

Part I: Seeking the “Truth of Comfort Women”

Chapter 1: Nature of the Article “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War”

(1) Is criticism that “Ramseyer denies the involvement of the Japanese government and the Japanese Army in the comfort women system” reasonable?

Let us make clear what the paper “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” essentially says (please refer to the full text of the paper presented later in this book).

Simply quoting and then commenting on the paper is not sufficient to make clear points. Therefore, along the way, I will comment on the criticisms about this paper that were often raised by groups such as Fight for Justice, a Japanese civic group.

Critical statements made by UCLA’s Michael Chwe and others include: “Ramseyer denies the involvement of the Japanese government and the Japanese army with the comfort women system.”

Ramseyer’s paper states the Japanese government’s involvement with the comfort station system in the 1930s and 1940s:

“The reams of Japanese government documents about the comfort stations from the 1930s and early 1940s make clear that the government established the institution to fight venereal disease. To be sure, it had other reasons too. It wanted to reduce rapes. ... [Omitted] Primarily, however, the military set up the stations to fight venereal disease: by definition, a “comfort station” was a brothel that had agreed to follow the military’s stringent sanitation and contraceptive procedures.

“The Japanese military did not need additional prostitutes (beyond licensed and unlicensed prostitutes); there were plenty. Prostitutes have followed armies everywhere, and prostitutes have followed the Japanese army in Asia. Rather, the Japanese military needed “healthy” prostitutes. During the Japanese army’s Siberian expedition in 1918, Japanese commanders found large numbers of their soldiers

incapacitated by venereal disease. As the army expanded across China in the 1930s, it found that the local prostitutes there were also heavily infected.”(page 5)

As mentioned above, Ramseyer clearly pointed out Japanese government and Japanese army involvement. Comfort stations were established for the purpose of preventing Japanese soldiers from being infected with venereal diseases and, at the same time, preventing soldiers from raping local women in a warzone.

Buying sexual services in places other than comfort stations was prohibited by military orders. A certain Japanese group says that Ramseyer denies involvement of the Japanese army, which is a malicious and strawman argument. This form of argument is a deception, which claims that something said was in fact not at all mentioned. The debater interprets the false claim to fit his own argument and uses it as a basis for attack.

The U.S. and Korea also established “comfort stations”

I would like to make it clear here that all armies, in all ages and places, have only three options concerning their soldiers’ sexual activity in warzones: ignoring rapes, ignoring prostitution unaddressed or establishing military brothels to control soldiers’ sexual activity.

The former Soviet Union did not establish military brothels and their soldiers perpetrated all possible acts of sexual violence in the areas they occupied. Soviet soldiers are said to have killed 10% of the women they raped, which does not include women who later killed themselves. This is a “crime against humanity,” a serious war crime, in addition to an issue of “women’s human rights.”

The U.S. Army ignored their soldiers’ use of paid sexual services, which caused a spread of venereal diseases, general corruption of public morals and social unrest. The mayor of Le Havre, France lamented the U.S. Army’s failure to set up military brothels and called it “irresponsible”.⁽²³⁾ We know all too well that American troops in Japan during the Occupation spread venereal diseases and caused serious social problems. Isn’t this clearly a violation of “women’s human rights”?

A surprising fact has been revealed recently. The U.S., which has scathingly denounced the Japanese army comfort women system and went as far as to adopt a House

resolution condemning present-day Japan, established military brothels in Italy, Morocco, Algeria and Liberia.⁽²⁴⁾ That is, the U.S. Army also regulated soldiers' sexual activity with military brothels because "necessity has no law". Gay McDougall, who compiled the McDougall Report that was mentioned earlier, should really judge her own country first as to whether it committed "crime against humanity."

The Nazi German military used private brothels under military control where ever they went and when none were available, they set up military brothels, in many cases, forcibly mobilizing women .⁽²⁵⁾

South Korea, which has long cried to the world that the establishment of Japanese comfort stations is a "women's human rights issue," set up brothels after WWII for use by the U.S. Army. The South Korean government was sued recently by Koreans who were comfort women at that time.

Also, during the Vietnam War, the armed forces of the Republic of Korea were involved in the management of a brothel in Saigon. However, it was not exclusively for Korean troops as non-Koreans were allowed access to the brothel.

During the Vietnam War, what the U.S. Army saw as more of a problem than prostitution was that high-ranking South Korean army officers were selling goods on the black market, thereby damaging the Vietnamese economy. That is, the US Army made the same choice as the Japanese army. Documentation of this resides at the U.S. National Archives Annex.⁽²⁶⁾

Simultaneously, the Korean army in Vietnam committed acts of genocide and started the *lai dai han* issue, which goes well above a violation of "women's human rights." McDougall should look into this as well, as a "crime against humanity," and demand South Korea compensate its victims.

The Japanese, German and U.S. militaries established military brothels to deal with "sex in the warzone." We should not avert our eyes from the fact that militaries that did not do this threatened the life and safety of residents in occupied areas with rape, the spread of venereal diseases and prostitution. In particular, the Soviet army's "rape of a million women" after the fall of Berlin and the subsequent spread of venereal diseases is a blatant "crime against humanity."

Incidentally, in 2013, Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a former professor at Chuo University, rebuked a comment made by the then Osaka Mayor Hashimoto Toru on the comfort women system, that “Other countries were doing something similar.” Yoshimi claimed that, “No other nation systematically set up comfort stations as military facilities. The comfort woman system of Japan was distinctive.” As clearly demonstrated by what I have pointed out up to now, narrow-minded Yoshimi is plain wrong.⁽²⁷⁾

(2) On the criticism that “the article confuses the comfort women system with licensed/unlicensed prostitution”

The point of this comment is that “there certainly were women who were in the sex trade in those days but he does not understand that “prostitution” is different from the comfort woman system.”

Let’s see what the article actually says:

“Although the comfort stations hired their prostitutes on contracts that resembled those used by the Japanese licensed brothels on some dimensions, the differences were important. To leave the countryside for work at a Tokyo brothel, a woman wanted some confidence that she would earn wages high enough to offset the risks and harshness of the job, and the hit to her reputation. To leave for a brothel on the military front, she incurred different vastly greater risks. Most obviously, she faced all the dangers of war – whether fighting, bombing, or the rampant disease on the front. ... [Omitted] Translating the Tokyo brothel contracts to the front, in other words, required changes. The most basic contractual difference: a much shorter contractual term. Reflecting all these risks that followed from the brothel’s location on the front, the contracts usually specified only two-year terms. Recall that the Japanese contracts typically provided six-year terms, and the Korean contracts three-year terms. Some Korean comfort women in Burma worked on contracts as short as six months to a year.” (page 6)

Ramseyer had already described the Japanese systems of licensed and unlicensed prostitution in “Indentured Prostitution in Imperial Japan: Credible Commitments in the Commercial Sex Industry” in 1991 and bases his current article on his previous writing. He is clearly not confusing the comfort women with common licensed/unlicensed

prostitutes. His article is unparalleled in terms of scrupulous discussion of the prewar Japanese sex industry based on statistical data, types of contracts and judicial records. I doubt critics can even match Ramseyer's knowledge in this particular area.

(3) On the criticism that “the article denies the possibility of women being deceived or ignores cases of deception”

This criticism, which is similar to number (2), suggests that Ramseyer confuses women who voluntarily became comfort women and those who were deceived by recruiters or parents.

Ramseyer, however, stated clearly that a considerable number of women were deceived and saw it as a problem, as shown below. Here, Ramseyer discloses the fact that Japanese scholars have known this but have kept silent.

That is, those who became comfort women were deceived or threatened, not by the Japanese army but unscrupulous Korean recruiters.⁽²⁸⁾

“Korea had a problem distinct from any in Japan. It had a large corps of professional labor recruiters, and those recruiters had a history of deceptive tactics. In 1935, Korean police records counted 247 Japanese and 2,720 Korean recruiters. ... [Omitted] In the late 1930s, Korean newspapers reported a ring of 11 recruiters who attracted over 50 young women into prostitution. ... [Omitted]

“Note, however, what this problem was not. It was not that the government – either the Korean or the Japanese government– forced women into prostitution. It was not that the Japanese army worked with fraudulent recruiters. It was not even that recruiters focused on the army's comfort stations. Instead, the problem involved domestic Korean recruiters who had been tricking young women into working at brothels for decades.” (page 5)

Readers may find this contradictory to his statement, that women signed a contract to become comfort women. Let me give a follow up explanation. Women being deceived here mainly refers to the stage up to delivery of women to recruiters by their legal guardians.

First, a fact that must be taken into account is that to become a comfort woman, five documents in addition to the contract were required: a letter of consent, a prostitute license, a personal background report, a seal certificate and a copy of a family register. The letter of consent had blanks for the woman and her legal guardian to sign and affix a seal and the personal background report had blanks for the “reason for the decision to practice the prostitute trade” and a “separate debt amount.”⁽²⁹⁾ If the contract was not in writing but by an oral promise, these documents could not have been prepared without an “agreement.” Furthermore, unless these documents were presented, women could not obtain a travel permit to go abroad where the comfort stations were located.

Even so, there was still a possibility that unscrupulous Korean recruiters deceived women and falsely passed themselves off as their legal guardians to officials to prepare the necessary documents. There were Korean recruiters who engaged in forgery to make a living.⁽³⁰⁾ These are the facts that Ramseyer noted in excerpt given above.

Nonetheless, comfort women, whether they agreed to become a comfort women or were tricked into becoming one, were all given as stipulated in the contract, namely an up-front advance, a defined term of service, a share of the food and lodging expenses, price, division of gross earnings between the house master and the woman and a share of medical expenses.

The terms of service, price, division of gross earnings and medical expenses were determined by the Japanese army. Let me call the readers’ attention to this point.

Comfort women all affixed a seal to a contract

Korean comfort women at the Myitkyina comfort station in Myanmar, which will be described later, say that they were coaxed by recruiters into becoming comfort women but still signed an individual contract.⁽³¹⁾

Nevertheless, as critics say, it is true that the women themselves had different levels of understanding of the contract in each case, even when they gave consent.

Come to think of it, I suppose just about the same applies when we make a contract today. That is, we do not necessarily have a complete understanding of the contract and come to a complete agreement in order to sign and affix a seal to the contract.

In addition, a considerable amount of up-front money was presented and, if the woman saw this, it would be difficult to say that the woman had absolutely no knowledge about what was involved. Women would likely know that an ordinary factory worker or employee would not be given such a large advance.

Furthermore, their documents underwent many checks at ports, on railways, until they arrived at their comfort station—there were many opportunities for these women to realize that they had been deceived. Even so, a possibility remains that recruiters deceived and threatened them and took them to comfort stations. Or, even if they had realized what was in store for them, they would have thought that nothing could have been done about it.

One possibility is that the women may have been able to tell authorities that they had been deceived and ask them to let themselves go back to their parents but it is quite unlikely that any woman was capable of doing so. It is true that women had difficulty exercising their right to say no. Note, however, that this assumes that women were deceived.

We should not forget first and foremost that a deception like this was a criminal act in those days. As Ramseyer points out in another part of the article, the Japanese army had issued notices such as *Gun'ianjo jugyofuto boshu ni kansuru ken* (“Regarding the Recruitment of Military Comfort Women”) telling police and other authorities to reinforce crackdowns on deceptive recruiters who deceive or kidnap women.⁽³²⁾ That is, Korean recruiters were deceiving women, which was illegal even based on the law in those days and in violation of the Japanese army notice. Ramseyer emphasized that this is the essence of the problem.

The position taken by the critics is the claim that “the Japanese authorities were aware that recruiters were committing dishonest acts to gather up women and they were completely in cahoots,” which is patently false based on primary sources like the one mentioned above. The official view of the Government of Japan is that “Forceful taking away of comfort women by the Japanese military and government authorities could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan was able to identify” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan).

Incidentally, Yoshimi claims to have been “discovered” the Japanese Army notification mentioned earlier. Hata Ikuhiko, the author of *Comfort Women and Sex in the Battle Zone*, says that the document was widely known and claiming “discovery” is not only wrong but in poor taste.⁽³³⁾

(4) On the criticism that “the Ramseyer article wrongly applies game theory to the comfort women system”

Chwe and others have pointed this out in their criticisms.

Ramseyer notes that the comfort women system can be reasonably explained by game theory:

“The contracts themselves followed basic game theoretic principles of “credible commitments.” Brothel owners (not the military) hired the bulk of the new prostitutes, and hired most of them from Japan and Korea. Realizing the incentive brothel owners had to exaggerate their future earnings, women wanted a large portion of their pay upfront. Brothels agreed. Knowing that they were headed for the front, women wanted a maximum service length. Brothels agreed. In turn, realizing the incentive the women had to shirk within their unmonitored quarters, the brothels wanted terms that gave women an incentive to work hard. The women agreed. Together, the women and brothels concluded indenture contracts that coupled a large advance with one or two year terms. Until the last months of the war, the women served their terms or paid off their debts early, and returned home.” (page 8)

What Ramseyer discusses here, in plain language, is how people involved in this system in those days compared cost and benefit before concluding a “contract.”

The up-front advance, hours of service and indenture contract were determined as a result of a complicated mix of intentions of the parties concerned. The article can be interpreted as an attempt to explain this mix of intentions.

Those who take the position that the comfort women system itself was “absolutely evil” from a viewpoint of modern thinking and willfully ignore reasonable explanations would find them unacceptable.

As described above, however, comfort women themselves may have been deceived. However, there were doubtlessly certain arrangements made between the women's parents and the recruiters. Both sides decided on the up-front advance and terms of service.

Ramseyer discusses how those arrangements were developed and how they functioned—he does not delve into morality.

We know that there are those who use emotion and cannot detach themselves from the comfort women issue. Some will cry, “People in the past did such a cruel thing because they had little awareness of human rights and were rough. This is unacceptable. Condemning them is all that should be done.”

However, Lee Young-hoon made clear in his video, “Comfort Women Controversy: (1) Did they really return home with empty hands?” on Syngman Rhee School TV, quoting *Diary of a Japanese Military Brothel Manager*, that many Korean comfort women brought home a lot of money. ⁽³⁴⁾

It may not have been an overwhelming success for all of them but certainly most women did become the tragic stereotype envisioned by critics--rather most conformed to the Ramseyer model.

Game theory is outside of my specialty. Readers looking for detailed explanation are referred to the comments linked in the Notes. ⁽³⁵⁾

(5) On the criticism that “the Ramseyer article has a quotation error”

The Korean media reported that the article made an erroneous quote, which has been pointed out by Jeannie Suk Gersen and acknowledged by Ramseyer. I could not find the error in question.

Those who have contributed to high-level academic journals understand that the editorial board makes various comments by pointing out errors, requesting corrections and giving advice. Editorial board comments could add up to 10 or 20 such comments. Some of the comments should be seen as differences of views. However, papers with

findings that significantly advance the academic field and are original in concept will be published subject to modifications according to the editorial board.

The point is whether an article, on one hand, as a whole, has academic value that makes it worthy of publication and, on the other hand, the number of trivial errors. Nevertheless, those who try to suppress Ramseyer's free and principled speech are demanding retraction of the article because of trivial errors. This is nothing less than abnormal.

One thing I found that could be an error is on page 4: Ramseyer translated Osaki's *oyakata* as a woman's "owner". If it had been "owner of her brothel," for example, it may not have been pointed out as an error but it seems like a trifling problem to me anyway.

For example, Amy Stanley, Hannah Shepherd, Chatani Sayaka and David Ambaras, who said that the article is "A Case for Retraction on Grounds of Academic Misconduct" claim that the article contains study misconduct because Mun Ok-ju, who worked as a comfort woman in Myanmar and had a high income, drew most of her income as tips and not payments from the comfort station owner.⁽³⁶⁾ I wonder if they thought about what they said.

I suppose that they are making an issue of where the income came from, that the women stuck to a contract but with "tips" as income. Is there any need to make a distinction? This group of scholars made an unbelievably horrible accusation. In any case, the fact is that Mun had so much money that she could buy a diamond in Rangoon.

(6) On denunciation that article does not address Japan's war responsibility

The article does not refer to Japan's war responsibility. Neither does it describe the responsibility of the Japanese government or Japanese army for establishing the comfort women system. This is because the focus of the article was not these things. As explained in (4), the purpose of the article is analysis of "contracts" in the comfort women system.

If any reader who closely read and understood Ramseyer's article thinks that "Japan has war responsibility and responsibility for establishing the comfort women system," then

that is up to the reader. That reader has probably taken various historical themes into consideration to reach such a conclusion, which really do not impinge on the core points of Ramseyer's article.

Having said that, if someone thinks that "Japan has war responsibility and responsibility for establishing the comfort women system," , rather than just leaving it at that, it would be worthwhile to reexamine exactly what responsibility Japan had and how its responsibility compares with that of other countries and their militaries. This exercise would be useful in that one's own common sense and knowledge is challenged and one is exposed to new knowledge.

Personally, I have absolutely no objection to Japan's broad thinking stated Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in 2015: "We will engrave in our hearts the past, when the dignity and honour of many women were severely injured during wars in the 20th century. Upon this reflection, Japan wishes to be a country always at the side of such women's injured hearts. Japan will lead the world in making the 21st century an era in which women's human rights are not infringed upon."

Notes

(23) Mary Louise Roberts *Heishi to Sekkusu* (Japanese translation of *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*) (Akashi Shoten, 2015), pp. 9 - 10

(24) "Vuic: Prostitution and the U.S. military" Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 9, 2021, https://richmond.com/news/vuic-prostitution-and-the-u-s-military/article_1bd36741-1244-5aaa-9d2d-ff71c9ec0d40.html

(25) Christa Paul *Nachizumu to Kyosei Baishun* (Japanese translation by Iemin Keiko, Ikenaga Kiyomi et al. of *Zwangsprostitution. Staatlich errichtete Bordelle im Nationalsozialismus*) (Akashi Shoten, 1996) see Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

(26) "Yamaguchi Noriyuki's 'comfort women for the Korean Army' article suspected of forgery: full text of the U.S. public record" (in Japanese) *Daily Shincho* <https://www.dailyshincho.jp/article/2017/10310800/?all=1>

(27) "Japan's comfort women system peculiar: historian criticizes Hashimoto" (in Japanese) Kyodo News, June 4, 2013, <http://www.shikoku-np.co.jp/national/political/20130604000436>

(28) As I said earlier, Park Yu-ha also drew the same conclusion. *Comfort Women of the Empire*, pp. 28 - 34. The following YouTube content is informative regarding this point.

“Human Trafficking Market in the Colony Korea Seen in the Ha Yun-myeon case”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY&t=1711s

(29) Asian Women’s Fund ed. *Collection of Materials Relating to the Wartime Comfort Women Issue: Government of Japan Survey* Vol. 1, *Jikyoku riyo fujo yukai higijiken ni kansuru ken* (Regarding the case of suspected kidnapping of women taking advantage of the situation) February 7, 1938, p. 35 https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0051_1.pdf

(30) Lee Young-hoon “Comfort Women of the Japanese Army” Rhee Syngman TV
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY

(31) Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report, United States Office of War Information Psychological Warfare Team https://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0051_5.pdf

(32) *Gun’ianjo jugyofuto boshu ni kansuru ken* (Regarding the Recruitment of Military Comfort Women) Communication from adjutant to head staff officers of North China Area Army and Central China Expeditionary Army, Riku shi mitsu dai 745 go (China Area Army, Secret Document #745), dated March 4, 1938, Yoshimi Yoshiaki ed. *Jugun Ianfu Shiryo-shu* (A Collection of Documents on Military Comfort Women) (Otsuki Shoten, 1992), pp. 105 - 106

(33) Hata Ikuhiko *Ianfu Mondai no Kessan* (The Bottom Line of the Comfort Women Issue) pp. 44 - 45

(34) Lee Young-hoon *Anti-Japan Tribalism* 273 - 281, Rhee Syngman TV
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY&t=1711s

(35) Those who doubt if game theory, in particular, applies are unavoidably referred to “*Geishogi Keiyaku – Seisangyo ni Okeru ‘Shinjirareru Komittomento’*” in the second subsection. This is a Japanese translation by Professor Sono Hiroo, School of Law, Hokkaido University of “Indentured Prostitution in Imperial Japan: Credible Commitments in the Commercial Sex Industry,” *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* Vol. 7, No. 1, Oxford University Press. Above all, the explanation about “credible commitment” on pp. 603 - 607 in Translator’s Postscript is easy to understand.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY 2. “*Geishogi Keiyaku – Seisangyo ni Okeru ‘Shinjirareru Komittomento,’*” *The Hokkaido Law Review* Vol. 44

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_1srirqsY&t=1711s

(36) “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War”: The Case for Retraction on Grounds of Academic Misconduct

Amy Stanley, Hannah Shepherd, Sayaka Chatani, David Ambaras and Chelsea Szendi Schieder

<https://apjff.org/2021/5/ConcernedScholars.html#munok-ju>