

“Comfort Women” All Signed a Contract of Agreement —Impact of the Ramseyer Article

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Dear Japanese Readers

Mark Ramseyer

It was an abnormal year.

I am an ordinary university professor. I am not a professor who writes books and papers that readers willingly read but a very average professor who writes plenty of what nobody reads. Once in a while I would write a paper read by a few but such papers are few and between.

What happened to me between January and March of this year (2021) was a series of bizarre events I had never experienced before in my life. I contributed a simple paper, of about eight pages (in English), last October, which, as with other papers I had written, did not attract attention. While I felt disappointed at the time, it was nothing new and, without being much thought, I set about writing the next paper.

On February 1, however, this paper fell into the hands of the Korean media and caused a sensation. Some dogmatic groups of people viewed the paper as having contempt for Korea and, among Korean Americans, some attacked me, saying that I was hateful of Korea. Still others emailed me and demanded that I apologize and yet others demanded that the journal editor retract my paper and even demanded that the President of Harvard University fire me. This was a two-month period of chaotic “conflict within academia,” where not only Koreans but also American specialists in Japanese history and literature demanded either an apology or retraction.

In the 1930s, the Japanese government at the time looked to expand the domestic, state-regulated prostitution system to overseas battlefields. While prostitution-related work on

battlefields was certainly more dangerous than that in Japan, it paid better for that reason- and there were poor women from mainland Japan and the Korean Peninsula who desired the high wage. They sought employment at comfort stations through contracts with the terms of service for, generally, two years. All sorts of documents from those days point to this fact.

About 40 years after the end of WWII, a man called Yoshida Seiji wrote a book titled *My War Crimes*, in which he claimed that he went to the Korean Peninsula together with military personnel to “hunt for comfort women.” Subsequently, a few elderly women from South Korea in a similar vein claimed that they had been taken by force to comfort stations by the Japanese army. Thereafter, they began suing the Japanese government. One of these women stated that she worked at a comfort station to make money. Another said that she did not herself want to work as a prostitute but became a comfort woman because her parents forced her. Both of these women later claimed that the Japanese army took them by force. Many of the women who claimed to have been forced to work as prostitutes and sued the Japanese government were residents of a nursing home for the elderly operated by an extremely corrupt politician.

Naturally, the Japanese army never had any need to forcibly round up prostitutes nor the time to do so. Yoshida himself later admitted that what he wrote in his book was fictitious. Furthermore, there is no evidence of so called comfort women hunts in official documents from those days.

These points show that no forced abduction by Japanese government personnel (including police and military personnel) of comfort women occurred anywhere on the Korean Peninsula. In arguments among academics, however, the clearer the facts, the more heated the attacks. I think that is exactly what happened to me.

Dear Japanese readers, please do not be fooled by claims of the so called comfort women.

Introduction

Ramseyer Bashing by “Anti-Democrats” is a Return to the Nazi-era

The comfort women all signed a contract, an agreement. It may have been a verbal agreement at times or an exchange of written contracts at other times but they could not work as comfort women without a contract or an agreement. What function did a contract serve between a comfort woman and a business owner? This was clearly stated within the paper “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War”⁽¹⁾ written by Professor Mark Ramseyer, Harvard Law School, and published in the *International Review of Law and Economics*. This fundamentally overturns the notion of “forceful abduction of comfort women” and categorizing comfort women as “sex slaves”. (I wrote a complete Japanese translation of the paper and include it at the end of the book.)

I regard Mark Ramseyer’s paper as his “Operation Tomodachi.” [This last sentence is unclear in English. Perhaps it could be something very simple like: “I have never met Professor Ramseyer, but write this book in support.”] Because of the publication of his paper, he has been subjected to an unprecedented level of vile behavior by the Korean media and by some American historians. At the same time, though, his paper provided an opportunity to see the issue from an entirely different perspective—for those who up to now were not interested in this issue as well as for those who were interested but only held the mainstream narrative.

At present, the dismal state of affairs in Japan concerning the comfort women issue could be comparable to that of the Tohoku region immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The following is the established international narrative, including South Korea: From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese army forcibly abducted as many as 200,000 Korean women aged between 11 and 20, forced them to be sex slaves and massacred 75% of them to hide the evidence.⁽²⁾ In fact, an American history textbook for high school students published by McGraw Hill contains wording to this effect.⁽³⁾

Japan and the Japanese have been convicted in the global court of opinion over the comfort women issue--a grave offense.

Addendum 1 to the 1996 Coomaraswamy Report says that the Japanese army made 200,000 Korean women sex slaves. A former comfort woman from North Korea claimed

that a Japanese soldier said, “It's easy to kill you all, easier than killing dogs,” and “Since those Korean girls are crying because they have not eaten, boil the human flesh and make them eat it.”⁽⁴⁾

The Addendum influenced comfort women reporting in the 1998 McDougall Report. In the Addendum, the Japanese army is said to have established “rape centres,” wherein women aged between 11 and 20, taken from all over Asia, were raped several times a day, and killed 140,000 of them, for which the Japanese army is held legally responsible.⁽⁵⁾

For this reason, Japanese children living abroad have sometimes faced bullying and discrimination.

This is exactly like the Tohoku region immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake. What is different is that there is no sign of recovery and that the situation is worsening, not improving.

The origin of current circumstances is the Kono Statement, but even well before this Statement, it was known that the outrageous statements were easily refuted by primary sources. As Hata Ikuhiko pointed out in his book, *Ianfu Mondai no Kessan (Closing of the Comfort Women Issue)*, Kono Yohei, the then Chief Cabinet Secretary, ignored primary sources.⁽⁶⁾

It is becoming more and more clear that this Statement is a lie that disregards the facts. Recently, with the publication of *Diary of a Japanese Military Brothel Manager* as a new reference, *Comfort Women of the Empire* by Park Yu-ha and *Anti-Japan Tribalism* by Lee Young-hoon, there are now numerous sources that show the realities of the comfort women and comfort stations.

Based on detailed investigation and using multiple calculation methods, Lee Young-hoon says that the number of Korean comfort women was about 3,600.⁽⁷⁾ What a difference from 200,000!

The belief that comfort women were between 11 and 20 years of age has no foundation. For one thing, the minimum age those days to engage in prostitution in Japan was 18 in mainland Japan, 17 in Korea and 16 in Taiwan. Eleven is really nothing more than fantasy.

It is likely that there were women who were deceived or threatened into working as comfort women, but according to Park Yu-ha's *Comfort Women of the Empire*, those who deceived or threatened them were not Japanese army soldiers but unscrupulous Korean recruiters.⁽⁸⁾

As Park points out, at comfort stations, those who used violence or forced comfort women to perform sex were mostly unscrupulous Korean recruiters⁽⁹⁾.

Indeed, the idea itself, that the comfort women were "sex slaves," is ludicrous. Women made dozens of times more money than commissioned Japanese military officers, were provided with lodging and substantial meals and went out to town on days off to go shopping and to see movies.⁽¹⁰⁾ Furthermore, they could return home after finishing their contracted term of service of two years. For licensed prostitutes in mainland Japan, the contracted term was six years.⁽¹¹⁾

Lee Young-hoon points out in his video, "Comfort Women Controversy: (1) Did they really return home with empty hands?" that, in many cases, comfort women from Daegu, Korea returned home on the expiration of their contract and bought real estate.⁽¹²⁾ In a sense, they were social climbers, starting from the bottom and climbing up the social ladder toward the top of the social pyramid.

That the Japanese army massacred 75% of the comfort women, a "fact" according to the McDougall Report, to destroy evidence has not been substantiated, even to the present day. This "fact" is based a comment concocted by Diet member Arafune Seijuro to supporters in his home constituency. Absolutely no explanation was given as to why this fairy tale should be considered evidence.

Japan and the Japanese are not guilty of this crime. The comfort women issue constitutes a rare but very tangible example of a false accusation based on flawed history, but what is even more absurd is that attempts to clear up this false accusation based on fact-finding is met with heated resistance.

South Korea, the UN, the U.S. and even Japanese scholars work closely to hinder attempts to uncover truth. Rather than offer counterarguments by giving evidence, the opposition smears and bashes scholars pursuing the truth as rightists, revisionists, racists and hate-mongers, thereby shutting down opportunities for rational discussion.

What provided the most dramatic and symbolic manifestation of this was the campaign demanding that Ramseyer's article, "Contracting for sex in the Pacific War," be retracted. The critics neither pointed out the flaws in facts nor offered counterarguments. Instead, they merely demanded his head on a stick.

Furthermore, they sent out floods of hate mail to Harvard University and the editors of the *International Review of Law and Economics*, the journal that published his paper. Not only did the mob demand retraction of his paper but they demanded that Harvard University dismiss Ramseyer. The howling mob relied on sheer numbers to marginalize Ramseyer and pressure him to "shut up."

No matter the mob's reasoning or logic, they have willfully and knowingly suppressed someone's right to speech and smothered free inquiry. Ramseyer's attackers behave as if they are in the right and have acted to quash freedom of speech and academic freedom based on their "right". By the mob's abuse of social media, with the goal of forcing Ramseyer into a corner, they well-deserve the dubious distinction of being modern day Nazis.

Ramseyer's war is our war. Our war is Ramseyer's war. Lies must be exposed. Errors and wrongs must be corrected. And democracy based on freedom of speech must be protected to the end.

Notes

(1) J. Mark Ramseyer "Contracting for sex in the Pacific War." *International Review of Law and Economics*, 65 (2021) 105971

(2) Asian Women's Fund ed. "Addendum 1 to the Coomaraswamy Report" "Report on the mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime" (in Japanese) p. 17, <https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0031.pdf>

(3) "Correction of comfort women description including 'massacre of comfort women to cover up the operation' in U.S. textbook refused by publisher" (in Japanese) <https://newsphere.jp/world-report/20150116-2/>

(4) Asian Women's Fund ed. "McDougall Report" "Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict" (in Japanese) p.17, <https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0199.pdf>

(5) Asian Women's Fund ed. "An Analysis of the Legal Liability of the Government of Japan for 'Comfort Stations' Established during the Second World War" (in Japanese) <https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0199.pdf>

(6) Hata Ikuhiko *Ianfu Mondai no Kessan (Closing the Comfort Women Issue)* (in Japanese) PHP Institute, 2016, pp. 33 - 47

(7) Hori Kazuo, Kimura Kan transl. supv. *Biruma/Shingaporu no Jugun Ianjo* (Japanese translation of *Diary of a Japanese Military Brothel Manager*) http://nadesiko-action.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/comort_women_diary.pdf (nadesiko-action.org), Lee Young-hoon *Anti-Japan Tribalism* (Japanese translation) Bungeishunju, 2019, pp. 268 - 269, "Comfort Women of the Japanese Army" Rhee Syngman TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY&t=1711s

(8) Park Yu-ha *Comfort Women of the Empire* Asahi Shimbun Publications, 2014, pp. 28 - 34, 46

(9) *Comfort Women of the Empire*, pp. 105 - 110

(10) Asian Women's Fund ed. *Collection of Materials Relating to the Wartime Comfort Women Issue: Government of Japan Survey Vol. 5*, United States Office of War Information "Japanese Prisoner of War Information Report" No. 49, October 1, 1944, pp. 113 - 118 https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0051_5.pdf

(11) "Contracting for sex in the Pacific War"

(12) Lee Young-hoon "Comfort Women Controversy: (1) Did they really return home with empty hands?" Rhee Syngman TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTV_f_YyERk&t=5s

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Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War (complete Japanese translation) J. Mark Ramseyer

**Mark Ramseyer’s Video Message to the Urgently Assembled Symposium
“International Historical Controversy over Professor Ramseyer’s Essay”**

Postscript