

## Women, the State, and War: Understanding Issue of the “Comfort Women”

(continued from the previous issue)

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### Explaining Comfort Women

According to the existing literature, the institutionalization of the system of comfort women was needed to avoid rape. According to Nishino, the Japanese military learned a hard lesson after World War I (Nishino 1992: 41). When the Japanese military was stationed in Siberia, Japanese soldiers committed extensive rape of local women resulting in the spread of venereal diseases. Rape became a central concern for the military leaders because spread of venereal diseases meant a drastic loss of soldiers' fighting capability (Hikosaka 1991: 45, Nishino 1992: 41). Thus, comfort stations were established with the explicit purpose of allowing soldiers to have sex without the risk of venereal diseases (Nishino 1992: 44, Yoshimi 1995: 32).

How were venereal diseases to be avoided if soldiers were still allowed to remain sexually active? Military doctor Aso's report issued on 26 June 1939, which became a blueprint for designing comfort stations in China, suggested that among those who were recruited as comfort women, young (under twenty years old) Korean women were qualified as 'presents for imperial soldiers' (Nishino 1992: 44). The report recommended that Japanese women (in the potential pool of comfort women) should be avoided because they were often old and had already worked as prostitutes so that they tended to be already infected with venereal diseases. In addition to the active recruitment of young women, concern for venereal diseases led the military to adopt strict rules regarding the use of comfort stations. Soldiers were required to use condoms — often called *eisei*

*sakku* or '*totsugeki ichiban*'— and other preventive medications (Nishino 1992: 85-96).

The establishment of comfort stations may truly reflect the beliefs upheld by military officers that regulated prostitution would decrease the rate of infection with venereal diseases.<sup>(16)</sup> But continued high rates of infection with venereal diseases (Yoshimi 1995: 49, ICJ 1994: 129) as well as increasing numbers of rape during the duration of the War (Yoshimi 1992: 200-2, Yoshimi 1995: 43-7),<sup>(17)</sup> indicate that the comfort women system proved to be an ineffective means to attain the goal of preventing venereal diseases. However, the military never gave up its operation of comfort stations until the end of the War. The continued operation of comfort stations on the one hand, and the persistent occurrence of rape and the spread of venereal diseases among soldiers on the other hand, suggest reasons other than prevention of venereal diseases explain why the military continued to operate comfort stations.

Furthermore, there is no logical link between the need to suppress the spread of venereal diseases and the establishment of comfort stations. As I will discuss below, there are other ways to avoid the spread of venereal diseases, such as encouragement of and/or forced abstention in exchange for home-leave holidays. Thus, prevention of venereal diseases is an insufficient explanation for the institutionalization of rape.

The dominant explanation for the second question, that is, why mostly Korean women were abused, is already found in the explanation provided above. The stated reason why Korean women were used as comfort women was prevention of venereal diseases because they were most often younger (i. e. virgins) and thus free of venereal diseases (Nishino 1992: 44, Hikosaka p.47). However, again, the stated reason leaves room for further explanation.

Suzuki asks if being a virgin was the most important condition, why weren't young Japanese girls recruited? The answer is that Japanese women were needed for reproduction under the national policy of 'bear babies, increase the population' (*umeyo fuyaseyo*) (Kim 1976: 76, Nagahara and Yoneda 1986: 115, Suzuki 1992: 33).<sup>(18)</sup>

However, the preference for young Korean women under twenty years old renders this explanation less convincing. According to the Outline for Population Policy adopted in January 1941, the government proposed that women over twenty-one years old must be married so they can bear more children (Kondo 1995: 490-3). This meant, Japanese women under twenty were available to be used as comfort women if the government decided to do so. Some may argue that it was not possible because sexual slavery would have made these young Japanese women unable to reproduce later on. It is true that incessant raping made many former comfort women unable to reproduce but it is unlikely that the military leaders anticipated this effect on women's bodies at the time they decided to use young women as comfort women. Thus the fact that Japanese women of ages equivalent to those of Korean comfort women were not mobilized as comfort women must be explained by reasons other than need for increased reproduction.

In sum, existing explanations offer answers to the questions on the institutionalization of rape and use of Korean women only partially at best. In the remaining part of this section, therefore, I will attempt to offer alternative explanations based on three different approaches.

### **Myths about Male Sexuality**

First, beliefs about male sexuality offer an answer to the question why comfort stations were used as a solution to fears of rampant rapes and resulting spread of venereal diseases among soldiers. As I already mentioned, there is no logical link between the prevention of infection with venereal diseases and the establishment of the comfort women system. Two alternatives were possible: to establish recreational facilities, and/or to grant home-leave holidays to soldiers (Hikosaka 1991: 159).

It is not that these two alternatives did not exist in the pool of ideas held by the military officers. On the contrary, there were some in the Japanese military who proposed these two alternatives to comfort women. For example, the military doctor Hayao Torao

recommended the establishment of 'respectable' recreational facilities such as 'cinemas, theaters, music halls, libraries, museums' in order to prevent repetition of atrocities committed by the Japanese army in Nanking (Nishino 1992: 75-83). Moreover, records indicate that the military did think about granting special holidays to soldiers and allowing families to visit soldiers. According to the journal of Kinehara Setsuzo, in October 1942, Prime Minister Tojo supported the idea of holidays for soldiers (quoted in Yoshimi 1995: 70). Holidays were not only for soldiers to go see their families. Holidays could also have helped the national goal of accelerating the birth rate.

Despite such proposals, however, neither recreational facilities nor holidays replaced the system of comfort women (Yoshimi 1995: 52). Why not? Hikosaka concludes that soldiers' holidays were not adopted because of 'material and spiritual poverty' (Hikosaka 1991: 159). Materially speaking, it is well known that the Japanese military was far behind its opponents. For example, the US military was able to send its soldiers home on a regular basis (Yoshimi 1995: 206) but the Japanese military was physically unable to do that because of its inferior transportation capacity. For example, existing data on civil aviation indicate that the US capacity to transport passengers was 68 times larger than that of Japan's in 1936 (Wakatsuki 1995a: 7). (These data are not actual data on military transportation capabilities, but they do indicate the vast difference that existed between the transportation capabilities of the US and Japanese militaries.) Thus, the Japanese military resorted to the strategy of so-called *genchi chōtatsu* (local acquisition) of food and ammunition (Wakatsuki 1995a: 134-7). In terms of 'spiritual poverty,' as I discuss below, soldiers (as well as other individuals such as comfort women and civilians) were seen as 'things,' not humans, and therefore, it is unlikely that the military leaders seriously thought that soldiers needed vacations.

What about the establishment of more 'respectable' facilities? Why did not the military replace comfort women system with other services to entertain soldiers? I contend that the reason why comfort women system was chosen as a preferred method of

keeping soldiers happy is closely related to the beliefs about war and male sexuality that existed in the minds of military officials and soldiers. The myths evolved around three mutually related beliefs about male sexuality.

(1) Belief one: Male physiology requires sex on a regular basis.

This view of male sexuality was shared widely among government officials and military personnel before the War. For example, Garon cites a view of a hygiene official who considered that 'male body needed to satisfy sexual lust' in 1900 (Garon 1997: 101). The military believed that 'to deprive young men of women for many years is to go against human sexual instinct' (Hikosaka 1991: 41, translation mine). Hicks quotes a statement by a former Japanese soldier who held that 'the Japanese ...realized that...the troops' biological (i.e. sexual) needs could not be turned off' (Hicks 1994: 144, addition mine). This idea led to the idea that soldiers needed women like they needed food and water. As food could be used as a special treat for soldiers, women were sometimes granted as 'special gifts.' For instance, in Northern Burma, where battles with large numbers of fatalities occurred, the Japanese military gave soldiers comfort women as special gifts to soldiers who were sent for one-way missions (Kim 1977: 212).

In sum, many Japanese, including those in the military, believed and to some extent still believe (Murase 1993: 52) that suppression of male libido was not possible and even if it were possible, it would cause physical problems such as neurological disorder (Hikosaka 1991: 155).<sup>(19)</sup>

(2) Belief two: If men were not allowed to have sex with women, then they would cause trouble to the military.

Because male physiology required regular sex, if men were forced to abstain, it was believed to cause a variety of problems. For example, in the Air Force, it was 'believed [that] sexual deprivation made pilots accident-prone' (Hicks 1994: 121). Furthermore, sexual deprivation was thought to be bad for the military's relationship with civilian women because repression of sexual desires would lead to increased rape.

This belief on male sexuality was commonly held before the beginning of the war. According to Garon, proponents of licensed prostitution, who dominated the Japanese society and the government before World War II, assumed that ‘repressing the sexual desires of men would only lead to increased rape and other sex crimes’ (Garon 1997: 100). Even Fukuzawa Yukichi, a leading philosopher of this period with good knowledge of the western thinking, maintained that single men needed prostitutes; otherwise social order would be disrupted (Garon 1997: 101).

In time of war, many, if not all, believed that male sexual desire increased. Not only did this mean that soldiers needed to have sex more than men in peacetime, but if their sexual needs were not met, soldiers were more likely to cause trouble. Sasaki states that ‘facing the high likelihood of death, the instinct of survival increased libido’ (Sasaki 1973: 314). In interviews conducted by Uetsubo, many veterans stated that ‘right before attack, we cleared our feelings (sukkirishite) by sleeping with women’ (Uetsubo 1977: 174).<sup>(20)</sup>

### (3) Belief three: Sex with women strengthened soldiers’ fighting capabilities.

The third belief was the flip side of the second belief. If sex deprivation was a minus for the military, sex opportunity for soldiers was perceived to be a plus for the military. In the third belief, if soldiers were allowed to have sex, soldiers’ fighting capacity was thought to increase. Thus, young soldiers were encouraged to use comfort facilities because ‘sex would build up their morale’ (Hicks 1994: 116). This view, I believe, is based on the idea that women were objects to be conquered and thus men are perceived to increase their aggressive instinct by first conquering women. This view is consistent with the view commonly held within the Japanese military that ‘virgin men are not real men’ (Yoshimi 1995: 223).

Whether the above beliefs are supported by scientific evidence or not is not relevant here. What is important, instead, is that these were widely shared beliefs by both officers and soldiers explain why the comfort women system was chosen to keep soldiers

'happy'<sup>(21)</sup> as opposed to other methods discussed above. However, we should not assume a direct link between such beliefs and the actual policy implemented by the military. We need to further probe into the structure of the state which allowed these beliefs to be translated into policy decisions.

### **The Japanese State: Its Ideology and Decisionmaking**

The second approach focuses on the Japanese state. In this section, we will first look at the dominant ideology held by Japanese government officials regarding the people under its rule. Then, we will examine the role of the Japanese military in establishing the comfort women system. Finally, we will unravel roles played by non-military government actors.

#### **(1) State Ideology**

The Japanese state's view of the people under its rule before World War II was not like the ones held by advanced democracies. Under the Meiji Constitution, the Japanese people were not citizens with full-fledged rights and freedom but were 'subjects' of the emperor. The methods used by the Japanese government to disseminate 'emperor-system ideology' which in turn was used to inculcate 'patriotism, loyalty to the emperor and the virtues of diligence and thrift' (Garon 1997: 5) included the use of *Kyōiku Chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890), *Kokutai no Hongi* (Fundamental Principles of the National Polity, 1937), *Shinmin no Michi* (The Way of Subjects, 1941). The result of this ideology was that large numbers of Japanese believed that it was most honorable to fight and die for the emperor. This view that the Japanese people (which included people in occupied areas) were to serve the emperor and the imperial state was fortified in time of war and put into practice as the extensive use (and abuse) of individuals to win the war. Thus, during World War II, both men and women, Japanese or non-Japanese, were fully mobilized without protection of their basic rights.

Of course, neglect of individual rights was not done uniformly across class, ethnicity

and gender. Mobilization of Japanese people varied depending on class, for example. For instance, those who were drafted as soldiers primarily came from poor rural areas and sons of the wealthy upper class were often exempt from or allowed to defer conscription.<sup>(22)</sup> As for women, general mobilization of women was not done until 1944,<sup>(23)</sup> because mobilization of women conflicted with the government's pronatalist policy. The result of incomplete mobilization was that while women from the working class worked in ammunition factories, middle class women who could afford to stay home were encouraged to do so so that they could reproduce.<sup>(24)</sup>

While such differences existed among people of different classes, the gap that existed between men and women was much larger. Under the Meiji legal system, not only were women the emperor's subjects, but also they were property belonging to men. Under the Meiji Civil Code (1898), for example, men monopolized the right of inheritance whereas married women were rendered legally incompetent. Moreover, laws regarding children born out of a wedlock and adultery gave men extensive sexual freedom whereas women's sexual freedom was highly restricted (Yoshimi 1995: 224-5, Garon 1997: 99). In sum, if men enjoyed respect for their rights on property and sexual freedom even under the repressive Meiji state, women's rights were doubly rejected by the state and by the male-dominant legal system.

The treatment of the people in occupied areas was also based on the 'emperor-system ideology'. However the implication of the ideology to the Koreans and Taiwanese was highly racist. Because the ideology held that the 'emperor is a living god and thus Japan is the invincible land of god,' Korea and China were regarded as inferior (Mahara and Senda 1992: 85, translation mine). As for men from occupied areas, the racism materialized in the form of forced loyalty to the Japanese state and labor under inhumane conditions. Thus, young men were conscripted to fight for the Imperial Army, and large numbers of older Korean men were forced to take up jobs under strenuous working conditions (Nishino 1992: 5-9, 136-40) related to mining or ammunition production (Kim



1976: 54).

Because gender discrimination was added to this racism, within the group of discriminated Koreans and Taiwanese, women received the lowest respect by the Japanese state contrary to a belief that 'we (i.e. people ruled by the Japanese state) all suffered (equally) during the war' (Kamisaka and Hata 1996, translation and addition mine). Japan's treatment of women in the colonized areas was worse than that of men because it was not just about the abuse of their labor but also it was about the abuse of their sexuality. Japan's treatment of these women were worse than that of Japanese women who also suffered gender discrimination. The proof is that, as I already mentioned, Japanese women's bodies and their reproductive capabilities were protected by the state policy as mothers of future soldiers. It is true that this itself shows lack of respect for Japanese women as individuals but the fact that their bodies were protected by the state must not be neglected. In contrast, Korean women (and Taiwanese women, too) were only seen as sex objects and as a result large numbers of Korean women were forced to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese military and suffered extensive psychological and physical damage throughout their lives.<sup>(25)</sup>

## (2) Structure of the Military

Now that we have seen the nature of the ideology held by the Japanese state at the time of the War, we need to see the positions of different actors within the Japanese state. As we have already seen, the Japanese military played a central role in the establishment of the system of comfort women. We also saw that the military held a particular view on male sexuality. In this section, we will examine the structure of the military and see how and why the structure gave rise to the need for the comfort women system.

Rape is about violence. It is a violation of women's physical and mental integrity. Because it is universally true that military discipline involves elements of violence, militaries were often associated with rape. As Hirschfeld noted, one of the purposes of military training was to eliminate soldiers' personal feelings and thereby make them

willing to blindly follow orders and give up their lives. The military training, therefore, is 'not very much different from activities at actual war which promotes a variety of impulsive emotions such as sexual excitement, cruelty and violence' (Hirschfeld 1954: 182-3).

The Japanese military was not exempt from the brutal disciplining of soldiers. Kumazawa notes that hazing (*rinchi*, lynch) was explicitly prohibited in the Japanese military and it was rare among soldiers with vast difference in rank. However, among soldiers with no or little difference in their ranks, it was not uncommon (Kumazawa 1974: 133).<sup>(26)</sup> Kumazawa further explains that violence exercised (against Chinese people) by the Japanese military was a reflection of 'internal contradiction' (Kumazawa 1974: 150), referring to the use of violence as a means to discipline soldiers. Wakatsuki also equates repression within the military and looting, murder, and rape committed by the soldiers which were perceived as 'precious freedom' (Wakatsuki 1995b: 133).

Such internal violence and contradiction may explain rampant rape. However, does it explain the institutionalization of rape? Suzuki links this internal contradiction with the institutionalization of military prostitution. She maintains that military leaders knew that soldiers would rebel against their officers if nothing was done to vent their frustration at the various contradictions of military life. Thus, comfort women were given to pacify the soldiers (Suzuki 1992: 37). Suzuki concludes that 'women's sexuality was violated in the name of the emperor' but at the same time men's sexuality was controlled by the state (Suzuki 1991: 105). In sum, violence and contradiction within the military gave rise to the need to compensate for the psychological and physical damage inflicted upon soldiers.

### (3) Position of Other Government Actors and Their Relation to the Military

What were the attitudes of officials in other branches of the government? Out of the three ministries that were the most powerful within the Japanese government before the beginning of the War (Wakatsuki 1995a: 72), namely the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Naimusho*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Finance, the first two are

relevant to the decisionmaking related to the issue of comfort women. Yoshimi notes that the Ministry of Home Affairs passively supported the military's policy. In a letter sent from the ministry to governors of all prefectures on 23 February 1938, the ministry granted the 'tacit approval' (*mokunin*) to the emigration of those who were over 21 year old and already working as prostitutes to work as comfort women. What this indicates is that the Home Ministry was afraid of breaching the International Convention of 4 May 1910 for the White Slave Traffic and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children of 1921, which Japan ratified in 1925. At the same time, however, there was no equivalent order issued to the occupied areas, which means that the ministry was passively approving trafficking of Korean and Taiwanese women (Yoshimi 1994: 93, Yoshimi 1997: 45).

To be sure, there are some reasons to believe that the ministry was opposed to the use of comfort women. After all, it was the police, which was under the control of the Home Ministry, which responded to the abolitionist movement and worked to limit the number of licensed prostitutes in the 1920s (Yoshimi 1997: 46). However, this fact does not prove that the police was concerned about prostitution and rape done outside of the mainland.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also was not too supportive of the trafficking of women. A response by Foreign Minister Togo to a telegram sent by a head of the foreign affairs office (*gaijibucho*) Hachiya of Taiwan colonial government, indicates the ministry's objections against issuing of visas to women who were sent to Southeast Asia as comfort women (Yoshimi 1992: 142-3). However, the ministry failed to prevent any of the actions taken by the military by the time the Japanese military began its extensive construction of comfort stations in China.

Whether this lack of resistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is due to the relative decline of its power within the Japanese government vis-à-vis the military or the ministry's tacit support of the military's action is not clear, however. On the one hand,

records indicate that, by 1938, the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was significantly weakened in relation to the military. A letter sent by the Shanghai Consulate General to the Nanking Consulate General on 5 July 1938 showed that a meeting held by the officials of the ministries of the Army, Navy and Foreign Affairs resulted in the decision that the Nanking Consulate General would lose control over operations of military-related bars, restaurants and brothels (comfort stations) (Yoshimi 1992: 177-80). On the other hand, however, some argue that within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was a rise of a faction that actively supported the policy of the military after the Manchurian crisis (Wakatsuki 1995b: 87-9). The Renovationist faction led by Arita Hachiro 'strongly supported the idea of Japan's special position in east Asia' and proposed that Japan 'should adopt strong measures toward China' (Usui 1973: 147). Because this line of policy was quite similar to the one held by the military, it is quite possible that it was not the loss of power of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that made the ministry ineffective in opposing the actions taken by the military but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in fact in support of the military.

As for the colonial governments that ruled Korea and Taiwan, Yoshimi concludes that these governments were involved in the recruitment of comfort women in one way or another. In both Korea and Taiwan, police departments were involved in the recruitment of comfort women. Due to the meager information, Yoshimi admits that it is unclear whether the police departments were directly involved in the recruitment of comfort women or they tacitly supported illegal operations. However, police stations were in charge of issuing emigration visas and they were in the position to gain information on individuals' occupation, family background, purpose of travel. Thus, Yoshimi concludes that the police departments were either supporting the recruitment of comfort women or liable for occupational negligence (Yoshimi 1994: 93-4).

In sum, the military faced a need to deal with its internal contradictions arising from reliance on violence as a basis for soldier discipline. Because of the beliefs on male

sexuality which were widely shared by military officials, the only solution to deal with the internal contradiction and keep soldiers from rebelling against their commanders was to give them women. This policy was supported in two ways. First, the state ideology helped abuse people from colonized areas, women, in particular. Second, this policy saw no explicit objections from non-military actors within the Japanese government. Combined with the lack of democratic checks by the people on actions taken by the government due to the lack of democratic institutions and extensive censorship, the environment was favorable for the military to institutionalize the comfort women system using mostly women from Japanese colonies.<sup>(27)</sup>

### **The International Factors**

The final explanation will focus on the international environment that affected Japan's policy making. In addition to the domestic conditions —beliefs on male sexuality, state ideology, and the structure of decisionmaking within the Japanese state—that worked in favor of establishing comfort women system, Japan's conscious and selective modernization served as a historical backdrop for the need to institutionalize, in this case, internalize (read conceal) extensive rape.

Since the beginning of the Meiji period, the most important goal of the Japanese government was to modernize (read westernize) the Japanese socio-political system which was deemed necessary by government officials to attain equal status with Western powers. In concrete terms, attainment of equal status meant, in part, revision of treaties that gave Western powers unilateral access to Japanese ports and extraterritoriality.

What is relevant here is the issue of extraterritoriality. One of the major reasons why Western powers demanded extraterritoriality in Japan was that they viewed the Japanese legal system as primitive. Thus, the primary concern of foreigners residing in Japan was inhumane criminal punishments. There were other aspects of the Japanese legal system, such as the existence of licensed prostitution, which contradicted the laws of some

Western nations and were deemed offensive in some Western societies. However, it was not until the Maria Luz incident of 1872 that the government realized the laws related to prostitution and sexuality damaged Japan's international reputation.<sup>(28)</sup>

The Maria Luz incident of 1872 linked the existence of brothels and the issue of extraterritoriality. Up until this incident, prostitution was rarely considered morally objectionable in Japan although with the beginning of the Meiji period, government officials were increasingly exposed to Western ideas and these Meiji leaders who were 'eager to demonstrate Japan's "civilized" status to the Western powers' (Garon 1997: 91) began to see licensed prostitution as a sign of backwardness.<sup>(29)</sup> In the Maria Luz incident, a Peruvian boat, Maria Luz, loaded with Chinese 'immigrants' recruited in Macao was shipwrecked off the coast of Yokohama. While the boat was being repaired in Yokohama, an 'immigrant' escaped and sought refuge with the governor of Kanagawa. In the court proceedings, which tried the captain of the ship on the suspicion that he was engaged in a slave trade, the defendant countercharged that the Japanese government had no right to pursue this case because it allowed trafficking of women domestically. The court dismissed the countercharge and all the Chinese slaves were returned home. However, the Japanese government took the Peruvian countercharge seriously and issued the Ordinance Liberating Prostitutes in 1872 (Mahara and Senda 1992: 94-5, Garon 1997: 91). According to this ordinance, prostitutes no longer had to repay their debts to their keepers and were freed from their occupation.

As the text of the Ordinance implies, this policy change did not signify acknowledgment of the individual rights of prostitutes. In this ordinance, prostitutes are equated with 'cows and horses.'<sup>(30)</sup> Moreover, the governments which faced opposition from the owners of brothels, 'searched for ways to satisfy both domestic needs for prostitution (*zaishō ron*) and international calls for protection of human rights (*jinken yōgo ron*)' (Morisaki 1995: 157, translation mine). The implication was that the Japanese government was deeply worried about Western views of Japan as a backward nation in

terms of sexuality-related policies and was willing to make some legal (i.e. formal) changes. At the same time, the government was not willing to make substantial changes in terms of the values that underlay the Japanese sense of sexuality and sex businesses.

Another historical reason why the Japanese government became sensitive to the way it treated issues of the sexuality was the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment in the West due to increasing number of Japanese prostitutes who worked overseas (*karayuki*). This was particularly true in the US because there were many prostitutes among the Japanese who immigrated to the US since the beginning of the Meiji period. This was one factor leading to the rise of the anti-Japanese immigrant movement in the US (Kim 1980: 131). Moreover, after World War I, the deportation of Japanese prostitutes from Siberia, Manila and other cities in Southeast Asia drew the world's attention to Japan's trafficking in women and children. By 1920, the League of Nations took up this issue and agreed to ban trafficking of women and children (Morisaki 1995: 168).

There is no official document that proves that the Japanese government institutionalized rape with such criticisms in its mind (hoping that institutionalization would hide the truth from the eyes of international critiques). It is true, however, that the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in Nanking in December 1937 were widely reported by the foreign press.<sup>(31)</sup> And some argue that the military was so sensitive to the foreign mass media that it established comfort stations to avoid further raping of Chinese women, but closed them in a couple of weeks as a response to a foreign media report (Yang 1995: 24, Kim 1995: 73).

What the above cases indicate is that the system of comfort women is consistent with the Japanese government's historical attitude toward the West: the Japanese government would make formal changes in order to convince the world that Japan was a modern nation. (In the case of comfort women, the military replaced rape with the system of comfort women.) At the same time, however, Japan would maintain the substance of its political and cultural practices. (This meant that, in the case of comfort women, the

Japanese soldiers were continuously allowed to rape women from occupied areas.)

## Conclusion

As I noted in the introduction, the Japanese public lacks sufficient knowledge of the most recent history of its nation, including the issue of comfort women. Forgetting the past, however does not erase elements of continuity in Japanese history. On the contrary, factors that led to the establishment of the system of comfort women, such as beliefs on male sexuality, gender discrimination, and racism still exist in contemporary Japan. It is true that Japan is now democratized and the people are no longer 'subjects' to serve the imperial system. However, even though the political structure has changed quite a bit, values and beliefs shared by the Japanese people have not changed. If values and beliefs are as important as the structure of decisionmaking in determining a nation's public policies, continuity in the Japanese way of thinking on sexuality, gender, and race could lead to abuse of women's bodies again. The collective amnesia is dangerous for it could lead Japan to repeat the crimes of its past.

## Notes

- (16) This belief that controlled prostitution lowers the risk of venereal diseases was widely held by hygiene officials which in turn supported licensed prostitution in the 1920s (Garon 1997: 101).
- (17) In terms of the number of rapes, that the army criminal law had to be revised in 1942 to reduce the penalty for rape indicates that the number actually increased (Utsumi 1997: 34). The article 89 of the military criminal law (promulgated in 1908) stipulated that penalty for stealing properties of citizens of occupied areas which accompanied rape was either lifetime imprisonment or imprisonment of seven years or more and in the case of death occurring from the rape, the penalty would be either death or lifetime imprisonment. However, this law was revised in 1942 and the penalty for raping a woman became imprisonment of one year or more and in case of death due to rape, the penalty was made either lifetime imprisonment or imprisonment of seven years or more (Kasahara 1997: 26).
- (18) In an article Suzuki wrote one year before, she seems to have accepted the official explanation for the recruitment of Korean women. Suzuki asks why young Korean women were made into



comfort women. By relying upon the military doctor Aso's report, Suzuki upholds that 'clean maidens' were needed as a present for the soldiers of the imperial army (Suzuki 1991: 104).

- (19) That abstention leads to physical problems is an incorrect understanding of male physiology. According to Murase, sperms do not build up in male sexual organs but they either die or are absorbed into the body fluid (Murase 1993: 51-60).
- (20) A statement by a former comfort woman, Kurosu Kana, testifies that contrary to the statements of veterans, soldiers were too scared and therefore they were physically unable to have sex (Uetsubo 1977: 174).
- (21) I use this term in quotation marks because even though officers might have thought comfort women kept soldiers happy, it may not necessarily be true for individual soldiers.
- (22) It was only on October 1, 1943 that students were conscripted to join the military. The law which exempted students from conscription (*Zaigaku chōshū eiki kankei hōki*, 1927) stipulated that students who were enrolled in secondary (or equivalent) schools and above are exempt from conscription until the student reached age 27 (this was revised to age 26 in 1939) (Hikosaka 1984:152, Oe 1982: 65).
- (23) The government decided to mobilize women over 14 years old in September 1943 and adopted the Outline for Fortifying Women's Voluntary Service Corps System in March 1944. (The actual order which implemented this policy was issued in August 1944) (Suzuki 1997: 178-9).
- (24) A collaborationist Hani Setsuko's statement in 1943 proves this point. Hani complained about the unwillingness of educated women to work outside of their homes and recommended that all women of working ages be mobilized (Suzuki 1997: 88-92). *Fujinkai no Dōkō* published in 1943 also observes that 'the mobilization of women is not done very well' (quoted in Suzuki 1997: 177, translation mine).
- (25) Kim Il Myon and others maintain that this effect —destruction of Korean women's reproductive ability— was intended by the Japanese government as part of 'genocide' policy (1977: 70, 84; 1976: 14; 1980: 224, Matsui 1993: 254, Suzuki 1997: 52). It is a well-known fact that Japan adopted an assimilationist policy in its colonies. Yet, whether the Japanese government intended to destroy not just the local culture but the people themselves needs to be examined carefully. My contention is that it is unlikely that the Japanese invented system of comfort women to destroy Korean population. Theoretically, genocide by way of rape is conceivable in two ways. First, as in the case of Bosnia, rape could be used to implant babies of the dominant race in the wombs of enemy women. Second, as actually happened with many former comfort women, multiple rape for a long duration of time could result in loss of reproductive abilities. However, it is unlikely that the Japanese military used Korean women with the purpose of eventual genocide for two reasons. First, testimonies indicate that babies born from comfort women and fathered by Japanese soldiers did not receive enough care and were often left to die. Second, it is unlikely that military leaders had a good knowledge of the effect of multiple rape on women's reproductive ability.

(26) Hazing involved both psychological such as 'revealing personal secrets, verbal insult, sarcasm (*hiniku*), insult (*iyami*)'. Physical violence ranged from standing still for a long term to beating with variety of objects. Other examples of hazing were 'borrowing' money, cigarette and other luxury items (without returning them) and making others pay for trips to movie theaters and spa (Oe 1982: 89).

(27) Hicks notes that despite the presence of ample sexual services around the US bases, the reason why military prostitution is not formalized is because 'public opinion would not acknowledge their need'(Hicks 1994: 83).

Mahara and Senda also note that the reasons why institutionalized military prostitution did not exist in the West after World War I was because of the social movements against such policy (Mahara and Senda 1992: 97). Yoshimi also states that lack of social movements, public opinion and parliament that protects women's rights led to establishment of military prostitution in Japan (Yoshimi 1995: 204).

The lack of public opposition may also help explain why Nazis were free to establish comfort stations similar to those of Japan's.

(28) In fact, foreigners who resided in Japan were often customers of Japanese brothels and prostitutes (Fujime 1997: 90).

(29) Traditionally, Japanese regarded sex and sexuality as part of the natural state of human lives. With the introduction of Confucianist ideas in the Edo period, however, the idea of sexuality began to change. For example, double standards for male and female sexuality were introduced based on the Confucianist belief that women are inferior to men and therefore only men could enjoy freedom of sexual activities. The modern morality about sex was, however, only shared by members of the urban upper class during the Edo period, but the idea permeated throughout rural Japan during the Meiji period when the Meiji government adopted policies to regulate people's sexuality (Ishikawa and Noguchi 1974: 88-90).

(30) The text reads that 'prostitutes and geisha are those who have lost rights over their bodies and thus are no different from cows and horses. It would not be reasonable to demand the return of goods from a cow or horse' (Garon 1997: 91).

(31) See, for example, a report by H. J. Timperley published in the *Manchester Guardian* (Timperley 1973).

## 女性、国家、および戦争 — 『従軍慰安婦』をめぐって

〈要 約〉

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本稿は、なぜ日本が第2次世界大戦中に「従軍慰安婦」制度を創設し、女性の身体を蹂躪したのかという問いに答えを投げかけることを目的とする。この論文では、まず先の戦争は軍部の独走によるものといった、今日の日本人が一般的に信じている戦争の原因説明によらず、「従軍慰安婦」創設の説明を個人的要因および国家の構造と国家により信奉されていたイデオロギーなどに求める。さらに、当時日本政府のおかれていた国際的状況も勘案する。すなわち本稿では「従軍慰安婦」問題に対し、日本政治および政策決定における多様な側面を検証するアプローチをとる。本稿のまず第一部では、当時社会全体に信じられていた「おとこらしさ」の神話について述べ、次に国家の構造と国家内の支配的イデオロギーについて説明し、最後に国際環境がどう「従軍慰安婦」問題に影響したかを分析する。