

Chapter 7: The “Comfort Women”: Japan’s Sexual Slave Culture and an Insult to Japan

“DURING THE ASIAN-PACIFIC War, the Japanese military and government established numerous rape centers throughout the empire, providing military personnel with easy access to sexual services. Japan’s WW II sex slaves or “Comfort Women [*ianfu*],” as they were euphemistically called, have rarely been acknowledged by Japan’s government. Using the term “Comfort Women,” a term embraced by the perpetrators themselves, denies the victims an accurate description of what happened to them; namely they were violated emotionally and physically, oftentimes murdered in the process. Therefore, when one studies this dark chapter of Japanese history, one needs to exercise caution when using the term “Comfort Women,” since such a term, still often used by the Japanese themselves, continues to perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of these women who were victimized by the Japanese who oppressed them.”

(Japan’s Holocaust, Chapter 13, p.161)

Rigg’s discussion on the “comfort women” is based on the premise that Japan was a premodern and completely lawless society. This is the kind of thinking that comes from an extreme racist, one who mocks the Japanese for fun.

First of all, Rigg lacks fundamental understanding, in that the "comfort stations" where the "comfort women" provided sexual services were not “rape centers” at all, but facilities provided to “prevent rape.” It was not easy for even the highly disciplined Japanese military¹ to prevent young soldiers who had been in battle for a long time from acting on their sexual impulses and committing rape.

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, when you look at the fact that Americans with the occupation that landed in Japan committed 1,326 rapes in Kanagawa Prefecture alone in the 12 days from August 30 to September 10, 1945, you can see that sex in young soldiers was not an easy matter to deal with. Prostitution was not illegal in Japan at the time, so there were many street girls, and the number of American soldiers who used them was probably about 10 times the number of known rapes. American soldiers probably raped for various

¹ This has been verified in Chapter 2 of this book referring to the Japanese military besieged in Beijing during the Boxer Revolt.

reasons, such as lack of money.

In any case, think about that: in Kanagawa Prefecture alone, in 12 days, less than 10,000 American soldiers engaged in sex with 10,000 women.

The reason why the Japanese military established "comfort stations" was for young people to use prostitution facilities, so-called "red light districts," which were legal at the time, when they were in the home country. So, "comfort stations" were created as open "red light districts" in battlefields. Therefore, the "comfort women" who worked in these comfort stations were the same as prostitutes who worked in brothels in the home country, but they received a large advance payment from "comfort station operators," contracted to work for a certain period of time, and provided services. This was not rape at all but legally conducted business. Calling this system "rape" is a slap in the face of prostitutes. Moreover, what they earned was quite high.

What I mentioned are stated in "Prisoner Interrogation Records" of the US military, so please take a good look at it. The report is seven pages long and stored at the US National Archives, titled "US Army India-Burma Theater Intelligence Division, Psychological Operations Team Intelligence Office, Japanese Army Prisoner Interrogation Report No. 49."

The reality of the comfort women revealed by US military interrogation records

The preface states:

15-01

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
Psychological Warfare Team
Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater,
APO 689

Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49.

Place interrogated:
Date interrogated:
Date of Report:
By:

Lido Stockade
Aug. 20 - Sept. 10, 1944
October 1, 1944
2/6 Alex Torichi

Prisoners:
Date of Capture:
Date of Arrival at Stockade:

20 Korean Comfort Girls
August 10, 1944
August 15, 1944

SECRET

PREFACE:

This report is based on the information obtained from the interrogation of twenty Korean "comfort girls" and two Japanese civilians captured around the tenth of August, 1944 in the mopping up operations after the fall of Myitkyina in Burma.

The report shows how the Japanese recruited these Korean "comfort girls", the conditions under which they lived and worked, their relations with and reaction to the Japanese soldier, and their understanding of the military situation.

A "comfort girl" is nothing more than a prostitute or "professional camp follower" attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers. The word "comfort girl" is peculiar to the Japanese. Other reports show the "comfort girls" have been found wherever it was necessary for the Japanese Army to fight. This report however deals only with the Korean "comfort girls" recruited by the Japanese and attached to their Army in Burma. The Japanese are reported to have shipped some 703 of these girls to Burma in 1942.

RECRUITING:

Early in May of 1942 Japanese agents arrived in Korea for the purpose of enlisting Korean girls for "comfort service" in newly conquered Japanese territories in Southeast Asia. The nature of this "service" was not specified but it was assumed to be work connected with visiting the wounded in hospitals, rolling bandages, and generally making the soldiers happy. The inducement used by these agents was plenty of money, an opportunity to pay off the family debts, easy work, and the prospect of a new life in a new land - Singapore. On the basis of these false representations many girls enlisted for overseas duty and were rewarded with an advance of a few hundred yen.

The majority of the girls were ignorant and uneducated, although a few had been connected with "oldest profession on earth" before. The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to work for the "house master" for a period of from six months to a year depending on the family debt for which they were advanced.

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"This report is based on the information obtained from the interrogation of twenty Korean "comfort girls" and two Japanese civilians [note: employers] captured around the tenth of August, 1944 in the mopping-up operations after the fall of Myitkyina in Burma. ... A "comfort girl" is nothing more than a prostitutes or "professional camp follower" attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers. The word "comfort girl" is peculiar to the Japanese. Other reports show that "comfort girls" have been found wherever it was necessary for the Japanese Army to fight. ..."²

Note that the report clearly states here that "comfort women" were nothing more than prostitutes. Next, in the section on the recruitment of comfort women, the report states,

² UNITED STATES OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION, Psychology Warfare Team, Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater, APO 689: Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49., p.1.

"The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to work for the "house master" for a period of from six months to a year depending on the family debt for which they were advanced."³ This shows that the military was not involved in the recruitment of the comfort women at all. In other words, the military provided a place for "house masters" to operate. It is outrageous to say that the military forcibly abducted women. If they had done so, they would have been put in front of a court-martial and sentenced to death. There is not a single document or testimony to prove that comfort women were forcibly abducted. Rigg completely ignores the official record of the U.S. Army. Or, maybe he just does not know anything about this very important document. Regarding living and working conditions:

"In Myitkyina, the girls were usually quartered in a large two story house (usually a school building) with a separate room for each girl. There each girl lived, slept, and transacted business. In Myitkyina, their food was prepared by and purchased from the "house master" as they received no regular ration from the Japanese Army. They lived in near-luxury in Burma in comparison to other places. This was especially true of their second year in Burma. They lived well because their food and material was not heavily rationed and they had plenty of money with which to purchase desired articles. They were able to buy cloth, shoes, cigarettes, and cosmetics to supplement the many gifts given to them by soldiers who had received "comfort bags" from home."⁴

In Burma, the "comfort women" participated in various sports and events with Japanese officers and soldiers. They also took part in picnics, entertainment and social dinners. They had phonographs and were allowed to go into town to shop.

As the report says, the "comfort women" had a lot of money, so they could buy whatever they wanted. The report is first-hand interviews by American soldiers and not second-hand hearsay. Reading this report completely overturns Rigg's tripe of the comfort women. If it does not, then readers are not rational human beings.

As for pay and living conditions:

³ Ibid., p.1.

⁴ Ibid., p.2.

"The "house master" received fifty to sixty percent of the girls' gross earnings depending on how much of a debt each girl had incurred when she signed her contract. This meant that in an average month a girl would gross about fifteen hundred yen. She turned over seven hundred and fifty to the "master". Many "masters" made life very difficult for the girls by charging them high prices for food and other articles.

"In the latter part of 1943, the Army issued orders that certain girls who had paid their debt could return home. Some of the girls were thus allowed to return to Korea."⁵

On average, the comfort women had a net income of 750 yen per month. At the time, a general's annual salary was 6,600 yen, or 550 yen per month, much less than that of the comfort girl's 750 yen per month. Furthermore, a sergeant's monthly salary was 23 to 30 yen, and private's monthly salary was a mere 7 yen. You can see how much money the comfort women earned by contrast. However, Rigg writes that **"they were violated emotionally and physically, oftentimes murdered in the process."** (p.161) Clearly his view is terribly distorted—fraudulent I might add—grounded in extreme anti-Japanese racism.

Moon (or "Mun") Ok-ju, was a Korean comfort woman, well known for earning a lot of money as a comfort woman. It was reported in the *Mainichi Shimbun* that her original postal savings account record was found. She had a remaining balance of 26,145 yen. She sent 500 yen home at one time, and subtracting living expenses, she earned more than 30,000 yen over two years, which is more than 1,000 yen per month. The balance, 26,000 yen, was enough to buy 10 houses in Seoul at that time.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

An interview with Mun Ok-ju was published by a leftist publisher, titled, *Mun Ok-ju: I Was a Comfort Woman for the Shield Division on the Burmese Front*:

"This time I was taken to Rangoon. Rangoon is a big, beautiful city. The trees are deep green. The sunlight was strong, and the ground was so hot that it was difficult to stand. There were many Western-style buildings. The Japanese army had a big headquarters in Rangoon. I think there were many other units, not just the Shield Division. There were also many soldiers. I felt relieved that we were finally safe because we were not on the front line. ... I will never forget shopping in the market in Rangoon. There was a big market. There was a Chinese market, and there were Koreans and Indians. There were also many shops selling the same things. In the market, each corner had a food shop, a cloth shop, a tailor, a shoe shop, a tailor, a shoe shop, and so on. People of all races gathered together in a lively atmosphere. I bought clothes at a clothing store run by an Englishman. They were fashionable clothes. I also bought a lot of things for friends who had asked me to buy things. I think I went there two or three times. Sometimes I went with Hitomi, and sometimes with other friends."⁶



This is the kind of life that the comfort women lived, and I think you will understand that calling the comfort women “sex slaves” would be an scathing rebuke to them.

I would like to introduce another amazing episode from Rigg’s book, described in Chapter 8, “Military Trials.” It is about an incident in which a disgraceful sergeant was exceedingly drunk, pulled out a sword and attacked Mun Ok-ju. She fought back hard, and during the struggle, she ended up killing the sergeant. As a result, she was court-martialed, but Mun Ok-ju, who had killed a Japanese soldier, was found not guilty on the grounds of self-defense. Even on a harsh frontline, the Japanese military obeyed the law. In the first place, Japan was not a lawless country as Rigg whines, but governed by laws.

⁶ *Mun Ok-ju: I Was a Comfort Woman of the Shield Division on the Burmese Front*, Mun-Ok-ju interviewed by Morikawa Machiko, published by Nashinokisha, Tokyo, 1996. p.106, 107.

Because prostitution was legal under domestic Japanese law, "comfort stations" were established and their operation was managed according to law. The testimony of Korean comfort woman Mun Ok-ju made it clear that the Japanese military strictly adhered to rules during wartime. Furthermore, her story showed that there was no discrimination against Koreans. Her testimony is valuable. Thus, saying that the comfort women "**were violated emotionally and physically, oftentimes murdered in the process,**" is nothing more than a cartoon depiction of the Japanese military and frankly quite racist. Had a Japanese soldier done such things, he would definitely have been sentenced to death by a military tribunal.

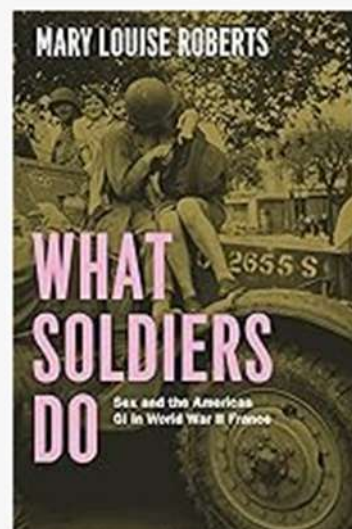
The US military established military brothels during World War II

In the US, some states prohibited prostitution, and due to Puritan influences, the US military did not allow prostitution, in principle, during World War II. However, it is now well-known that military brothels were set up in Italy, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya during World War II. In fact, Hawaii was not yet a state, but a special district was set up by the US military in Honolulu for soldiers going overseas. Photographs exist of soldiers lining up to enter these brothels.

You can see for yourself how American GIs behaved in France by reading *What Soldiers Do* by Mary Louise Roberts. She describes the actions of American soldiers in France that drew abundant condemnation. In the end, the American military could not keep up its pretenses. Here a French mayor, who was fed up with American soldiers trying to have sex with prostitutes and non-prostitutes in public places during the day, without caring at all about what other people think:

"...bemoaned [the] Mayor Pierre Voisin in a letter to Colonel Weed, the American regional commander. The good citizens of his city were unable to take a walk in the park or visit the grave of a loved ones without coming across a GI engaged in sex with a prostitute. At night, drunk soldiers roamed the street looking for sex, and as a result "respectable" women could not walk alone."⁷

"Not only is this the opposite of indecency being practiced at any time of the day or night, but the sight of minors being exposed to such spectacle is not only scandalous but intolerable."⁸



Then the mayor wrote a letter to Colonel Weed.

"Americans construct a regulated brothel north of town?"⁹

The mayor went as far as requesting the US military to set up a "comfort station". This shows that Japan was doing something far-sighted. In other words, I would like to know what Rigg, who called comfort stations "rape centers," thinks of Americans setting up "comfort stations".

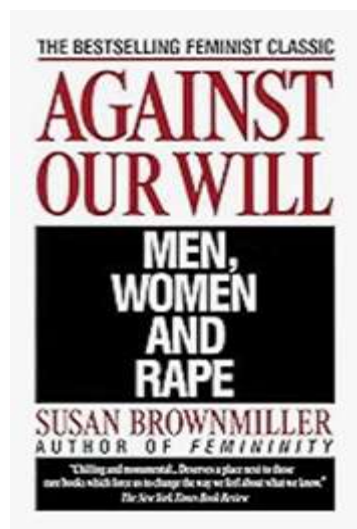
⁷ *What Soldiers Do*, by Mary Louise Roberts, published by University of Chicago Press, 2014.

⁸ *What Soldiers Do*, page 1, by Marie Louise Roberts, translated by Hisae Kennedy (Rekishi Tsu Magazine, 15-May, WAC, Tokyo).

⁹ Ibid.

Not only in World War II, but more recently during the Vietnam War, the US military brought local brothels into their base camps, had the prostitutes tested for sexually transmitted diseases by military doctors every week, and adopted a method of safety management. They adopted a format almost identical to the "comfort stations" operated by the Japanese military:

“Military brothels in Army base camp (“Sin Cities,” “Disneylands” or “boom-boom parlors”) were built by decision of a division commander, a two-star general, and were under the direct control of a brigade commander with the rank of colonel. Clearly, Army brothels in Vietnam existed by the grace of Army Chief of Staff William C. Westmoreland, the United States Embassy in Saigon, and the Pentagon.”¹⁰



Furthermore, the US military made extensive use of "comfort women" in Korea. A book was written by a group of Korean scholars, *The Military and Sexual Violence* (Gendaishi Shiryo Publishing). It examines in detail how United Nations forces (i.e., the US military) and the South Korean government were involved in managing comfort stations since the outbreak of the Korean War. In Korea, the "comfort women" who catered to American soldiers were called "*Yang gong ju*" (Western Princesses), "*Yang galpo*" (Western prostitute), and "United Nations Women". The prostitution districts for the US military were called "Base Villages" (*Kijicheon*).

¹⁰ *Against Our Will*, by Susan Brownmiller, Fawcett Books, New York, 1975. P.95.

A book explains the origin of comfort women for the US military in Korea, based on the author's own experience. It is called *Why Did Comfort Women for the US Military in Korea Come About?*¹¹ Choi's hometown was about 40 km north of Seoul, but when the Korean War broke out, it was occupied by the North Korean army, and then recaptured by the UN forces. The villagers say that they welcomed the arrival of the UN liberation army, at first. However, after a while, the UN forces began to hunt for women. They wandered around the village during the day, keeping an eye on women. Then, in the evening, they parked their jeeps in places where they could see the whole village, such as on slopes, and searched for women they were looking for with a telescope. When they found them, they drove their jeeps and robbed the women. The village fell into a state of panic, but prostitutes from Seoul saved the village. It seems that a "prostitution village" was established, where about 30 prostitutes from Seoul gathered, and GI robberies stopped. Thus, the usefulness of the "brothel villages" became clear, and the Korean government began to actively set up "comfort stations."



In other words, the Japanese military "comfort stations" were ahead of their time and the most rational response at the time to the problem of young men and sex in the battlefield, which could not be suppressed merely with flowery ideas. Nonetheless, Rigg calls these "rape centers," so his level of ignorance of Japan and his raw racism is horrifying indeed.

This is how the comfort women issue emerged

The problem of sex in the battlefield was not only faced by Japan, but by every other country and each took appropriate measures. The examples of the United States and South Korea were mentioned above, but the Soviet Union assumed that such problems did not exist and left it to the soldiers at the front to solve. As a result, it is impossible to measure how many women were raped and murdered under Soviet occupation. If you don't know what happened in Berlin under Soviet occupation or what Japanese women were made to in Manchuria following Soviet occupation, please look into it.

¹¹ *Why did comfort women for the US military in Korea come about?*, by Choi Gil-seong, published by Heart Publishing, Tokyo, 2008.

Anyway, why has the "comfort women" issue come to be treated as if it were a uniquely Japanese human rights violation?

If we assume, as Rigg asserts, that Japan committed vile human rights violations by creating "comfort stations," then why was this issue not raised at the Tokyo Trials, which unilaterally condemned Japan for every and any conceivable "war crime" nor during the 14 years of Japan-Korea negotiations for normalization of diplomatic relations after the war? Could it be that the Japanese government hid this issue? This is silly, as recruitment of the "comfort women" was actively carried out in newspapers before the war. Since it was in no way illegal at the time, it was never considered by anyone to be problematic at all.

However, long after the war, in the 1970s, when memories of that time were fading, so-called human rights activists and anti-Japanese bigots took up the comfort women issue. It all started in 1973 when Senda Natsuyuki wrote a book called "Military Comfort Women: The Voiceless Accusation of 80,000 People." When Yoshida Seiji published "My War Crimes: Forced Transportation of Koreans"¹² in 1983, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper gave it extensive coverage. The hoax, that Yoshida "hunted comfort women" on Jeju Island in Korea, spread throughout Japan, Korea, and the world as if it were true, the lie of "forced transportation and sexual slavery of comfort women."



In other words, there was no "comfort women issue" to begin with, but the "comfort women issue" erupted when Yoshida Seiji's book was published and the *Asahi Shimbun* gave it extensive coverage. And so the "comfort women issue" spread to Japan, Korea and the rest of the world as if it was a serious human rights violation. What is strange is that many scholars have not found a single piece of evidence, document, or witness of the forced transportation of comfort women, yet they willingly parrot the lie that 200,000 comfort women were forcibly transported and sexually enslaved as "self-evident."

¹² "My War Crimes: Forced Transportation of Koreans", by Yoshida Seiji, published by San Ichi Shobo, Tokyo, 1983.

In response to this issue, scholars bring up the testimonies of comfort women. However, they ignore the fact that when their testimonies first appeared, there was no mention of forced abduction at all, but as “forced abduction” became a hot topic in the media, the testimony gradually shifted—to “forced abductions”. When Professor Ramseyer of Harvard Law School stated that all comfort women received large advance payments based on an agreed upon contract, scholars whined that there was no evidence of contracts. However, even if it was called a contract, it was not an official document, and the essential points of a contract were that the employer paid an advance, 300 or 500 yen, which was more than the average woman's annual salary at the time, and that the contract stipulated the duration of employment, that is, the number of years (usually two years). Once the contract period was over, the contract expired, so there was no second thought in having such a contract disappear. There is an abundance of literature on the structure of such contracts, however, and there is no doubt that contracts were both necessary and in existence. However, it is troubling that the majority of so-called scholars still wail that they cannot believe that comfort women signed contracts. Professor Ramseyer's *Complete Refutation of the Theory that Comfort Women Were Sex Slaves* (Heart Publishing) contains a huge amount of material to prove the truth about the comfort women. There aren't any scholars who can properly refute Ramseyer's findings, but they desperately cling to their belief in “sex slavery” by changing arguments.

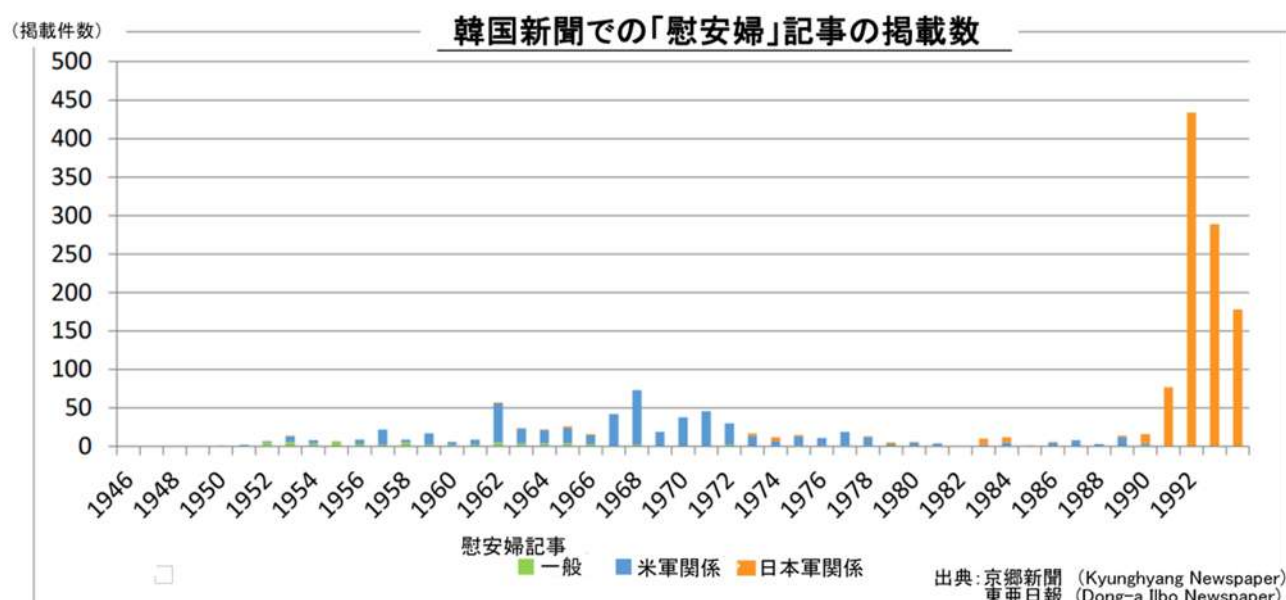
I wonder what so-called scholars who cry that there is no evidence of contracts think about the US military's "Prisoner Interrogation Records" I mentioned earlier in this chapter. I quoted p.1 of this report, "The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to work for the “house master” for a period of from six months to a year, depending on the family debt for which they were advanced."¹³

Are they willfully ignoring or flat out denying an official US interrogation report, which clearly says, “The contract they signed”? Again, the US interrogation report is primary source information.

Professor Ramseyer includes some interesting data in his book

¹³ UNITED STATES OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION, Psychology Warfare Team, Attached To U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater, APO 689: Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49., p.1.

Ramseyer looked at how many times the word "comfort women" appeared in two major Korean newspapers (*Kyunghyang Shinmun* and *Dong-A Ilbo*), and divides his findings into those related to the US military and those related to the Japanese military. The first thing we can see from his search is that the word "comfort women" finally appeared in 1952, sometime after the war, and this had nothing to do with Japan but with the US military. From 1962, there was a lot of articles about US military comfort women. "Japanese military comfort women" made a small appearance in 1984, and then expanded from 1992. Generally speaking, it is clear that before the 1990s, references to "comfort women" meant "U.S. military comfort women".



However, in South Korea, the "forced abduction of comfort women" hoax fabricated by Yoshida Seiji and the *Asahi Shimbun*, has been widely utilized by the Korean government as a tool to extract apologies from the Japanese government and has even been included in elementary and junior high school Korean textbooks. Furthermore, 240 "former comfort women" have been being granted various allowances, such as a living allowance, medical expenses, living safety support subsidies, nursing support membership, and funeral and memorial service expenses, on the grounds that they were "forcibly mobilized and sexually abused by the Japanese Empire" under the Korean "Comfort Women Victims Law."

However, Kim Byeong Heon, director of the Korean National History Textbook Research Institute, has established that of the 240 certified "victims," "not a single one was forcibly

mobilized or sexually abused by the Japanese Empire." Since 2019, Director Kim Byeong Heon has been running a campaign calling for the removal of the comfort women statues that were erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul based on lies.

Now, after Yoshida Seiji's story about hunting comfort women on Jeju Island was demonstrated in a local newspaper (the *Jeju Shinmun*) to be a complete fabrication--and Yoshida himself admitted this--the *Asahi Shimbun* was forced to admit that it wrote articles based on lies. On August 5, 2014, 32 years after the article was first published, the *Asahi Shimbun* announced the retraction of 18 articles based on Yoshida Seiji's lies. To put it bluntly, this was the end of the comfort women issue, but anti-Japan racist thinking is rampant worldwide, and there are still many people who claim that Japan forcibly abducted comfort women and that the comfort women were sex slaves.

Rigg is one of these people. He shifts the focus and insists that prostitution itself is a human rights issue that concerns the dignity of women, and that Japan violated the human rights of women. If this were true, then what will become of the United States, South Korea, and many other countries that did the same, exact thing?

In any case, it is absolutely unacceptable to slander Japan with a huge, racist lie:

"According to some research, only 10% of the estimated 200,000 "Comfort Women" survived their harrowing ordeals. Many perished due to internal bleeding, within combat zones, or as a result of diseases, while others were ruthlessly murdered by their perpetrators once they were deemed no longer useful.

(Japan's Holocaust, Chapter 13, p.163)

What do we think about prostitution?

The idea that prostitution is undesirable is now dominant Japan has banned prostitution since 1958. However, in Europe and other places, prostitution is very much a legal and vibrant business. Although there are some countries that have minor restrictions, such as prohibiting pimping, it is very much legal.

Therefore, to condemn the past by assuming that the idea that prostitution is a "violation of the rights of women" is absolutely arbitrary and mere virtue signaling. To condemn

Japan's past on the premise that Japan was a backward country that ignored human rights is the height of racism. In South Korea, where the comfort women issue remains a central theme of its anti-Japanese thinking, Korean prostitutes have taken to the streets in strident protests, arguing that proposed anti-prostitution laws will prevent them from doing business. For them, being prohibited from selling sex for money is a serious human rights violation. You are free to interpret however you like the thinking of South Korean prostitutes, but we should all be aware of the utter uselessness of basing human rights issues on our own absolute values and biases.