the Japanese Army has now spread globally and has become the source of harsh but groundless international criticism directed against Japan and the Japanese people. As a news organization, we are painfully aware that it was our misreports, and our failure to quickly correct those misreports, which were the cause of all this trouble.

(4.) We ask for the comfort women problem to be reevaluated.

The Asahi Shimbun acknowledges that the falseness of the claims of forced recruitment of comfort women and of Seiji Yoshida's testimony had already come to light by at least 1993, but we did not retract our news reports in a prompt manner. To make matters worse, we propagated these reports outside Japan by wiring them abroad in English translation. Because of this, people across the world now wrongly believe that the term "comfort woman" is synonymous with "military sex slave".

The Asahi Shimbun now retracts all of its distorted coverage on the comfort women problem.

In order to restore the battered prestige of Japan and its citizens, we are urging the people of the whole world, and especially the world's news agencies, to reexamine all the facts. The Asahi Shimbun will henceforth make the utmost effort to ensure that others will understand the historical fact that the Japanese government and Japanese Army never recruited any comfort women coercively.

-Date:

-Asahi Shimbun Company

-Representative Director Masataka Watanabe

(3) 全面

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