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Panel on "Military and Sexual Violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Korean Peninsula"

Examining the relationship between colonialism, militarism, and sex industry:  
The Colonial "Pleasure" Quarters (Yûkaku), the Camptown (Kijich'on),  
and the "Entertainment" Districts (Hwallak'ka) in the City of Gunsan

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**Objective:** To offer a historical examination of the relationship between colonialism and militarism and sex industry, with a special focus on Gunsan City in North Cholla Province (Population: approx. 280,000).

## **I. Colonial Period**

### (1) Gunsan, a Colonial City

Colonial Gunsan flourished as a commercial city and known as the City of Rice.

- The Port of Gunsan opened in 1899. Japanese settlers forced 700 Korean villagers (150 families) to evacuate from a small village in order to establish a living quarter reserved exclusively for themselves.
- Gunsan (with rice producing regions behind it) was one of the key shipping ports for Korean rice to be exported to Japan. Gunsan functioned as a base of Japan's colonial exploitation of Korean resources.
- Northern Korean cities (e.g. Hweryong) assumed more militaristic roles ↔ Southern Korea (e.g. Gunsan) more commercialistic and economically exploitative
- Japanese-style houses and buildings in present-day Gunsan: e.g. Former Building of Bank of Chôsen (1923), formerly known as "the Most Magnificent Building in Gunsan"

### (2) The "Pleasure Quarters" and the Japanese colonial rule

Japanese overseas settlers during Japan's Meiji period (1868–1912) are said to have built brothels first.

- The Kyômachî Yûkaku (the Kyômachî Pleasure Quarter): one of the pleasure quarters

located in colonial Gunsan's Japanese district.

- According to documents as of 1935, there were 8 Japanese brothels (61 people) and 3 Korean brothels (26) in the Kyômachî Pleasure Quarter.
- Now turned into the Myongsan Market. (Photo: the second floor of the former brothel called the Yoshimotorô)

## **II. After Liberation/Division of Korea**

### **(1) The US Military Forces and the Camptown**

- The US base in post-WW2 Gunsan built on the confiscated Japanese air base
- 1960s: Clubs in Yonghwa-dong (in Gunsan City) for US soldiers
- 1969: "America Town" near the US base, women moved to America Town
- Today: Camptown women also from Russia, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan

### **(2) "Entertainment" District for Korean men**

- Sonyang-dong: former pleasure quarter in the colonial period
- 2000 Fire Incident: near Gunsan Market, killing 5 women working in sex business
- 2002 Fire Incident: in Kaebok-dong, killing 12 women
- 2004: legislation of laws regulating sex industry; legislation made possibly by women's movements

**Conclusion:** Gunsan provides a vivid example of a close relationship between the development of sex industry and colonialism, militarism, and male chauvinism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Korean peninsula.