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Introduction

It has been more than thirty years since the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ issue was raised as a war crime and the responsibility of colonial rule. Despite all of the accumulated research findings and investigations of the actual conditions surrounding the Japanese military comfort women, the concept and the categorization of the ‘comfort women’ remains vague among researchers, activists, and related organizations without any clear agreements between them. This is mainly because previous researchers or activists have tended to over-emphasize the perspective of victims from their own countries or to only narrate the historical facts regarding the ‘comfort women system’ based on official historical documents without providing further analysis.

In order to stimulate productive discussions regarding the concept and the categorization of the ‘comfort women,’ we should examine the historical background of the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ system. At the time, the Japanese military had been facing the problem of lax military

* This translated article is a revised and supplemented version of Park Jung-ae, “피해실태를 통해 본 일본군위안부의 개념과 범주 시론,” 사학연구 120 (December, 2015): 167-203.

discipline among their soldiers. Hoping to maintain control within the military organization, the Japanese military attempted to distract from such problems by focusing on resolving the soldiers' 'sexual desire,' which was indeed over-interpreted. There were mainly three ways of dealing with the soldiers' sexual desire, which were installing new "sexual comfort facilities"; condoning the rape committed by soldiers in occupied areas; or encouraging soldiers to use the licensed prostitution facilities that had been traditionally managed by the Japanese government.

This article focuses on the characteristics of the Japanese military at the time, which managed and tolerated the soldiers' sexual violence against women for the sake of conducting efficient warfare. Specifically, I will examine how the Japanese military responded to their soldiers' wartime rape or the use of licensed prostitution facilities in the name of a "sexual comfort" policy. Finally, I argue that the concept and the category of the Japanese military 'comfort women' should be established from the perspective of the Japanese military, who actually felt the need and planned the system at that time, thus moving beyond a mere debate over whether it was those women's voluntary or forced action.

First, I will begin by examining how the concept and the categorization of the Japanese military 'comfort women' have developed in previous works. This will show that the concept and the categorization of the Japanese military 'comfort women' has not been inherently fixed but rather has been occasionally redefined, due to the different approaches that have addressed this issue. In addition, by reviewing the nature of the 'comfort women' system through the lens of historical damages, I will examine what issues should be considered by researchers and activists when defining Japanese military 'comfort women' while accounting for trends toward world solidarity at the same time. This is an attempt to demonstrate the significance of reflecting historicity not only when we establish the concept and the category, but also when we look for solutions to the Japanese military 'comfort women' system that had existed in the past.

Existing Discussions of the Concept and Categorization of Japanese Military Comfort Women

1. Categorization of Japanese Military Comfort Women according to the Number of Victims

First, the existing discussions of current researchers and activists over the concept and the category of the Japanese military 'comfort women' diverge in terms of identifying the magnitude of total damage caused. The variation in the number of victims, which ranges between 20,000 and 400,000, reflects differences in the perspectives of how the Japanese military 'comfort women' should be considered.

The causes of this divergence are related to inconsistencies in counting the victims: whether or not 'licensed prostitution' should be counted, or only be counted, among 'comfort women'; whether or not someone should be considered a victim, as a 'comfort women,' if that person was regularly forced to 'sexually comfort' soldiers in a certain place for a certain period of time; and whether or not the victims of soldiers' rape, which occurred frequently in occupied places, should be counted as 'comfort women.'

Hata Ikuhiko, a representative right-wing historian in Japan, argues that the 'comfort women' system should only be equated to licensed prostitution of the time. He insists that there is no need to discuss Japan's national responsibility for the 'comfort women' system because it was simply the transferal of traditional Japanese 'licensed prostitution' to the wartime area. His position is based on the logic that since licensed prostitution of the time was accepted as legal, we cannot discuss the illegality of or the responsibility for the comfort women system. However, he does not take into account the historical fact that the licensed prostitution system was severely criticized by the international community or by anti-prostitution activists even at that time as being equivalent to slavery or as a human trafficking system. Moreover, the historical fact that licensed prostitution operated differently in the Japanese home islands compared to its colony or its leased territory has also been ignored. He insists that there was no forced mobilization because what we call the 'comfort women' were indeed traditional Japanese licensed prosti-

tutes who were merely transferred to the wartime area. Their total number is estimated at 20,000 according to the following calculation: the number of licensed prostitutes of the time had normally been maintained at around 200,000, while each of them served about 150 visitors (遊客) each day. Taking into account the total number of Japanese soldiers dispatched overseas at that time as around 2.5 million and dividing it by 150 people, the result is 16,000. Hata argues that the total number of comfort women, if counted in a narrow sense, should be around 20,000 people. If the definition is expanded to include all other women, aside from the licensed prostitutes as well, he expects that only a few thousand additional people would be added.¹

Yoshimi Yoshiaki categorized the comfort stations into three types: first, comfort stations directly managed by the military; second, military-only comfort stations entrusted to private enterprise; and third, private comfort facilities temporarily designated and used by the military.² The first two types were the typical brothels that clearly had military involvement. However, the third type elicited some controversy, such as how to distinguish ‘designated’ comfort stations from other facilities that had no military designation; whether or not non-designated brothels could be considered comfort stations if frequently visited by the Japanese soldiers; and if only licensed prostitutes from designated comfort stations could be accepted as ‘comfort women,’ while those from the non-designated comfort stations were not. Considering all of these discussions, we can see that we truly need to consider the occurrence of the ‘comfort women’ itself in our history, rather than the distinction between ‘designated’ and ‘non-designated’ comfort women as assigned by the Japanese military. We should go further back to examine historical reality, rather than limiting ourselves to a contemporary, yet narrow, perspective.

Yoshimi Yoshiaki, on the other hand, took a completely different approach to estimating the number of ‘comfort women.’ He referred not only to

¹ Hata Ikuhiko, *Japanese Military Sexual Slavery and Battleground Sex* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1999), 406. The number of Japanese troops overseas was estimated at 2.5 million.

² Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *The Truth about the History of Japanese Military ‘Comfort Women,’* Nam Sang-gu, trans. (Seoul: Yeoksagonggan, 2013).

what Kanahara Setsuzo's document³ revealed—one 'comfort woman' was matched to 100 Japanese soldiers of the 21st Army in 1939, but also to the commonly accepted convention of the time which was called the "Niguichi" (i.e. "29 to 1"), which meant a ratio of one comfort woman to twenty-nine soldiers as the most desirable proportion. The replacement rate for 'comfort women' was set at a minimum of 1.5 and a maximum of 2. Assuming that the average number of Japanese military overseas was three million, the number of 'comfort women' should have been at least about 50,000 (= 3 million / 100 × 1.5), and the maximum should have been about 200,000 (= 3 million / 30 × 2).⁴

In addition, the Chinese scholars Chen Lifei (陳麗菲) and Su Zhiliang (蘇智良) also raised doubts about the predicted number of 20,000, insisting that this number neglected all of the Chinese comfort women victims who were not discovered until the late 1990s. Moreover, given the enormous number of brothels distributed throughout China, as well as all of the sexual violence committed against Chinese women by the Japanese troops at that time, they believed that the actual number of the victims was much larger than the predicted number. In light of all of the investigation and research conducted in China, the replacement rate should be between 3.5 and 4.0 and, thus, the total number of 'comfort women' should be at least 360,000 people (= 3 million / 29 × 3.5) and a maximum of 410,000 (= 3 million / 29 × 4) people.⁵ They also have argued that scholars from the relevant countries believed the numbers they proposed, but this is not true.

In the case of South Korea, the number of victims of the Japanese military 'comfort women' system had been recognized as 80,000 to 200,000 until the 1990s. It is presumed that this estimated number had

³ Kanahara Setsuzo, *Compendium of Daily Work Log*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: the Ministry of War, 1939).

⁴ Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Japanese Military Comfort Women*, Lee Gyu-tae, trans. (Seoul: Soхва, 1998), 90-92. The original edition is written by Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Military Comfort Women* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995). The number of Japanese troops overseas was estimated at 3 million, and 29 soldiers were calculated as 30.

⁵ Chen Lifei and Su Zhiliang, *An Inquire into a Korean Comfort Woman Pū Yǒngxīn and Her Colleagues* (Shanghai: Shìdàiguóji chūbǎn yǒuxiàngōngsī, 2005), 17-20.

been formed in the 1970s. There were two books which made a significant influence on the formation of the historicity (歴史像) of the time. These were *Military Comfort Women*, written by Senda Kakou and published in 1973 and 1974, and *The Emperor's Army and Korean Comfort Women*, written by Kim Il-myeon and published in 1976. It was in 1977 for the former and in 1981 for the latter when these two books were translated into Korean and released to readers.⁶

Senda, in his book, estimated the total number of 'comfort women' at 84,000, considering the total number of Japanese overseas armies of the time reaching about 3.2 million. Such an estimation was based on the historical record that, in 1941, about 20,000 Korean 'comfort women' were planned to be mobilized in proportion to the scale of 750,000 soldiers from the Kwandong Army who participated in the July Special Training. Despite that the total number of the military force of the Japanese army had reached almost 5.55 million, the calculation excluded the 2.35 million soldiers in mainland Japan since there were no 'comfort women' in mainland Japan.⁷ Kim Il-myeon demonstrated that the mobilization of 'comfort women' was planned at the ratio of 29 soldiers to one 'comfort woman,' so that the 'number of Korean girls' who were taken by the Japanese military was reaching approximately 170,000 to 200,000.⁸ Hence, even without mentioning any additional evidence, it seems that the books mentioned above initiated the supposition that the total number of 'comfort women' would be limited to only about 80,000 to 200,000. Yoshimi Yoshiaki later favored such a supposition and confirmed it.

⁶ Im Jong-guk, ed., *The Comfort Women* (Seoul: Ilwol, 1981). The book was a translation composed of some parts, related to Korean comfort women, from Senda Kakou's *The Main Series of the Military Comfort Women*. This translated extract was originally written by Kim Jeong-myeon but edited by Im Jong-guk and republished in 1992 with the same title. Despite translated versions show Kim Jung-myeon as the author, the original book was written by Kim Il-myeon with the title of *The Emperor's Army and Korean Comfort Women* published by San'ichi Shobo in 1976. For more reference, see Kim Ilmyeon, *The Emperor's Army and Korean Comfort Women* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1976).

⁷ Senda Kakou, *The Main Series of the Military Comfort Women* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1978), 167. This book, originally published in 1973 and 1974 by Futabasha, was republished in 1978 by San'ichi Shobo with two versions of the main and the sequels.

⁸ Kim Jeong-myeon, *The Comfort Women*, Im Jong-guk, trans. (Seoul: Ilwol, 1992), 89.

Yoshimi Yoshiaki, who once estimated the number of 'comfort women' as approximately 50,000 to 200,000, revised his assumption later in his research report which was submitted to the Northeast Asian History Foundation in 2007, claiming the number could range from 80,000 to 200,000.⁹ This was because even the victims of a mere rape for a certain period of time were also included in his calculation of the 'comfort women.'

By examining the existing discussions over the calculation of the number of victims, it seems that the concept of 'comfort women' could be interpreted in a variety of ways: the typical 'comfort women'; the rape victims by the Japanese military; the licensed prostitutes from the brothels designated by the Japanese military; and the licensed prostitutes from the private brothels which were directly managed by the Japanese government. When all types of rape victims are included in the calculation, still, it is possible to neglect the specificity of the 'comfort women' system via the Japanese military's 'organized and systematic' management. Meanwhile, if only the case of designated brothels is taken into consideration, the problem of neglecting the victims, those who also comforted the Japanese soldiers but worked in the non-designated brothels, remains. The claim that the Japanese government has no responsibility for the 'comfort women' as those people were originally the licensed prostitutes who had worked in common brothels of the time, similar to what Hata Ikuhiko argues, is indeed aimed at concealing the state-involved criminality of the 'comfort women' problem. Such a claim is undoubtedly ahistorical and anti-feminine as those prostitutes of the time, whether licensed by the Japanese government or not, are still related to problems such as human trafficking, the violation of international law, or the violation of human right issue especially caused by the violence by the owner or 'visitors,' for which all deserve international blame.

⁹ Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility-Women's War and Peace Archives, ed., *Study on the Solutions for History Problems between Korea and Japan—To Discuss Solving the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' Problem* (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2007), 18.

2. The Concept of Japanese Military Comfort Women according to the Definition of Victims

The difference in perceptions surrounding the number of victims reflects the difference in perceptions of the concept and the category of the Japanese military ‘comfort women,’ since every single researcher estimated the number according to how they defined the term ‘comfort women.’

Yoshimi Yoshiaki defined the military ‘comfort women’ as those who were forced to sexually comfort the soldiers at brothels, which were created by the Japanese military in all war or occupied areas between the January 28 Incident in 1932 and the defeat of Japan in 1945.¹⁰ Most of the civic groups or activists in current Japan are giving their consent to Yoshimi Yoshiaki’s definition of the ‘comfort women.’ Even the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan’s War Responsibility—Women’s War and Peace Archives, which has been striving to find the truth and solve the ‘comfort women’ problem for more than 20 years, and The ‘Fight for Justice’ Resistance to Oblivion of Japanese Military Comfort Women and Future Responsibility, the website which was launched in January 2013 especially with the help of VAWW RAC (Violence Against Women in War Research Action Center) to deal with the problems related to the Japanese military ‘comfort women,’ are also following Yoshimi Yoshiaki’s definition.¹¹

On the other hand, Yun Myungsuk approached the ‘comfort women’ issue in regard to the military comfort facility system itself, rather than the effort to find the appropriate definition of the term.¹² She argued that there were mainly three types of wartime sexual violence committed by the Japanese military of the time: ① made women arrested in the military comfort facilities and raped them every day; ② the Japanese military repeatedly raped women in certain places for a certain period of time, as in the case of China’s Shanxi Province; and ③ one-time rape committed in the war area.

¹⁰ Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Japanese Military Comfort Women*, 20-21.

¹¹ Website for the Fight for Justice, <http://fightforjustice>.

¹² Yun Myungsuk, *Korean Military Comfort Women and Japanese Military Comfort Stations System*, Choi Min-soon, trans. (Seoul: Ehaksa, 2015), 26-27, 90-91.

Among these three, she claimed that only the first case can be considered as the military comfort women system, as it has the most obvious traits related to the state’s commitment to a war crime, and, thus, the Japanese government should take responsibility for the military comfort facility system itself. Meanwhile, the other two types could also hold the state accountable in a different dimension—such as sexual assault committed by the soldiers or the commercial prostitution problem around the military. Although Yun Myung-suk does not clearly define the term ‘comfort women,’ it seems that generally ‘a woman who was arrested and raped in the military comfort facility’ is accepted as a concept of the ‘comfort women.’

Taiwanese researcher Delan Zhu (朱德蘭), on the other hand, defined the ‘comfort women’ as the women who became licensed prostitutes limited to the Japanese military in the 1930s or in the 1940s Asia, whose total number is estimated at 400,000.¹³ It is seen that she purposely did not include the term ‘comfort facility’ in defining ‘comfort women,’ and this was perhaps because the term ‘military comfort facility’ might have been used in Taiwan meaning something different from a sexual facility. For example, one military comfort facility built in Pingtung City (屏東市), Taiwan in 1938 was equipped with a large restaurant, bathhouse, and hall, as a recreational facility where people could enjoy hobbies such as go and billiards. It was open to the public and sold groceries on weekdays and soldiers used it as a comfort facility only on Sundays. On the other hand, ‘comfort women’ in Taiwan said they were victimized at comfort facilities, which were in high-end restaurants, renovated classrooms, renovated private houses, and caves in remote military facilities, among other locations.¹⁴

In other cases, so-called comfort facilities were in areas that were not sexual facilities. One news article wrote that in June 1938, Gentaro Takagishi (高岸源太郎), a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Beppu City (別府市) in Oita (大分), Japan, who owned a *ryotei* (料亭), established a military comfort facility with a large hot spring and rest area in

¹³ Zhu Delan. *The Japanese Government-General of Taiwan and Comfort Women* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2005), 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

downtown Kanawa (鐵輪).¹⁵ Such cases suggest that we should be careful in distinguishing locations recorded as comfort facilities in order to see whether or not they were actually utilized by soldiers as ‘sexual comfort facilities.’

Meanwhile, the Chinese researchers Chen Lifei and Su Zhiliang claimed that the term ‘comfort women’ refers to women who were forced to ‘sexually comfort (性服務)’ members of the Japanese military as sexual slaves.¹⁶ They also deliberately avoided using the term ‘comfort facility’ in defining ‘comfort women,’ because many Chinese victims experienced sexual violence temporarily or only for a certain period of time.

Four Chinese victims who were repeatedly sexually assaulted by Japanese soldiers at certain places for a certain period of time even filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court of Japan in 1995 and 1996 (however it was only two of the four victims at that time) under the appellation of Chinese ‘comfort women.’ The Japanese researchers, lawyers, and activists who supported these trials termed the location of their sexual assault as ‘rape camp.’ When the Tokyo High Court ruled on this case in 2004, it stated that “this was a ‘so-called comfort women incident’ as (Japanese troops) forcibly kidnapped and detained the Chinese women living near the garrison to repeatedly rape them daily.”¹⁷ In other words, it used the term ‘the so-called comfort women’ to refer to the ‘comfort women’ victims.

Meanwhile, survivors in Shanxi Province and the Hainan Islands in China initiated lawsuits claiming damages in Japanese courts in 1998 and 2001 as ‘victims of sexual violence.’ The ‘victims’ included women who had been imprisoned and raped repeatedly for a certain period of time. The media in Korea, China, and Japan all reported on these events under the ti-

¹⁵ “This time, the Comfort Station of the Japanese Army,” *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Seibu Office—Oita* (June 28, 1938).

¹⁶ Chen Lifei and Su Zhiliang, *An Inquire into a Korean Comfort Woman Pū Yǒngxīn and Her Colleagues*, 5.

¹⁷ Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace, ed., *One day, the Japanese Soldiers Came—Rape and Comfort Stations on the Chinese Battlefield* (Tokyo: Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace, 2008), 35.

tle of Japanese military 'comfort women.' This indicates that the victims, who were previously not included as 'comfort women' in accordance with the definition established by Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Yun Myungsuk defined, were recognized as 'comfort women' here.

The Korean public institutions or organizations, when defining the term Japanese military 'comfort women,' especially emphasize the fact that they were forced to be mobilized and raped as sexual slaves under the suppressive system of the time: The Northeast Asian History Foundation explicates the Japanese military 'comfort women' as "the women who were forced to engage in the sex with Japanese soldiers at a comfort facility established in an occupied area"¹⁸; The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance defines them as "the victims of sexual slaves who were forced to be mobilized to the 'military comfort facility,' which was systematically established in Japan's occupied lands and colonie."¹⁹ Research Institute on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, in its Archive webpage launched in 2020, narrated that "the Japanese government and the military systematically installed the comfort facilities through making corresponding policies, transported 'comfort women' to the battlefield by establishing internal regulations for the usage of comfort facilities, and generally managed and controlled the overall operations of the comfort facilities by, for example, conducting regular checkups for sexually transmitted diseases among the 'comfort women.'²⁰ Considering that all of the above emphasizes how the victims were in a compulsory situation under a system that the Japanese government or the Japanese military intervened in or managed, it can be said that Korean public institutions and organizations are defining the concept of 'comfort women' victims in the strictest yet and in the most narrow sense.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government tends to add the word 'so-called

¹⁸ Northeast Asian History Net, the webpage of the Northeast Asian History Foundation, http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswt.d_0001 (Searched on March 29, 2021).

¹⁹ The webpage of The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, <https://womenandwar.net/kr/what-is> (Searched on March 29, 2021).

²⁰ The webpage of the Research Institute on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Archive 814, <https://www.archive814.or.kr/About/Define> (Searched on March 29, 2021).

(いわゆる)’ in front of the term ‘comfort woman.’ When the former Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan Yohei Kono (河野洋平) announced a discourse on August 4, 1993, he declared that “The so-called military comfort women issue is obviously a serious problem that undermined the honor and the dignity of the numerous women under the involvement of the military at that time.” The website for the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF), which was supported by the Japanese government since the Kono Discourse, defines the ‘so-called military comfort women’ as “the women who were dragged to Japanese military comfort facilities and forced to serve Japanese soldiers sexually for a certain period of time during the Pacific War.”²¹ Aside from the obvious victims of the ‘comfort women’ from military comfort facilities, the AWF brings all of the various types of female victims, who were sexually assaulted by the soldiers in the occupied areas, under the concept of ‘the so-called comfort women.’ Then, the AWF includes the victims, who were imprisoned in Japanese military garrison buildings and raped for a certain period of time, as an equal footing with the ‘comfort women’ victims in Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, the Netherlands, and Indonesia altogether.

The term ‘military sexual slavery’ is more broadly used than the term ‘comfort women’ in the international community, since the special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission Radhika Coomaraswamy’s claim in the 1996 report that the term ‘military sexual slavery’ is a more accurate expression for use. In 1998, the special rapporteur Gay McDougall defined the ‘comfort women’ system as a ‘sexual slavery system held in rape centers’ and specified the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ system as the most severe form of sexual violence among all of other violence that women experienced during the war. However, since the 2000s, the international community has begun to deal with the problem of the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ merely as one common case of infringement on women’s rights that occurred during the war. Even the Korean activist groups, with the support from international solidarity, have started to consider the ‘comfort women’ issue as a common case of infringement of

²¹ The webpage of the Asian Women’s Fund, <http://www.awf.or.jp/k1/> (Searched on March 29, 2021).

women's rights that occurred universally during the war period.²² In other words, the historical specificity of the 'comfort women' victims has been blurred and the feature as a universal and a common sexual violence has emerged instead.

When it comes to the case of related organizations and the researchers of Korea, China, and Taiwan, there is a tendency to explain the concept and the category of 'comfort women' with emphasis on the features of their own countries' 'comfort women' victims. On the other hand, Japanese researchers attempt to explain the overall damages caused by the 'comfort women' system, focusing on the characteristics of the comfort facilities and the 'comfort women' as revealed in the documents, especially in Japanese administrative data or military documents. The 'comfort women' resolution movement, which encompasses the research conducted so far, has expanded its global solidarity by emphasizing that the system was a 'universal violation of women's rights.' However, it seems that the peculiar historicity of the 'comfort women' system itself has not yet achieved general consensus, to say nothing of its universal nature as 'wartime sexual slavery.'

In order to overcome this confusion over the concept and the categorization of the Japanese military 'comfort women,' we should return to the history. The following sections will discuss the unique historicity of the issue of Japanese military 'comfort women,' considering all the actual damages as well as its universality in its relation to women's rights across different generations. In this manner, what is readdressed is how to define the Japanese military 'comfort women.'

²² Chung Jinsung, "The Historical Reality of the Japanese Military Comfort Women Issue and the Coloniality," in *The Japanese Military Comfort Women Problem and Japan's Historical Revisionist Policy*, Do Si-hwan, ed. (Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2018), 21-22; _____, "Universality as Sexual Violence under Armed Conflicts and Historical Peculiarity of Japanese Sexual Slavery: Focusing on the Discussions of International Society," *Journal of Korean Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 2003): 46-47.

Japanese Military Warfare Participation and Controlling the Sexual Desire of the Soldiers

1. The Lax Military Discipline of Soldiers and the Japanese Military's Response

The necessity of the Japanese military 'comfort women' system arose from the need to address the problem of the soldiers' lax military discipline. Japanese troops did not conduct themselves very well during the wartime period. When Miki Yoshihide (三木良英), the medical director of the Ministry of the Army of Japan, went out to inspect the northeastern region of China in May 1940, he commented that "the life of the Kwandong Army was a total mess, full of fleeing and assault."

Japanese troops in China are generally ill-conducted. They are in need of mental comfort and a supply of commodities. The commander claims that mental instability is the fundamental cause of all the unknown feelings and assaults. Thus, commander Doihara (土肥原) is requesting the dispatch of a group of comfort women. It has been known that there was no one from the border guards who went out. I ask for urgent support from The Relief Department of the Military (恤兵部).²³

Regarding the problem of the bad behavior of the soldiers on the battlefield, the Japanese military tried to find the cause of the soldiers' mental illness. "Due to the conditions of the battlefield, soldiers were repeatedly exposed to extraordinary yet varied stimuli or impulses and this caused a peculiar mental illness as a consequence."²⁴ In summary, "such excessive mental instability which lasted for a long time causes mental fatigue, and this will finally result in an accident such as when a [musical] instrument's

²³ Kanahara Setsuzo, "Compendium of Daily Work Log (February 5, 1940)," in *Complete Compilation of Documents on the Japanese Military Comfort Women*, vol. 1, Yuko Suzuki, Yon'e Yamashita, and Masaru Tonomura, eds. (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2006), 242.

²⁴ Hayao Torao, "Special Phenomena on the Battlefield and Its Countermeasures (1939. 6)," in *Government Investigation: Complete Compilation of Documents on Military Comfort Women*, vol. 2, Asian Women's Fund, ed. (Tokyo: Ryukei-shosha, 1997), 55.

string easily breaks when it has been pulled too tight for a long time. The malfunctioning mentality leads to the frequent occurrence of crimes.”²⁵

In his article written in 1939, the army surgeon Hayao Torao (早尾 雄) introduced twenty-two factors that influenced the soldiers' mentality by controlling their mind and body. Sexual desire and rape was the 17th factor among the total of 22. Hayao insisted that the incidents of rape of Chinese women, which was attributed to the over-suppression of the Japanese soldiers' sexual desire at the time, directly triggered the establishment of the official comfort facility for the military and, thereby, introduced ten different cases of rape committed by the soldiers. He also revealed his sarcastic attitude by commenting about why Japanese soldiers could not behave rationally in the face of their sexual desire and, even worse, the military authorities did not consider it strange. Instead, he believed that the Japanese military authorities at the time thought that there was no better way than holding a woman for soldiers to suppress the difficult instincts arising from the dull life of war.²⁶

What we can learn from here is that the Japanese military regarded the problem of their soldiers' lax military discipline—including fleeing, assault, and rape—as something that commonly occurred on the battlefield, rather than as a particular problem of the Japanese military. Mental illness is also something that is commonly experienced by any army, participating in war, with the 'sexual desire'²⁷ of their soldiers being one of the most critical factors that affect their mentality. Thinking that the soldiers had no choice but to become rough as their 'sexual desire' had been suppressed for so long on the battlefield, they regarded having sex with women to satisfy their sexual desire as very natural, viz., a male-centered sexual consciousness.

It was the feature of the modern Japanese military that interpreted the

²⁵ Hayao Torao, "Two War Neurosis and Two Crimes in the Battlefield (1938)," in *Field Reports of the Military Doctors*, Takasaki Ryuji, ed. (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1990).

²⁶ Hayao Torao, "Special Phenomena on the Battlefield and Its Countermeasures (1939. 6)."

²⁷ The soldier's 'sexual desire' quoted in this article is nothing more than a patriarchal discourse as it implies that soldier's 'sexual desire' is either to be resolved through sex with women or to inevitably cause crimes such as violence and rape. Thus, we used the quotation marks for 'sexual desire.'

matter of military discipline in terms of male's sexual instinct. What enabled the Japanese military to maintain its discipline was the compulsion of absolute obedience and the emphasis on mentalism.²⁸ All the strict rules, training, and punishment helped maintain decent discipline. Military authorities aimed at making their young soldiers fight like a robot by neglecting their ill-conducted private lives.²⁹ This was also aimed at concealing the fundamental problem of what Japanese troops had—too much repression lied in their soldiers' human rights. Life in the military was always full of tension and the military facilities were generally poor in quality. Despite the armies of the western countries that are guaranteed a certain period of vacation, all of the Japanese troops, except for only a small number, were not given any vacation during wartime.³⁰

In 1939, the military surgeon Aso Tetsuo (麻生徹男) suggested establishing other types of entertainment facilities—places for troops to enjoy music, movies, books, sports, and so forth—aside from the 'comfort facilities' to deal with a lax military discipline problem, but it was not accepted.³¹ Similarly, the military surgeon Torao Hayao also appealed that what soldiers with mental illness were in need of was mental therapy with corresponding hospitalization and treatment, plus the coordination of work, a guarantee of enough rest, and the prohibition of drinking with tight monitoring, but it was not taken seriously by the Japanese military.³² What these two military surgeons paid attention to was the problem of the over interpretation of soldiers' 'sexual desire.' The perception, as Torao Hayao pointed out, was that 'there is no better way than holding a woman to the soldiers to suppress their tough instinct.' This was indeed the direct trigger that resulted in establishing the Japanese military 'comfort women' system.

²⁸ Yun Myungsuk, *Korean Military Comfort Women and Japanese Military Comfort Stations System*, 223-24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁰ Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Japanese Military Comfort Women*, 64-65.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³² Yun Myungsuk, *Korean Military Comfort Women and Japanese Military Comfort Stations System*, 241.

2. Controlling the Sexual Desire of Japanese Soldiers and the 'Comfort Women'

1) Installation of the Military Comfort Facility

The Japanese military established the 'comfort women' system on the pretext of sexually comforting their soldiers. The Ministry of the Army of Japan announced the "Measures to Raise the Morale of the Military" in September 1940, saying that "the comfort that soldiers receive in the sexual comfort facilities is in particular the most honest and yet the most significant one. Therefore, when it comes to discussing the need to suppress such convention, we also need to take into consideration its impact on other factors such as the promotion of motivation, the maintenance of military discipline, and the prevention of crime or "sexual diseases."³³

Installing comfort facilities was the Japanese military's unique system that was difficult to find in other countries. When the United States military wrote a report in 1944 by arresting and interrogating the operators and the 'comfort women' from the comfort facilities, they demonstrated that "the term 'comfort girl' is a unique Japan-thing because different types of 'comfort women' are found in all of the other places where Japanese troops participated in battles."³⁴ The one who receives the 'comfort' from the term 'comfort women' is the soldier. Referring to the United States military's report that "the 'comfort women' are found in all of the other places where Japanese troops participated in battles," it can be noted that there had prevailed the perception that 'comfort women' were aimed at helping Japanese soldiers. In other words, this reflected the specific intention of the Japanese military at the time towards the creation of 'comfort women,' which was to make the execution of war more efficient.

³³ Yuko, Yon'e, and Masaru, eds. *Collection of Documents Related to the Japanese Military Comfort Women*, vol. 1, 247-51.

³⁴ United States Office of War Information, *Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report*, no. 49 (October, 1944).

2) Soldiers' Conceal and Promotion of Raping the Women

The military comfort facilities were under the direct and the indirect control of the Japanese military. The Japanese military was involved in the mobilization and the transfer of the 'comfort women' as well as the operation of the military comfort facilities. There have been four main motivations for establishing the Japanese military 'comfort women' system discussed so far, including what Yoshimi Yoshiaki analyzed: 1) preventing the occurrence of rape incidents in occupied areas; 2) preventing soldiers' sexual diseases; 3) providing 'comfort' to their soldiers; and 4) maintaining the military's internal secrets.³⁵

The second item corresponds to the purpose of suppressing possible violations of military flags, as mentioned above. We should consider the point that the purpose of establishing a military comfort facility for the 'prevention of rape' was for suppressing anti-Japanese sentiment against the Japanese soldiers in order to maintain military discipline in the occupied area, rather than for the protection of ordinary women's dignity.³⁶ Okabe Naozaburo (岡部直三郎), chief of staff of the Japanese Northern China Area Army, dispatched a note to each army on June 27, 1938, that supports this point. The note stated that rape by military rape is an 'act of rebellion against the state,' as it 'interrupts the overall operational behavior of the military.'³⁷

³⁵ Yun Myungsuk, *Korean Military Comfort Women and Japanese Military Comfort Stations System*, 188.

³⁶ 'The protection of ordinary women's dignity was the commonly used excuse of the people who supported establishing a licensed prostitution system by insisting that establishing a legal place for men to resolve their sexual desire would help protect women's dignity. The Japanese government, recognizing the licensed prostitution system, led by soldiers and city laborers, as a necessary evil of the modern state, did always support this system to argue that the abolishment of licensed prostitution would increase sex crimes against 'ordinary women.' Thus, the licensed prostitution system was closely related to the promotion of the 'good housewife' ideal in modern Japan. However, the local women in occupied lands were not considered to be protected by patriarchal Japanese men, which was a belief deeply influenced by nationalism. Therefore, such recognition led to the weak protection of the local women in the occupied area from sexual crimes committed by the Japanese military.

³⁷ Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, eds., *Collection of Documents Related to the Japanese Military Comfort Women*, vol. 1, 109-10.

The Japanese military did not strictly punish the crime of rape committed by their soldiers. Even Naozaburo Okabe, who had emphasized the seriousness of the rape problem, did not consider the problem of the soldiers' sexual assaults seriously, as it was 'a crime committed unintentionally.' Despite the provision in Chapter 9 of the Japanese Army Criminal Code that rape by soldiers would be treated as a 'crime of robbery or rape' and be punished indefinitely or by at least more than one year (amended in 1932), some said that "even the commander sometimes overlooked their soldiers' rape, thinking that it helped to energize them."³⁸ In the cases of Hebei and Shanxi in China, where the Japanese military's sexual crimes were relatively concentrated during the Sino-Japanese War, the cases of collective rape—men—were easily found.³⁹ Considering that even rape committed by the entire army base was not treated as a violation of the Army's criminal code, should this be viewed as systematic occurrences by the military or as casual acts of aberration by a military that was lucky enough to avoid any condemnation at the time?

Kasahara Tokushi (笠原十九司) pointed out that the pleasure that soldiers gained from murdering or raping sometimes helped them transcend the pain and the fear from the war.⁴⁰ Having said that, the Japanese military indeed promoted efficiency of warfare by condoning rape by their soldiers. In other words, rape by soldiers was considered as a strategy of war.

There is also testimony from one Korean woman who was once mobilized by Japanese naval forces in the past. She described an episode when one soldier, after committing rape, killed the victim because he feared exposure to the public when she returned to her village.⁴¹ As such,

³⁸ Torao Hayao, "Special Phenomena on the Battlefield and Its Countermeasures (1939. 6)."

³⁹ Kasahara Tokushi, "The Investigation of Japan's Military Sexual Violence in Hebei and Shanxi Provinces," *Quarterly Report on Japan's War Responsibility, Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility* 13 (January 1996): 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴¹ Jung Bong-yeon, "A Study of the Actual Condition of the Korean 'Comfort Women' in Haenam Province," interview by Jang Soo-ji and Park Jung-ae, in *Research Report of the Truth Commission on Forced Mobilization under Japanese Imperialism Republic of Korea* (Seoul: The Truth Commission on Forced Mobilization under Japanese Imperialism Republic of Korea, 2007), 67.

the Japanese military was not concerned about rape committed by their soldiers but rather the possibility that this crime would become known publicly. Driven not only by the fear of anti-Japanese actions by the residents in the occupied area, but also by fear that the victims would appeal to the Japanese military police, many of the soldiers, who committed rape, killed the victims to destroy the evidence.⁴² In addition, some said that conversations among senior and junior soldiers where they boasted of their rape activities also implicitly encouraged each other's sexual offenses.⁴³ The military surgeon Torao Hayao said, "Not engaging in raping does not mean anything but just a little stricter discipline."⁴⁴ Therefore, rape by a soldier was not an unusual event but a daily routine, which was generally tolerated by the military authorities. This also suggests that the gap between rape victims from the Asian-Pacific War and the 'comfort women' victims was almost negligible.

3) Use of Brothels in Imperial Japan

The last issue regards the licensed prostitution system that existed in the main islands of Imperial Japan, in the colonies, in the areas under occupation, and in the wartime territories. When we discuss the historical specificity of the Japanese military 'comfort women' system, people often mention its difference from the licensed prostitution system. Licensed prostitutes from brothels have not been generally recognized as 'comfort women' victims. However, such a perception was created to refute the logic of the history deniers, who argued that Japan had no responsibility for the 'comfort women' as they were originally licensed prostitutes.

Since the 1990s, several studies have attempted to clarify the relationship between the licensed prostitution system and the Japanese military 'comfort women' system. They demonstrated that both systems could suppress the human rights of women and exert control over a male's sexual

⁴² Kasahara Tokushi, "The Investigation of Japan's Military Sexual Violence in Hebei and Shanxi Provinces," 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

desire through the process of institutionalization within a framework enabled by state power.⁴⁵ On the other hand, others have explained the licensed prostitution system in terms of Japan’s modernization process. They have interpreted the advent of the system as a natural process that strengthened the power of the wealthy as well as of the urban laborers through rapid conflict and discrimination by ethnicity, class, and gender.⁴⁶ Therefore, in line with the argument of the modern Japanese government, they claim that prostitutes were not victims of human trafficking since they were legally permitted, and apply the same principle to the ‘comfort women’ as well.

On the other hand, there is a clear perception that women who were taken to the comfort facilities in Japan, the colonial regions, and Manchuria, where the licensed prostitution system operated during wartime, were obviously ‘comfort women’ victims. The Chinese ‘Comfort Women’ Museum in Shanghai exhibited photographs from Osaka Town (逢坂町) in Dalian (大連) in the 1930s.⁴⁷ This was a leased territory controlled by the Japanese military after the Sino-Japanese War, which later became an area for licensed prostitution in December 1905.⁴⁸ In other words, the brothel run by the Japanese Consulate in China at the time is considered to be a military comfort facility by the Chinese archives.

In addition, a Korean victim, Yun Du-ri, testified that she was taken to the first comfort facility located in Yeongdo, Busan in September 1943. She said that around 30 to 40 Japanese soldiers came each day and there

⁴⁵ Yuki Fujime, “The Comfort Women Issue From the Perspective of Women’s History,” in *Quarterly Report on Japan’s War Responsibility* 18 (January, 1997); Youn’ok Song, “History Development From the Licensed Prostitution to the Comfort Women System,” in *Judging Japanese Military Slave—Records of 2000 International Women’s War Crimes Tribunal*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Ryokufu Shuppan, 2000).

⁴⁶ Hata Ikuhiko, *Japanese Military Sexual Slavery and Battleground Sex*, 27-57.

⁴⁷ Seoul National University Institute for Gender Research, ed., *Research on Analyzing the Current Situation of the Historical Contents Related to Japanese Military Comfort Women and Improvement Plans for Their Utility* (Seoul: Ministry of Gender Equality, 2009), 45.

⁴⁸ Takeshi Fujinaga, “The Russo-Japanese War and Japan’s Transplantation of Licensed Prostitution to Manchuria: Pleasures and Control,” in *Examining the Traces of Amusement in Modern Times* (Ōsakasangyōdaigaku sangyō kenkyūjo kenkyū sōsho, 1998).

were more soldiers on the day the ship came in.⁴⁹ Yun Du-ri's experience is not much different from that of the 'comfort women' victims who were taken to China and Southeast Asia. The area where Yun Du-ri was taken was the brothel in Makishima (牧島), Busan during the colonial period.⁵⁰ Lee Seo-geun, the first Korean naval volunteer who was mobilized to Hainan Island of China via Taiwan, also said that while he stayed in Kaohsiung (高雄), Taiwan for one week in 1944, he witnessed soldiers using the local brothels. Since most of the people there were soldiers, it deserved to be called a 'comfort facility.'⁵¹

In the areas for licensed prostitution in Imperial Japan, each police officer belonging to the Ministry of Home Affairs of Japan, the Home Affairs Bureau of the Chosun Governor-General, and the local Japanese Consulate carried out the registration of the women in hospitality, the examination of sexual diseases, and the collection of sales tax, etc. Furthermore, when the total mobilization system was in operation after 1938, the Imperial Japanese licensed prostitution system began to be reorganized to participate in war. The Japanese government tried to suppress the wartime hospitality business through business control and tax increase policies, and to close completely the relatively non-competitive hospitality business. As a result, the licensed prostitution business, which lost its competitiveness among the private brothels in the early and the mid-1930s, began to show its strength again after 1938. The brothels were becoming wealthy as there were many military visitors, especially during the army's camping period.⁵²

⁴⁹ Yun Du-ri, "Being Trapped in Comfort Facilities—Right in Front of My House," interview by An Yeon-seon, in *The Korean Military Comfort Women, Who Were Taken by Force*, vol. 1, the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, ed. (Seoul: Hanul, 1993), 289-96.

⁵⁰ Yun Du-ri once appeared in the documentary "Low Voice 2" (Director Byeon Yeong-joo) in 1997 and pointed out the comfort facility in Yeongdo, Busan as the place where she was taken. This was an area within the Makishima Brothel of Busan during the colonial period.

⁵¹ Lee Seo-geun, interview by Park Jung-ae, in *Mindeullaey yeongto*, Shinchon (May 17, 2008).

⁵² Police Agency of Gyeonggi Province, "Regarding the Second Sino-Japanese War—Economic Situations," in *Security Situation* (September 1938), ed. Police Agency of Gyeonggi Province, (Police Agency of Gyeonggi Province, 1938).

Due to the Japanese government's policy of eliminating a number of hospitality businesses which were not competitive enough, ironically, the government left a few businesses that could have had more soldiers during the war. The licensed prostitution system during wartime was also reorganized in tune with the total mobilization system and eventually transformed, thereby transforming into a system with different characteristics as compared with the previous system.⁵³ It can be said that the licensed prostitution facilities developed into the facilities that could operate as 'sexual comfort facilities' when all of the comfort facilities were starting to actively yet systematically appear after the Sino-Japanese War.

Conclusion

In regard to the 'comfort women' system, Chung Jinsung believed that its incorporation into the global women's movement for the sake of strengthening international solidarity indeed resulted in excessive discussion of the Japanese military 'comfort women' issue without consideration of its core historicity.⁵⁴ The historicity of the Japanese military 'comfort women' issue lies in the 'historical facts' that the mobilization of the 'comfort women' and the establishment of the comfort facilities were all part of an organized and long-lasting Japanese system. Therefore, she argued that the effort to resolve the 'comfort women' issue should start from an analysis of the actual historical context.⁵⁵ This article also concurs with her position that establishing the concept and the category of the 'comfort women' requires an analysis of the actual situation in history. Nevertheless, her argument contains less of historical context in delving into the local brothels as military comfort facilities or the rape cases against local women by the Japanese

⁵³ Park Jung-ae, "The Joseon Government-General's Policy to Suppress the Entertainment Industry and Changes in the Hospitality Industry in Joseon during the General Mobilization Period," *The Journal of Korean-Japanese National Studies* 17 (2009): 191-222.

⁵⁴ Chung, "The Historical Reality of the Japanese Military Comfort Women Issue and the Coloniality," 21-22.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-32.

military that had operated military comfort facilities for a long period of time.

As the ‘comfort women’ issue was raised in terms of Japanese war crimes and the responsibility for colonial control, the concept of the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ system could be interpreted as a national crime since the 1990s. This was possible because the perception that sexual violence experienced by women was not a problem of individual misfortune but rather a problem of a patriarchal and violent social structure, which began to be recognized in Korean society after 1987. Moreover, the social consensus on the need to criticize the secondary perpetrators by looking at the sexual violence from the victims’ perspective has gradually grown. Among the soldiers who used military comfort facilities at the time, the words that were used more often than ‘comfort women’ were gisaeng, whore, barmaid, P (ປໍ່), or prostitute. However, since the 1990s, these terms have all been included within the concept of ‘comfort women’ as defined from a new perspective. We cannot just simply negate the historical context and define the concept only from a contemporary point of view. Since the damage experienced by the ‘comfort women’ victims is inextricably linked to the systematic and the prolonged involvement of the Japan government, we should emphasize the peculiarity of the ‘comfort women’ ‘system’ itself.

This ‘institutional’ aspect can only be revealed when we look at the ‘comfort women’ issue from the perspective that the ‘sexual comfort of the soldiers’ was supported by a corresponding policy implemented by the Japanese government as a strategy to raise efficiency in conducting warfare. The licensed prostitution system and the comfort facilities were established and women’s sexual segregation was solidified, all of which were made possible under the policy considerations of public power. We should avoid discussions which aim at creating competitions among ‘comfort women,’ ‘licensed prostitutes,’ and ‘rape victims’ with respect to the extent of their respective damages on the grounds that these discussions will lead to the exclusion of or to the hierarchization of these victim groups. The victims were either glossed over by being conceptualized with the term ‘comfort women’ or hated as being ‘whores’ or ‘prostitutes’ who were confined in

the 'sexual comfort facilities' and forced to endure inhumane lives. Having said that, the fact that the licensed prostitution system and the Japanese military 'comfort women' system, both of which turned women into sexual objects, were legally accepted and actively utilized as a strategy of warfare should be criticized severely. Henceforth, we need to stop the circumvention of the responsibility for past crimes under the excuse that this behavior was considered legal in the past, and to eradicate the voices that seek to legalize men's sexual use of women.

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