

KOREAN COMFORT WOMEN: HOW JAPANESE MILITARY
EXPANSION WITHIN EAST ASIA LED TO SYSTEMATIZED
PROSTITUTION BETWEEN 1910 AND 1945

A Thesis

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Joseph Michael Grzebyk

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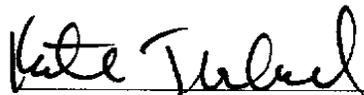
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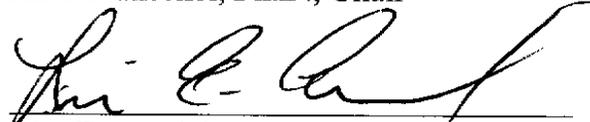
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Origin of Japanese Prostitution.....	11
III. Why Korean Comfort Women?.....	39
Modern Changes	40
Recruitment.....	55
Colonialism and The <i>Gisaeng</i>	63
IV. Why an Issue Today?.....	75
V. Conclusion	93
Bibliography	95

PREFACE

ROMANIZATION AND MCCUNE SYSTEM

Transliteration of the Korean language into English is a fairly recent practice. The McCune-Reischauer Romanization and the Revised Romanization are the two current models. They have shaped transliteration of the written Korean language for the past seventy-five years. The McCune-Reischauer system was invented by an American in the 1930s. This system represents a phonetic transcription of the spoken Korean language which relies on the placement of apostrophes for proper pronunciation. In contrast, Revised Romanization adheres more strictly to Korean phonology, thereby eliminating confusion in pronunciation. Korean translation consequently varies between these two models depending upon the transcriber's choice of style. The Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism created and integrated the newer Revised Romanization system in 2000 in an attempt to adopt a standardized form and thus further alleviate confusion among foreign speakers. Like many new and unfamiliar things, traditional scholars met complete integration of the newer system with criticism. Many current publications are still inclined to utilize the McCune-Reischauer method. The following research will script all applicable terms according to the newer Revised Romanization system.

ABSTRACT

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Japan's military aggression throughout East Asia during World War II largely hinged on the colonization of Korea. Although Japan controlled various other areas of Asia, Korea had a variety of valuable resources that aided Japanese Imperialism. Korea was a country that possessed tactical military advantages, valuable natural resources, and the abundant potential for human labor. Although Japan benefitted from colonizing Korea, Koreans struggled under the yoke of Japanese oppression. At the heart of Korean suffering lies the creation of prostitution centers known as comfort stations. Japan abducted or "enlisted" somewhere around 200,000 Korean women for centers established near areas frequented by Japanese troops. Many of the women kidnapped by Japanese recruiters existed in a state of virtual slavery and exposed to a battery of daily beatings and rapes. As a result of culture and shame, numerous survivors of comfort stations hid their experiences for the better part of fifty years. Only recently has the issue surfaced in

popular media. The Japanese government managed to hide the guilt of their actions after the war, but in the face of current accusations, they are no longer able to deny the actions of their military and the existence of comfort women.

My research attempts to deconstruct the commonly accepted narrative about comfort women. What would the phenomenon look like from a different perspective – one that didn't assume Japanese guilt? I attempt to build a counter-factual history to see if the story of Japanese colonization and exploitation of Korean women might be more complex than it looks on the surface. For the basis of my study, I decided to look at the factors that contributed to the rise of Korean women in comfort stations. The main questions that guided my research explored other plausible explanations for the exposure of Korea women to sexual predators. For instance, how did the Japanese colonization of Korea create an avenue for Korean oppression, manipulation, and abduction? Also, did modernization play a role in the rise of Korean comfort women? Finally and most importantly, this thesis explores the premise of a possible relationship between Korean culture, beliefs, and history in the creation of comfort women.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“I was born as a woman but never lived as a woman....I suffer from a bitterness I do not know how to overcome”

– Comfort women victim, Kim Hak-Soon¹

While attending the South Korean University of *Yonsei* in 2012, I was struck by how often the topic of the deplorable acts committed by the Japanese during WWII came up. The Korean belief about comfort women is at the heart of the vilification of Japan. Nearly all Koreans will agree that the Japanese military abducted around 200,000 Korean women and forced them to live as sexual slaves. I had heard of comfort women before, but knew little about them or their relationship to the Japanese. In South Korea, the sexual exploitation of women by the Japanese during WWII has a constant presence in the Korean historical memory. There seems to be a consensus that this atrocity visited upon Korean women was entirely the fault of the Japanese.

South Korea’s unwavering belief that Japan is uniformly to blame for comfort women made me wonder if there was another side of the story. Yes, what the Japanese did was horrendous, but do others share some of the responsibility? What would the phenomenon look like from a different perspective – one that didn’t assume Japanese guilt? These questions are what drew me toward the topic of my thesis. As I began to research

¹ Kazuko Wantanabe, “Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women: ‘Comfort Women’ Forced into Sexual Labor for Japanese Soldiers,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 26, no.4 (October – December 1994): 5.

comfort women, I began to construct a counter-factual history to see if the story of Japanese colonization and exploitation of Korean women might be more complex than originally represented. This thesis is the result of that exploration.

The sexual exploitation and enslavement of Korean women by the Japanese Imperial Army during the first half of the twentieth century is a very convoluted and controversial subject. Traditional scholars worldwide have euphemistically referred to these women as “comfort women.” This term is a direct English translation of the Japanese word *ianfu* which the Japanese military used to describe prostitutes.² Comfort women, in fact, are the prostitutes used by the Japanese Empire between 1910 and 1945. This term reinforces the grossly inaccurate categorization of these women from a Japanese perspective. As more light is shed upon the facts surrounding the subject, these women are beginning to be understood as victims of coercion, abduction, and sexual abuse. Although the term “comfort women” is a drastically misleading term, it is the one most commonly used in the majority of scholarly works done on the subject to date. This study, therefore, uses the term “comfort women” despite its historical inaccuracy.

The Japanese military housed comfort women in temporary housing units referred to as comfort stations. These stations were the temporary or sometimes permanent brothels of the “conscripted” prostitutes. The term “conscripted” is used here to indicate the method of enslavement of these victims of war. Recruiters secured comfort women through a means of deception, abduction, or “legally binding” contracts. Victims of Japanese sexual recruitment can be divided into two categories: contracted prostitution or sexual slavery.

² *ian-fu* or *wian-bu* in Korean, more specifically referred to an adult female who provided sexual services to a warrior, so that he may be better rested to fight and win the sacred war for the Japanese Empire.

Contracted prostitution involved recruiters who typically enlisted prostitutes with a general agreement that they could potentially purchase their release at some point in the future. However, freedom was rarely achieved for the majority of enlisted prostitutes under Japanese control. Unfortunately, the vast majority of “prostitutes” were incapable of ever leaving their employment once it had commenced. Employment agencies or brothel owners often charged working women spurious fees for clothing, food, and medicine during service. As a result of accrued expenses, they often owed more than they earned. The second category of enslaved comfort women had no hope of purchasing their freedom. The Japanese military acquired these women through force and used them as sexual objects with limited or no personal freedom. Whether voluntarily enlisted or abducted, both groups of women found themselves in an unexpected life consisting of daily rapes and other physical abuses.

Fundamentally, the Japanese government sanctioned the enslavement of prostitutes for the benefit of the military. Japanese military personnel operated and controlled virtually all comfort stations throughout East Asia. Although victims of comfort stations often fell into the hands of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese flesh traders, the scope of this paper will only address Japanese involvement and influence upon the systematic sexual exploitation of women for the military.

Located throughout East Asia, the Japanese concentrated comfort stations near military installations or points of interest. As the Japanese Empire spread, so did comfort stations. As a result, the Japanese established comfort stations in Japan, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand, Burma, New Guinea, Hong Kong, Macau, and

French Indochina.³ While the Japanese procured women from all these countries, this paper will only address the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean women affected by the system during Japanese expansion--from the official annexation of Korea in 1910 to the formal surrender of Japan to the United States in 1945.

Due to the sudden and thorough destruction of documents by the Japanese following their surrender in 1945, the actual number of women relegated to comfort stations cannot be accurately known. Current research on the subject estimates that anywhere from 20,000 to 400,000 women resided at some point within these facilities.⁴ However, most historians agree that the actual figure is somewhere around two-hundred thousand women. Furthermore, most historians agree that Korean women made up the majority of victims incorporated into forced prostitution during Japanese occupation. They estimate that Korean women constituted eighty to ninety percent of all comfort women. Koreans constituted a large majority of victims because of several factors that include proximity, race, and class.⁵ Consequently, the issue of comfort women globally has traditionally been regarded as a largely Korean phenomenon by the media because of the sheer volume of Korean women associated with comfort stations.

The recruitment of women for sexual exploitation was a phenomenon methodically and purposefully constructed through the joint actions and policies of China,

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "On the Issue of Wartime 'Comfort Women.'" August 4, 1993. Cabinet Councilors' Office on External Affairs
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/issue9308.html>

⁴ Sarah Chunghee Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 23.

⁵ Paul H. Kratoska ed. *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005), 311.

Korea, and Japan. The success of this system was based on a historic familiarity and acceptance of prostitution. The oppression of comfort women had its roots in Japanese culture--the acceptance of female sexual objectification. The institution of comfort stations was not the product of some modern idea, but rather the evolution and adaptation of a system based on the misogynist beliefs of Japanese patriarchal society throughout their history. Korea also has a long tradition of patriarchal misogyny. Korean patriarchy increased the risk of abduction and abuse from Japanese militants. Korean patriarchy combined with the strong social status afforded a woman's virginity, greatly increased the likelihood of Korean female abduction. Similarities between Korean and Japanese culture made Japanese occupation and influence flow relatively smoothly. Nonetheless, Koreans under Japanese occupation had to adapt for survival. Ultimately, the systematization of comfort stations was not only a product of Japan's aggression, but the result of altered and inherent Korean values. In essence, Korean culture provided a unique opportunity for the Japanese to sexually exploit Korean women. This is evidenced by the systematization and expansion of comfort stations and the large numbers of Korean women forced into comfort stations.

Dr. Sarah Chunghee Soh is one of the leading researchers on comfort women. She has written a variety of articles as well as a book on the subject: *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*.⁶ Soh traveled back and forth between the United States and Korea while gathering information for her book. Of Korean descent, and able to speak Korean, Soh interviewed survivors of Japanese-controlled Korea. Her relentless search for the truth resulted in a remarkable story that brings to light a truly

⁶ Soh, *The Comfort Women*.

horrific time in Korean history. *The Comfort Women* is a seminal piece that discusses the sexual violence against Korean women from a Korean perspective. Using a variety of personal narratives, Soh succinctly describes the history of forced prostitution. More importantly, Soh's search for justice is a strong undertone throughout her writing. Soh's work attempts to fortify the issue from a Korean standpoint as a global movement for reparations for victims grows. Time is of the essence because of the dwindling number of survivors coupled with the fact that they are all advanced in age. Currently, there are only a handful of Korean comfort women survivors still alive. These resilient victims of Japanese oppression permanently reside within the *House of Sharing* on the outskirts of Seoul, the capital of Korea.

Although Soh provides a highly informative historical setting for comfort women, her work is largely aimed at the Korean movement for redress. The focus of my thesis is not on the victim's story, but how these women became susceptible to the system as a whole. This study aims to identify the reasons behind the decline of Korean morals and the increased objectification of Korean women. What were the factors that helped foster the comfort women system as a result of Japanese Imperialism? What did Korea's own economic role play in the creation of this tragic system? Carter J. Eckert's book *Korea Old and New a History* proved to be a valuable resource for addressing this question.⁷ His work examines Korean history from the Paleolithic Age to the end of the twentieth century. Although Eckert covers a vast time span of Korean history, his modern research of the twentieth century stands out, offering an insightful analysis of the agricultural and industrial

⁷ Carter J. Eckert, et al. *Korea Old and New a History*, (Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, 1990).

effects on Korean workers. He describes how Japanese officials restructured Korean agricultural practices as a means to feed Japan. Moreover, Eckert looks at the effects of increased industrialization in Korea. This study attempts to use Eckert's work to compare the increase of Japanese industry in Korea with an increase in the destitute circumstances of Korean farmers.

The economic strife faced by Koreans left them with few options for supporting their families. Japanese-controlled Korea presented a viable alternative for unemployment. Japanese recruiters often hired Korean men to help secure a stable supply of Korean women. Korean workers that received wages from the Japanese likely found themselves in a situation that relied on the stability and continuation of Japanese support. In order to survive, many Korean farmers and laborers sought to incur favor with Japan. This included seeking out vulnerable women for military brothels. In many cases, the loss of family wages increased a woman's vulnerability. As families became more and more impoverished as a result of economic decline, farmers found a means to survive by selling off their daughters to recruiters. Many of these daughters found themselves living within the confines of comfort stations. Although economics played a huge role in the abundance of available Korean prostitutes, the whole issue of comfort women is greater than the sum of its parts.

There are only a handful of published books that attempt to fully address the dismal state of comfort women. Full disclosure of the issue is arguably unattainable because of a lacuna in memory or absence of documentable evidence. One study by George Hicks portrays comfort women as more than just a Korean phenomenon. In *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, Hicks describes

the forced mobilization of all comfort women throughout Asia.⁸ Internationally, the media has portrayed the issue as a solely Korean problem due to an overall high volume of women taken from Korea. As Hicks documents, the issue is much larger. The Japanese abducted women throughout Asia as a means to supply government-sanctioned brothels with prostitutes. Hicks addresses the commonly forgotten victims from other minorities by stressing the overall reach of Japanese colonization within Asia. *The Comfort Women* is an example of a methodical and highly investigative piece of historical research that highlights Japan's barbarism.

Although scholars such as Soh and Hicks provide a highly informative narrative on comfort women, they fail to encompass and identify the heart of the matter. Korean society in some fashion is also responsible for the successful manipulation of so many Korean comfort women. Koreans adopted many of the fashions and governmental policies of Japan. Consequently, a sizable portion of the Koreans suffered under the different and often harsh changes that followed. Unable to make a living, Koreans exchanged traditional occupations and customs for more modern or profitable positions. More often than not, the only jobs available for Korean men involved recruiting women for the Japanese. Many Korean men resorted to human trafficking as Japanese accomplices for survival. On the other hand, I believe that many Korean women survived by abandoning their traditional roles for urban lifestyles and urban occupations. Trying to prove my assertions about Korean society, I found language and cultural animosity as the greatest obstacles.

⁸ George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997).

Scholarly publications in English on the subject are rare. One reason for this is that proper research on the subject demands competency in several languages owing to changes that occurred to Colonial Korea's national language. Comfort women lived during an era of political upheaval. Governments changed, and as they changed the national language of Korea shifted. Japanese colonial policy dictated that all Koreans must learn to speak Japanese. Therefore, thorough examination of primary sources demands fluency in not only Korean and Japanese, but Colonial Korean as well. Colonial Korean is a mixture of Korean characters as well as Japanese pictographs. Currently, Colonial Korean is only accurately spoken by a very limited number of individuals and considered a dead language. Researchers that wish to investigate comfort women face this obstacle.

The recent rise of interest in comfort women has generated a public demand for more information. Unfortunately, much of the concrete evidence is suspect, tainted with a strong cultural and political bias. The unsavory story of comfort women has long been hidden behind a veil of patriotism. In order to ascertain what really happened, one must either be in possession of the few remaining primary documents or put one's trust in the authors that publish their findings. This study attempts to blend the two different methods and build a more concrete narrative of what really occurred.

My focus is on the involvement of Korea in the creation of comfort women. Japan systematized the institution of comfort stations, but Koreans assisted directly and indirectly in the population of comfort stations by Korean victims. Researchers have failed to account for the huge disparity in the numbers of victims within comfort stations. The majority of women that served in such facilities were predominantly Korean. During World War II, Japan colonized multiple territories in Southeast Asia. With this in mind, why is it

that Koreans accounted for the majority of comfort women? Using primary sources from *Yonsei* University, one of the most prestigious universities in South Korea, my research attempts to answer this question. Modernity played a huge role in the shift of traditional values that protected women from exploitation. My thesis utilizes material that has yet to be made available online or in textbooks. More specifically, I draw on the Korean women's magazine *Yeoseong*, connecting urbanization to the rise of comfort women in general. Many of the women that sought modern life styles exposed themselves to traffickers. Consequently, the push for modernization was a direct link and driving force behind comfort stations populated by Koreans.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF JAPANESE PROSTITUTION

Sexual slavery within China and Korea evolved throughout the course of World War II. Originally, comfort stations existed as ad-hoc pleasure houses or brothels. The genesis of the first comfort stations can be traced to Japanese colonialism in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1910, Japanese colonialism in Korea amounted to the imposition of Japanese ideals and beliefs on the Korean population. Under Emperor Hirohito (r. 1926-1989), Japan dictated and controlled virtually every aspect of Korean society until the unconditional surrender of Japan in 1945. In doing so, the Japanese, in essence, battered the hearts, minds and bodies of an entire generation of Koreans.

In order to understand the complexities of Japanese trafficking of Korean women, one must understand the history of the area. Japanese encroachment on Korea began with the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876. Korea, or the Hermit Kingdom as it was known, had a variety of strategic and economic advantages. In addition to being a largely coastal country, Korea had an abundance of natural resources like timber and coal. Korea also provided a highly strategic access point for the potential invasion of China. Japan desired to establish economic ties with Korea before the European powers could, and looked for a means to gain a foothold in the isolated Kingdom. Unfortunately for Japan, Korea existed as a tributary nation under Chinese protection since 1401. Because of this, Korea remained a largely independent and autonomous country since the fifteenth century. Fearing Chinese retaliation in response to an

unjustified invasion of Korean, Japan had few options. Consequently, Japanese involvement in Korea could only be justified in the case of an unprovoked attack upon Japan by Korea. Hoping intimidation would incite such an attack, Japan dispatched a warship to the Korean coast that arrived on September 20, 1876. Under the official pretext of a survey mission, the Japanese gunboat *Un'yō* approached the coastal waters off the Korean island of *Ganghwa*. Without provocation, Korean forces opened fire on the vessel. After returning fire, the *Un'yō* returned to Japan. In order to avoid a war with China, the government of Japan dispatched negotiators to Korea to delegate a compromise over the incident.

Japan's original intention was not to engage in conflict with Korea, but to gain access rights to Korean harbors for the extension of trade between nations. Trade with Korea offered the potential for vast monetary gains for both countries. Japanese officials also believed that control of Korean ports was the first step in the placement of a wedge between Korea's longstanding relations with China. Not wishing to initiate a costly conflict over trade rights, China relinquished these rights to Japan for the time being. With Chinese interests removed from Korea, Japan was free to place economic demands on the country. The Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876, gave Japanese traders uniform admission to Korean ports. Japan's unprecedented access to the three biggest Korean coastal ports of Busan, Incheon, and Wonsan, began the long process of Korean subjugation.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Japanese had established a relatively prosperous foothold within Korea through international trade. One reason for this was Japan's aggressive drive to modernize in the nineteenth century. Initiated under the reign of Emperor Meiji (r. 1867-1912), the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) shifted Japan from a feudal state to a global power largely owing to a rapid industrialization campaign. To fuel

Japan's rapid modernization, the country required the acquisition of a large quantity of raw materials for industrialization. One of the main components of any industrialization movement relied on coal to power mechanization. Additionally, Japan's militarization and modernization depended largely upon coal for the production of iron and steel. Traditionally, the military strength of a nation rests on the production of iron and steel for war machines.⁹ Japan, a country with few natural resources relied heavily on imports from the Asian continent to sustain production. Japanese modernization, consequently, depended entirely upon on a steady and guaranteed supply of incoming raw materials and natural resources. Manchuria and Korea are areas both rich in coal and other natural resources. Unfortunately for Japan, China controlled these regions and their resources. The success of Japan's modernization movement hinged upon the acquisition of the resource-rich areas of Manchuria and Korea. Ultimately, Japan's ability to control Manchuria and Korea could only be realized through war.

In the late nineteenth century, the opportunity arose for Japan to exert power over areas within China and Korea. On August 1, 1894, the First Sino-Japanese War erupted in Korea. The dispute primarily began as a peasant uprising. Known as the Donghak Uprising, large forces of Korean peasants rebelled against the installation of heavy taxes imposed by the government. Initially unable to control the mob of angry peasants, the Korean government requested the aid of Chinese forces. Wishing to protect their tributary ties within Korea, China mobilized and sent a force of three thousand troops into Korea. To avoid conflict with Japan, the Chinese government informed Japan of its impending actions. Japan

⁹ John E. Orchard. "Japanese Expansion in China," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 152, China (Nov., 1930): 331.

saw the opportunity of the Korean rebellion as a means to gain political control within the country. Therefore, Japan dispatched eight thousand troops under the pretext of protecting Japanese residents in the Korean countryside. Shortly after arriving in the Korean capital of Seoul, the Japanese military seized the royal residence of Gyeongbok Palace and installed pro-Japanese officials. The “new” Korean government then ordered Chinese troops to return to China. China refused to comply with Japanese demands, and over the next several months, Japan and China engaged in a series of land and sea battles for control of Korea.

Well trained and armed as a result of modernization, Japanese troops defeated Chinese forces at nearly every encounter and forced China to admit defeat with the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in April 1895. Signed by the Chinese Qing Empire and Japanese Meiji Empire, the Treaty forced China to sever Sino-Korean ties and acknowledge Korea’s independence.¹⁰ Once China lost political control over Korea, Japan quickly infiltrated Korean politics and filled the vacuum as the general authority of the region. In addition to forcing China out of Korea, the Treaty of Shimonoseki also called for China to relinquish the south-eastern part of Manchuria known as the Liaotung Peninsula to Japan. The region has a variety of natural resources and stands as a strategic access point for any potential invasion of China.

Russian officials understood the unique advantage Japan acquired as a result of the agreement over the Liaotung Peninsula and objected to the Treaty. As a close neighbor of China, Russian officials feared that if Japan controlled the Liaotung Peninsula, then they could easily control China. Russian aspirations for future control of China demanded a halt

¹⁰ Eckert. *Korea Old and New a History*, 223.

to the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. To countermand the result of the treaty, Russian officials used political ties with France and Germany to form the Triple Intervention on April 23, 1895. As a diplomatic alliance between Russia, France, and Germany, the Triple Intervention added political pressure and increased the risk of war with Japan over control of the Liaotung Peninsula. Japan, not wishing to engage in war, returned the Liaotung Peninsula to China, but kept a firm grasp over the direction of Korean politics. With Japanese influence removed from the region, Russian officials quickly concluded a secret agreement with China regarding the Chinese territory. Russia acquired a twenty-five year lease of the Liaotung Peninsula and permission to build a Trans-Siberian railway through Manchuria.

In addition to land-use rights, Russia also gained permission to lease the coastal city of Port Arthur. Located at the southernmost tip of the Liaotung Peninsula, Port Arthur was Russia's only access to the Pacific Ocean. Crucial for trade, the coastal city was heavily fortified against the potential of a Japanese attack. The Russian acquisition of Port Arthur and railway rights within China infuriated Japanese officials. Japan perceived Russia's actions as a direct threat to the security of their nation. As a result of Russian and Japanese interference in Chinese affairs, anti-foreign groups such as the Boxers appeared in China. Many Chinese people blamed foreigners for the loss of territory and sought ways to undermine outside interference in Chinese affairs. The mobilization of the militant Boxers threatened the continuation of global trade. Japan and Russia both sent additional troops to ensure stability in China. The increase of Japanese troops established a precedent for foreign control. The rise of the Boxers ignited the spark that led to future Japanese annexation.

In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion erupted in China. The Boxers, a fanatic militant group of xenophobes marched on the Manchurian capital of Beijing. Fueled by the desire to

eradicate foreign influence on Chinese affairs, the Boxers focused their attacks on missionaries and foreign nationals outside of the established European section of Beijing. The rebellion peaked with a siege on Beijing's headquarters for diplomatic affairs, the Center of International Legations. The Boxers' advance on the Center forced some three thousand foreigners to retreat inside the confines of the complex. The Boxers surrounded the area and attempted unsuccessfully to breach the perimeter over the course of several months. Although the Boxers repeatedly attacked the compound, they failed to breach the perimeter, leaving the battle at an impasse. After fifty-five days, an international military force composed of twenty thousand troops from different nations attacked the Boxers and ended the siege.

Russian officials took advantage of the uprising by also sending a force of one-hundred thousand troops into Manchuria under the pretense of protecting Russian subjects and aiding the restoration of order in China.¹¹ After forces subdued the Boxers, Russian troops continued to remain in Manchuria, "giving the distinct impression that Russia intended to remain in permanent occupation."¹²

With a massive force of troops in Manchuria, Russian forces safeguarded the area against Japanese intervention. With Manchuria secured, Russian officials obtained the commercial rights for mining and timber within Korea. Russian access of Manchurian and Korean resources presented a sizable risk to the future of Japanese imperialism and modernization. Without the necessary resources to fund modernization, Japan would likely

¹¹ David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russia's Ambivalent Response to the Boxers," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 41, no. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 2000): 76.

¹² *Ibid.*, 237.

remain a nation struggling under the yoke of scarcity. The government of Japan demanded the removal of Russian troops from China with the intention of gaining control over the resource rich areas of Manchuria and Korea. However, unable to persuade Russian forces to withdraw, Japan attacked the Russian fortified naval base of Port Harbor and invaded Korea in February 1904. Russia later sued for peace in 1905 with the Treaty of Portsmouth after being constantly overwhelmed by Japanese forces.

The Japanese victory over the Russian forces via the Treaty of Portsmouth served as a new opportunity for Japanese expansion within Korea. The Treaty acknowledged Japan's political, military, and economic interests and ultimate supremacy over the peninsula. The Treaty provisionally stated Russia's pledge not to hinder Japan from any future action in the peninsula. Essentially the Russo-Japanese War "removed the last obstacle to Japan's domination of Korea."¹³

The Japanese-Russian fight over Korea lasted little more than a year. Although short, the skirmish demonstrated Japan's modern military and captured the attention of other powerful nations. In light of Japan's increased military strength and in fear of Russian expansion, the United States secured a formal agreement over the future of Korea. Leaders of the United States concluded that Russian dominance of Korea and Manchuria constituted a threat to American interests.¹⁴ With the aim of halting Russian expansion, the United States formally condoned Japanese military aspirations within East Asia.¹⁵ By allowing Japanese

¹³ Ibid., 239.

¹⁴ John Edward Wilz, "Did the United States Betray Korea in 1905?" *Pacific Historical Review*, 54, no. 3 (Aug., 1985): 248.

¹⁵ Anonymous, "No American Aid for Korea," *The New York Times*, 26 July 1907, page 4, final edition.

aggression, the United States, in effect, permitted the rise of Japanese hegemony in Korea which aided in the creation of comfort stations. The American public believed that a corrupt monarchy incapable of managing its own affairs ruled Korea, establishing a widely negative perception of the region.¹⁶ Japan's modernization appeared to present a viable option for Korea's advancement into the twentieth century. The recent rise of Japan as a modern power impressed the world. Such global powers as the United States and Great Britain perceived Japan as a forward thinking nation that could bring order to the "Sick Man of Asia." The United States no longer viewed Japan as a country in need of guidance, but as a nation that could guide and protect American interests in Asia. Furthermore, President Theodore Roosevelt believed that Korea belonged to Japan. Viewing Japan's expansion into Korea as a positive check upon Russian interests, Roosevelt remarked that "she [Japan] deserves it [Korea] for what she has done."¹⁷ Roosevelt was referring to Japan's modernization and rise of military actions in East Asia. He shared the belief that Japan existed as a potential tutor and model for the Korean state. With few advocates for self-determination and little backing from the United States, Korea yielded to the territorial demands of Japan with the Eulsa Treaty of 1905.

The Eulsa Treaty, more commonly referred to as the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty, deprived Korea of diplomatic sovereignty and set the stage for Japanese exploitation of Korean women. Additionally, the Treaty authorized the installation of a Japanese Resident General in Seoul. Representing Japan, the Resident General's position served to provide guidance and council to the Korean Emperor, Gojong (r. 1863-1907). Japan perceived Itō

¹⁶ Wilz, "Did the United States Betray Korea in 1905?" 248.

¹⁷ Ibid., 248.

Hirobumi (1841-1909) as a logical choice for the position as the first Resident General in Seoul.

With a strong background in politics, Itō previously served four terms as Prime Minister of Japan. He recommended and represented the best intentions of the Japanese in Korea. As Japanese influence increased over Korea, so did Itō's power to determine the course of Korean politics. Although his position began as an advisor, his power grew to outweigh any official Korean ruling or administrative policy. The extension of Itō's power ultimately granted him the ability to enact laws, dismiss Korean officials, or appoint any Japanese subjects of his choice to office.¹⁸

With such authority, Itō tried to instill self-governing qualities among Korean officials throughout his term as Resident General. He originally felt that Korea could eventually stand as an independent nation at Japan's side. However, with years of failed efforts to reform and educate Korean officials, Itō ultimately determined that Korea was incapable of self-governance. Itō publicized his beliefs in 1909 when he spoke before a group of Korean tourists. Aware that his efforts had been unsuccessful, Itō remarked that "Japan and Korea had hitherto stood side by side, but that they should now proceed together to form one empire."¹⁹

In essence, the 1905 Eulsa Treaty and Itō's installation as Resident General laid the foundation for Korea's official annexation by Japan in 1910. Annexation later gave the Japanese a free hand in the exploitation of Korean labor. Japan officially announced control

¹⁸ Toyokichi Iyenaga, "Japan's Annexation of Korea." *The Journal of Race Development*, 3, no. 2 (Oct., 1912): 202-203.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

over Korea on August 22, 1910, with the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty. Overall, Japan achieved annexation under the pretext of benign self-improvement for Korea. Officially, the Japanese government explained the annexation as a means to “secure the well-being of the Korean imperial family, to promote the prosperity of the country, and at the same time to ensure the safety and repose of Japanese and foreign residents.”²⁰ The Japanese government stated that the initial protectorate of 1905 had failed to achieve those goals. It was therefore necessary for the Empire to bring Korea under the direct administration of the Imperial Government. The eventual outcome of the Japanese-Korea Annexation Treaty was the complete absorption of Korea by the Japanese Empire. From that point forth, Korea ceased to exist as an independent state and became globally recognized as a Japanese colony.

The spread of Japanese colonialism along the Korean Peninsula proved as just the beginning of territorial expansion. After the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan continued to seek out or create reasons for military involvement in Asia. As Japan expanded, so did the need for additional military forces. At times, there was little for the military to do. Away from families and friends, many soldiers sought out prostitution as a way to pass the time. Many Japanese officials realized the need for brothels to maintain the morale of the troops and approved local prostitution visitation rights. However, such unregulated prostitution led to the spread of venereal disease and incapacitated a large number of the soldiers. When infected soldiers compromised the military’s ability to function, Japan realized the need for safer and more efficient method of prostitution. This need was most strongly evident during the Japanese mobilization of troops during the Russian Revolution.

²⁰ David Brudnoy, “Japan’s Experiment in Korea.” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 25, no. 1/2 (1970): 162.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Mukden, or Manchurian Incident of 1932 provided Japan with more opportunities for military expansion. The tumultuous upheaval and dismantling of Tsarist rule during the Russian Revolution surprised the Western Powers, as well as Japan. The autocracy quickly dissolved, only to be replaced by a new group of radical Marxists known as the Bolsheviks. Japanese officials perceived the Bolshevik regime as a potential threat to Japanese Imperialism and therefore sought opportunities to encourage any anti-Bolshevik actions that would undermine their power.

Shortly following the Revolution in 1918 a chance for Japanese expansion presented itself. One repercussion of the Russian Revolution was the threat that American allied war supplies would fall into the hands of enemies. The United States rallied Britain and France to send troops to Russia as an attempt to protect allied war supplies and support tsarist forces in a developing civil war. President Woodrow Wilson, offered Japan the chance to assist with the endeavor. Japan accepted the offer and joined the Western troops that marched into the cold Siberian countryside.

The Siberian Intervention presented a unique opportunity for Japanese military experience. Japan initially amassed and deployed a force of approximately twelve thousand troops throughout eastern Siberia and major ports along the Chinese border. However, Japanese forces within Russia eventually swelled to over seventy thousand troops.²¹ The Japanese concentrated the majority of their forces around the Russian town of Vladivostok, just north-east of the Korean-Russian border. Known to harbor pro-tsarist personnel and troops, the city proved a fitting place to promote anti-Bolshevik propaganda. Nonetheless,

²¹ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2003), 175.

two years after entrance into Russia, Western powers realized that the Bolsheviks had grown too popular and too powerful. Western troops quickly withdrew at the realization of the futility of their efforts. The Japanese refused to follow, and continued their occupation for an additional two years. The prolonged period of occupation by the Japanese in the Siberian countryside marked the beginning of military-controlled centers of prostitution in Russia.

Although Japan initially planned the Russian expedition to last only two years, Japanese forces occupied Russia for a total of four years. Between 1918 and 1922, Japanese forces sought to control the rich resources of eastern Russia. During periods of minimal fighting, bored Japanese soldiers engaged in all sorts of disorder including large-scale rapes of local residents. Japanese officials feared that sexual assaults upon the local inhabitants of Siberia put the troops at risk of sexually transmitted infections. The most common forms of sexual infections among soldiers included gonorrhea, chancroid, and syphilis. Until effective medication was developed, doctors typically treated gonorrhea and chancroid with various baths, injections, and herbal tinctures. According to an official report, Japanese medics treated 1,109 soldiers for venereal diseases during the first two years of the expedition.²²

Infections like gonorrhea or chancroid could be easily treated at military medical facilities, but others, such as syphilis, could incapacitate or kill a soldier after a long period of infection. Many soldiers were unaware that they carried such infections. As a result, soldiers often spread venereal diseases during sexual encounters without seeking treatment.

²² Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 11.

The spread of venereal diseases among troops became so prevalent that one out of every seven divisions was completely incapacitated due to illness.²³

The Japanese military attempted to curb the spread of infection with the distribution of condoms as a part of soldiers' rations. Additionally, officials issued a uniform policy requiring the use of condoms by all troops during brothel visits. In theory, such military precautions would slow the spread of venereal diseases, but the reality, especially during wartime conditions, was different. Some men simply refused to use condoms. Or if they chose to use one, there were none available. The shortage of condoms was so great at times that some prostitutes washed and reused them.²⁴

Once having contracted a sexually transmitted disease, Japanese soldiers had few options. They could find a cure or suffer with the disease and its symptoms. A cure could either be found with, or without, the help of military medical facilities. Many soldiers chose to find a cure outside of the military's purview to avoid punishment for contracting a sexually transmitted disease. During the interwar period, any soldier discovered to be positive for venereal disease faced the possible demotion of two ranks.²⁵

The possibility of demotion often discouraged soldiers from reporting infections to medical officers and receiving treatment. Consequently, many soldiers sought alternative solutions. One method for circumventing military aid was self-treatment through civilian pharmacies or black market remedies. Although effective, alternative treatments were often

²³ The number of troops within a division depends upon what type of division is assembled; infantry, armored, etc. Although the number can vary, a division typically consists of between 10,000 and 30,000 soldiers. See George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁵ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 30.

expensive and difficult to purchase on a soldier's salary. Lack of money forced many soldiers to rob civilians or seek other illegal methods to obtain the necessary funds. Soldiers that robbed civilians often grouped together to give off the appearance of strength. Unfortunately, robbery was often accompanied by rape and hence resulted in a higher frequency of sexual transmitted diseases. Civilians that lived in the countryside away from the protection of society presented easy targets for sexual exploitation. As soldiers raped, they often became infected with additional diseases that needed treatment. In essence, military procedures concerning disease posed as a vicious cycle for the continuation of rape.

Ironically, the increase of crime and rape committed by Japanese soldiers was a direct result of the stringent methods of control imposed by the military to reduce the spread of VD.²⁶ Soldiers actively hid their diseases in order to avoid punishment or chastisement by fellow soldiers. Considering the consequences of reporting infection, the actual number of soldiers infected with venereal diseases should be regarded as significantly higher than those reported.

The proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases among soldiers caught the attention of the Japanese media. In 1917 an article in the popular newspaper *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, noted the rise of soldiers infected with venereal diseases. Noting the threat that disease posed to the military, the article urged the authorities not to forbid a soldier's access to prostitutes, but to tighten control of unlicensed prostitutes.²⁷ The Japanese media concluded that unregulated prostitution posed a major threat to the health of the military. The

²⁶ Ibid., 30.

²⁷ Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*, (London: University of California Press, 2003), 39.

media's fear of unregulated prostitution was more than just groundless conjecture. The Japanese military had performed several studies on the effects of prostitution as a result of increased infection rates. According to a 1920 study by the military Inspector General of Japan, about seventy percent of all recruits examined and diagnosed with a venereal disease had reported a licensed prostitute as the source.²⁸ Military personnel frequented both unlicensed and licensed prostitution centers. Men that visited both kinds of centers likely aided in the spread of STDs. In the eyes of the progressive Japanese media, both regulated and unregulated institutions needed to be revamped to combat the spread of infection.

Essentially, the media perceived all forms of prostitution as a major threat to the well-being of the Japanese military. What makes the media's portrayal of prostitution so illuminating is that it blames the proliferation of venereal diseases on prostitutes and not the visiting male clientele. In the public's opinion, prostitutes were no longer private entertainers, but culprits now liable for the behavior of their customers. In addition, the article also implies that the rampant rise of sexual infections was the result of poor management. What the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* alludes to is a belief that prostitution was in dire need of government intervention and management. This type of attitude towards prostitution assisted in the increased desire for comfort stations. Japanese officials noted the connection of unregulated prostitution with an increase of venereal diseases. What they needed was an effective prototype and model for future military endeavors.

With the intention to curtail the rise of rape and spread of venereal diseases such as syphilis, Japanese officials ordered the establishment of military regulated prostitution

²⁸ Ibid., 39.

centers on the Japanese controlled island of Sakhalin. Using the full extent of their authority, the *kempeitai* (military Japanese police) policed the military brothels with the aim of reducing the number of VD outbreaks. The *kempeitai* oversaw the implementation of periodic medical examinations on all Japanese controlled prostitutes and regular soldiers. Mandatory examinations limited the transmission of diseases from infected women to soldiers and vice versa. Military doctors sent infected patients to special military facilities for treatment, consisting of a standard injection of Salvarsan. A poisonous yellowish powder, Salvarsan is an organic compound that contains a small amount of arsenic.²⁹ When used properly, Salvarsan offered a viable and effective cure for syphilis. During the Siberian Intervention, the number of patients using Salvarsan ranged from a low of 4,370 in 1918 to a high of 6,075 in 1922.³⁰ An increase in the amount of patients treated may be due to other factors than a spread of infection. One solution might be that soldiers simply sought treatment as a result of a new cure for on-going infections.

The short-lived success for prevention and treatment of sexual infections was eventually overshadowed by the overall military failure in Siberia. The Japanese forces in Russia lost three thousand soldiers to skirmishes, disease, and exposure. Additionally, Japanese occupation angered the Soviet Union and made American officials suspicious. Overall a loss militarily, the Japanese officially ended their occupation of Siberia after four years in 1922.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., 36.

³⁰ Ibid., 38-39.

³¹ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 175.

Although an utter failure, the Siberian intervention provided invaluable information on the impact of unregulated prostitution on the health of the soldiers. A high infection rate from syphilis forced the Japanese military to find alternative methods to prevent future outbreaks. The search for new treatment methods by military officials led the Japanese army to rethink their approach to prostitution. The spread of VD during the Siberian Intervention proved that prostitution could undermine the success of any future military expeditions. If Japan was to succeed militarily, it needed to first combat STDs among troops. Officials realized that in order to be a strong nation militarily, Japan must adapt prostitution to fit military life. As Japan expanded within Korea and China, newer forms of prostitution flourished.

The Japanese have often regarded Korea as a dagger or “spear pointed at its heart.”³² This was because Japan had long perceived Korea as a vital access point for military invasions. The Japanese understood that as long as Korea remained outside Japanese control, it posed a greater risk for the possible invasion of Japan by other nations. Whether or not the Japanese invaded Korea with the clear intention of creating a buffer zone for the future annexation of China is debatable. What is evident is that the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910 and of Russia in 1918 provided a unique opportunity for the possibility of territorial expansion. Once established in Korea, the Japanese empire had nearly unfettered access to the Chinese empire. The proximity of Korea to the Chinese capital of Manchuria proved to be too tempting for Japan.

³² Toyokichi Iyenaga, “Japan’s Annexation of Korea.” *The Journal of Race Development*, 3, no. 2 (Oct., 1912): 201.

Seeking justification for the military mobilization of Manchuria, the Japanese staged the infamous “Mukden Incident,” or “Manchurian Incident,” on September 18, 1932. With the intention to incite conflict, a group of Japanese recruits detonated a small amount of dynamite near the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway track in Mukden (now Shenyang). The media portrayed the “bomb” as an unprovoked attack on Japanese forces in the area guarding the train. Further, the media blamed Chinese dissidents for the “aggressive” attack even though the blast caused insignificant damage. Later investigation revealed that Japanese military personnel caused the explosion.

Nonetheless, Japan used the railway attack as an excuse to mobilize troops within the Chinese region of Manchuria. This invasion of Manchuria resulted in the creation of the Japanese-administered state of Manchukuo six months later. Along with ground forces sent to Manchuria, Japan dispatched naval units to the surrounding coastline near Shanghai. Naval forces were not only the harbingers of war, but also the first that saw brothels set up with the direct intention of supporting and comforting stationed troops.³³

Many influential leaders of Japan believed that the success of naval expeditions relied on the commodity of women. Noting the perceived importance of prostitution, one member of Japanese Parliament in 1935 remarked how the success of naval expeditions depended on it. He believed that the ample supply of prostitutes made it possible for naval officers to be away from home for extended periods of time. Japanese Parliament was under the assumption that sailors worried too much about their family without the distraction of women. Therefore, advocates of military prostitution viewed the system as an aid to Japan’s

³³ Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 44.

rise as a major military power.³⁴ Consequently, Japanese officials established additional comfort stations nearby military units deployed in China. With the introduction of regulated prostitution centers for the military in China during the 1930s, Japan exported a practice that they had observed on the mainland for centuries. Japanese officials used the longstanding historical ties of prostitution between Japan and China as a foundation for the establishment of successfully run comfort stations.

The governmental regulation of prostitution in Japanese society began in the early seventeenth century with the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868). As founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu (r. 1603-1605) believed that, although prostitution was a dubious practice, its suppression would create greater problems for the people of Japan. Ieyasu saw prostitution as a potential remedy for violence, and felt that it was an essential “evil” that needed careful regulation.³⁵ In essence, state-wide toleration of prostitution created a way to maintain order and reduce instances of rape and other sexual assaults. As a result, in 1618 Ieyasu established the official brothel district of Yoshiwara in Edo. Although prostitution centers had existed within Japan since at least the tenth century, Yoshiwara was the first example of a state-run institution.³⁶ Under governmental supervision, prostitution districts blossomed throughout Japan and became a normal part of everyday life that continued well into the nineteenth century.

³⁴ Sheldon Garon, “The World’s Oldest Debate? Prostitution and the State in Imperial Japan, 1900-1945.” *The American Historical Review*, 98, no. 3 (Jun., 1993): 722.

³⁵ Gary P. Leupp, “Capitalism and Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century Japan.” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 33, no. 1, *Eighteenth-Century Homosexuality in Global Perspective* (Spring 2007): 140.

³⁶ Kazuhiro Oharazeki. “Anti-prostitution Campaigns in Japan and the American West, 1890-1920: A Transpacific Comparison.” *Pacific Historical Review*, 82, no. 2 (May 2013): 178-179.

The Tokugawa Shogunate lasted for 268 years and finally ended with the installation of the Meiji government in 1868. Throughout that period, Japanese society shared a common belief that brothels provided a useful service for society. During the early twentieth century, Fukuzawa Yukichi continued this belief by advocating the continuation of widely available state-sanctioned brothels. As a leading advocate of Japan's modernization movement, Fukuzawa understood brothels as a necessary tool against the perceived uncontrollability of men's sexual desires. Japan's leaders agreed with Fukuzawa and sought out measures to continue the practices of the Tokugawa Shogunate with the desire of controlling men. More specifically, advocates of state-controlled prostitution claimed that "licensed prostitution was necessary to protect the wives and daughters of 'refined families' and to keep the animal instinct [of young men] under control."³⁷ Similarly, Japanese officials and a large portion of Japanese individuals believed that only with the aid of prostitution, would a man be free to advance to a more enlightened status. More importantly, the belief that men needed state-sanctioned sexual outlets was a reason for the growth in profitability and popularity of human trafficking. As more individuals bought into the belief of man's carnal desires, a national acceptance arose for the proliferation of brothels and increase of human trafficking.

During the nineteenth century, one of the main driving forces behind the increase of trade between China and Japan was the abduction of women. The evolution and advancement of human trafficking along Japanese and Chinese trade routes can be directly attributed to early Chinese businessmen (or pimps).

³⁷ Ibid., 180.

Originally, merchants found that they made the most profit from shipments of silk. Beginning in the 1850s, Chinese merchants discovered that they could increase the profitability of their journey through the additional commodity of women. As merchants transported silk outside of China, they also acted as kidnappers and smugglers for the transportation of women destined for brothels.

Chinese merchants obtained the majority of victims from rural Japan because their location minimized the risk of detention. In the countryside, Chinese merchants found that they could successfully fabricate stories for unsuspecting or naïve country folk. In contrast, people in urban settings were more often aware of the danger that traffickers posed and their methods of abduction. Therefore, kidnappers had more difficulty fooling women that lived in bigger or populated cities.

Kidnappers transported placed women on vessels bound for large ports along the Chinese coast. Harbin, Fengtian, Shanghai, and Xiamen experienced the largest influx of trafficked Japanese women. Traffickers chose these cities for their increased trade activity, seaside access, and large male population. Many Japanese traders followed the example of early Chinese traffickers and took advantage of the profitability of human trafficking. As business increased, so did the need for more women. Profits drove traffickers to expand and increase their trade. Eventually, Japanese traffickers cornered the market on the flesh trade between China and Japan. Many Chinese merchants found that they could not compete with the success of the Japanese.

Chinese smugglers found themselves outclassed by Japanese smugglers for several reasons. Ethnic Japanese traders knew the terrain, spoke the common language, and were often familiar with the local families in rural areas. In addition, rural Japanese women

easily trusted Japanese traders and the stories they fabricated about a future replete with wealth, security, and happiness once they left home.

Japanese merchants slowly began to control the trafficking industry. Many traffickers justified their actions as a patriotic duty crucial for the Japanese economy. During this time, it was difficult to find anyone connected with Japanese merchants in Asia that did not consider the contribution of prostitution crucial for Japanese capitalist expansion.³⁸ Traffickers received payments for their women and at the same time increased trade and trading routes between China and Japan. Prostitution also added additional tax revenues that contributed to local governments and communities. Smugglers, therefore, considered their work a contribution to the welfare of their nation and a patriotic duty. Such patriotism was based on the fact that smuggling women benefited a wide range of industries. With the various benefits that trafficked women offered, the system was easily justified by Japanese entrepreneurs and government bureaucrats.

Nationalism contributed to the fanatical view that tied prostitution with patriotism. In addition to merchants championing the benefits of prostitution, Japanese intellectuals also advocated the profession. The famous scholar of Russia and author of Japan's first modern novel, Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909), believed that prostitution was linked with nationalism. Ethnically Japanese, Futabatei witnessed firsthand how business prospered during the Siberian intervention when prostitution was introduced. With the strong notion of "patriotic duty" to support Japanization, Futabatei himself even contemplated

³⁸ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 62.

opening a brothel.³⁹ He considered prostitution the first step in Japanese commercialism and believed that once clients experienced Japanese prostitutes, their desire for all Japanese products would become an obsession. Therefore, many sided with Futabatei and believed that prostitution was the first step towards Japan's modernization and rise as a global power.

Whether for personal or national gain, Japanese traders dominated the Eastern China trade in flesh through routes originally established by Chinese merchants. According to one scholar, "Without these Japanese men, there would have been much less extensive kidnapping and deployment of the so-called comfort women later on."⁴⁰ In this regard, the contribution of Chinese and Japanese traffickers to Japanese imperialism is without question. Japanese traders established an early precedent for what would become the flourishing military sex trade during the twentieth century.

Unlike the stigma attached to brothels in Western society, Japan's view of prostitution was much more benign during the twentieth century. Public opinion defined brothel owners as upstanding businessmen and taxpayers who contributed to a healthier society by funneling the sexual aggression of lustful men. In addition to controlling the rampant licentious behavior of men, many citizens believed that men could ward off illness by going to brothels. In 1931, when a member of the Japanese abolitionist group "Purity Society" attacked the idea of brothels, a member of parliament retorted that the repression of prostitution would only incite increased "masturbation, the chief cause of respiratory problems."⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60.

⁴¹ Garon, "The World's Oldest Debate?" 726.

Since the early twentieth century, masturbation had been associated with a variety of deleterious effects upon the body. Japanese doctors defined masturbation as a major hindrance to an overall healthy physique and often the leading cause of neurasthenia. Defined as nervous exhaustion, neurasthenia--or more specifically sexual neurasthenia--was associated with a range of debilitating maladies. Many contemporary Japanese educators shared this conviction. They asserted that “excessive autoerotic practices...led to paleness, loss of appetite, forgetfulness, indifference, melancholy, and poor scholastic results.”⁴² Within Japan, prostitution prevailed as a necessary and highly normalized activity in order to avoid the “horrible consequences of masturbation.” Essentially, Japanese society perceived prostitution as an essential component of a healthy society. With few against prostitution, comfort stations appeared and spread with the mobilization of Japanese forces.

Although some form of prostitution had always been an integral part of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese society, military comfort stations throughout Eastern Asia began with Japanese military aggression in the twentieth century. As Japan expanded into China, the military initially conscripted Japanese prostitutes for newly established brothels abroad. Prostitutes signed contracts for brothels within Asia that lasted from one to six years. Upon consignment and arrival in China, prostitutes worked in facilities alongside stationed troops. Shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century, authorities estimate that nearly twenty thousand Japanese women labored as prostitutes under this system of contractual labor.⁴³ The Japanese originally referred to conscripted prostitutes sent abroad as *karayuki-san* or migrant laborer. As the volume of conscripted prostitutes increased, the phrase *karayuki-san*

⁴² Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex*, 63.

⁴³ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 114.

took on a different meaning to instead represent a Japanese woman sent abroad for prostitution. The *karayuki-san* system for prostitution represented a form of contractual servitude that served as a precursor and model for future comfort stations.

The *karayuki-san* system of prostitution evolved into comfort stations as the Japanese military advanced throughout East Asia. Using the model of the *karayuki-san*, the Japanese adapted the system to specifically accommodate the needs of military personnel--the *ianjo*.⁴⁴ The newer form of *ianjo* represented an evolution of the earlier *karayuki-san* styled brothels. Although some accounts place a variety of earlier prototype stations and red-light districts at various locations, the lack of documentary evidence leaves March 1933 as the first confirmed account for the implementation of the *ianjo* system and the first confirmed military comfort station.⁴⁵ Officially known as a “Hygienic Facility for Prevention of Epidemics,” the first *ianjo* facility near Shanghai served as a model for future comfort stations. The original *ianjo* brothel housed thirty-five Korean and three Japanese women. Japanese officials determined that these thirty-eight women would provide sexual services for the 7,764 stationed troops in the area.⁴⁶ The proportion of military troops to women amounted to a rough ratio of 204 men for every woman. This first *ianjo* as well as future facilities would be reserved specifically for the army.⁴⁷

At first, Japanese officials instructed soldiers to only visit government-authorized prostitution houses. With such a high volume of soldiers, the ‘service’ placed upon the women by the military was constant and demanding. The scant number of women forced the

⁴⁴ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 9.

⁴⁵ Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 47.

⁴⁶ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 11.

⁴⁷ Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex*, 37.

army to eventually permit soldiers visitation rights to private establishments, where they again faced alarmingly high rates of venereal diseases. Japanese officials realized that there existed a need for additional prostitution facilities as the military demand for “sanctioned” available prostitutes and healthy soldiers increased. Officials feared that an absence of prostitution centers would increase the rate of disease and occurrence of rape. Although rape is always a risk during war, Japanese soldiers engaged in the rape of Chinese citizens in large measure because of beliefs about honor.

The tendency to rape occurs higher among Japanese soldiers because of a culture ingrained in the core belief of honor. The greatest honor for any soldier of the Imperial Army was to die in the service of the Emperor. Compared to the greater will of the Japanese Empire and Emperor, individual life became virtually insignificant and expendable. This core belief by all members of Japanese society had cruel repercussions for soldiers that sought to put their personal desires before that of their country. The value of life was especially insignificant for enemy combatants and non-Japanese individuals. The Japanese soldiers realized that if their lives had no value then, “an enemy’s life became inevitably much less important.”⁴⁸ As the Japanese military occupied foreign countries, the potential for violence and rape increased. The most disturbing example of Japanese honor paired with the act of rape occurred after the invasion of China.

As the Japanese advanced into the Eastern Chinese border, rape became a common threat for the indigenous population. To prevent the spread of sexual violence, Japanese Emperor Hirohito officially declared rape an illegal and punishable offense. This

⁴⁸ Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Penguin Book, 1997), 58.

official proclamation unfortunately served as little more than a nominal safeguard against further transgressions. Surviving Japanese veterans claim that even though the army had outlawed the practice, rape “remained so deeply embedded in Japanese military culture and superstition that no one took the rule seriously.”⁴⁹ As a result, the Japanese Empire offered evidence that rape was an action that was not tolerated even as mass rapes occurred.

The behavior of the Imperial Army as they invaded Nanjing offers a grim look into the strict policy against rape and the “intolerance” displayed by officers. During the cold December of 1937, a force of Japanese troops marched towards the city of Nanjing. The annexation of Nanjing and the atrocities that occurred are forever remembered as the ‘Nanjing Massacre’ or more appropriately ‘The Rape of Nanjing.’ Because of the level of sexual violence by Japanese troops. Although Japanese troops used rape as the leading method of terror during the massacre, they perpetuated other unspeakable horrors on the population. Japanese fighters and officers held competitions for the greatest number of decapitated heads. Additionally, soldiers buried Chinese victims alive or used for them for bayonet practice. Although the number of victims is difficult to determine, it is estimated that Japanese troops repeatedly raped between twenty to eighty-thousand women until they escaped, committed suicide, or lost their usefulness a means for sexual gratification.⁵⁰ Soldiers often killed the victims of rape or other forms of torture simply because ‘dead bodies don’t talk.’⁵¹ Ordered to do so by commanding officers, many soldiers murdered their victims to avoid culpability. Death eliminated the chance of future accusations against

⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 89.

⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

Japanese troops. Although the Empire of Japan had taken a firm stance against rape, Nanjing provides a cruel example of how it was impossible to prevent.

The Nanking Massacre of 1937 forced many Japanese officials to turn to a more systematized method of alleviating sexual assaults on Chinese women. The presence of additional troops meant the additional risk for future outbreaks of uncontrollable violence. Therefore, the increase in comfort stations accompanied the mass installment of troops during the invasion of China. Japanese officials thought that a suitable outlet for aggression would protect civilians from violence. By early 1938 the number of Japanese troops within China amounted to more than one million.⁵² With the majority of troops stationed in Central and Northern China, Japanese officials ordered the installation of additional comfort stations in the area. Eventually, Japan approved comfort stations for all Asian war zones. Officially ordered by the Emperor, the decree that authorized comfort facilities followed a very precise chain of command. After the initial order of approval, the general chief of staff of the Imperial Army then authorized recruitment methods and policies for each region.⁵³ The planned and systematic recruitment methods of prostitution suggests that stations were anything but ad hoc pleasure houses and differed extensively from previous brothels. The military organized new forms of comfort stations and monopolized every aspect of the industry. Prostitution was no longer a private business, but a controlled, highly regulated, and normalized military amenity of the Imperial Empire.

⁵² Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 13.

⁵³ Bonnie B. C. and Margaret Stetz, eds. *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2001), 8-9.

CHAPTER III

WHY KOREAN COMFORT WOMEN?

The majority of scholars describe comfort women solely as a product of Japanese militarism. Although comfort women are a direct result of Japanese military aggression, there are additional factors involved in the large percentage of Korean women that populated Japanese comfort stations. One crucial aspect of Korean society researchers commonly overlook involves the economic status of Korean families in the early twentieth century. Prior to industrialization, the majority of Korean families relied heavily on farming for income. The modernization of Korea brought with it a new demand for labor. As Japan enforced tighter restrictions on Korean farmers, families were unable to procure a living solely from farming. The inability of families to maintain traditional livelihoods forced some to seek jobs within the city or sell-off the commodities they owned. For many farmers, children were the only commodity they possessed and presented a means of saving the family. In exchange for money, some farming families sold their daughters to local recruiters. These girls often ended up in Japanese-run brothels spread throughout Korea and China.

In addition to economic conditions, modernity also played a role in the changing of Korean families. The modernization of Japan changed the traditional lifestyle and standard of living for many individuals; both in Japan as well as Korea. Modern technology gave way to modern ideas that challenged the traditional mores of the past. Magazines became a

conduit for the many new ideas about how women should look and act. More specifically, women's magazines exposed readers to a world of liberation found in the form of commodities. Women previously controlled by the traditional patriarchal values of society, found solace in the ability to choose products for themselves. Advocates of modernity championed the poster image of the "Modern Girl" as a role model for the liberation of women.

Modern Changes

As Japan pushed for modernization with the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), advertisers flooded consumers with images of modern devices. Japan's modernization movement targeted men and women with the financial backing to purchase products through advertising campaigns. Advertisements challenged the traditional appearance and behavior of women with the depiction of the new modern woman or Modern Girl. The iconic Modern Girl, characterized by her erratic behavior, independence, and sexual liberation first appeared in Japan during the 1920s. The Modern Girl was the equivalent of the American flapper. Her lifestyle was defined by the products that filled her life. Modern Girls used modern goods for everyday life. As a result, the image of Modern Girls encouraged Japanese women to break from the traditional roles of the past and adopt new fashions and attitudes.

Traditionally, Japanese women ascribed to the ideology of *ryōsai kembo*, or 'good wife, wise mother.' *Ryōsai kembo*, confined Japanese women to the paternalistic demands of their husbands, sons, and families. The standard behavior of a "good" Japanese woman included three specific levels of obedience to other men throughout her life. These "Three Obediences," demanded that a woman obey her father before marriage, her husband

during marriage, and her eldest son when she became a widow. In short, Japanese society insisted on the absolute obedience and subservience of women. *Ryōsai kembo*, guaranteed that Japanese women “had neither a place to exercise their freedom and individuality nor an opportunity to apply their knowledge and ability to life outside the home.”⁵⁴ Modernization brought with it an erosion of *ryōsai kembo*. Consequently, women experienced an unprecedented liberation from societal expectations and standards. This left many women to explore alternative opportunities and activities previously unavailable; such as consumerism.

Consumerism clashed with the traditional Confucian stereotype of ‘good wife, wise mother.’ Subsequently, many women experienced a new, active role that consisted of the choice in purchasing products. The choice of Modern Girls empowered Japanese women with self-expression that offered a small reprieve from male dominance. Choice allowed women the possibility of fulfilling their desires. Similar to the American flapper, the Modern Girl strove to be a good consumer, a noticeable change for the traditional Japanese woman. For the first time, women could choose and purchase products that appealed to individual preferences and tastes. The opportunity to fulfill personal desires differed greatly from the traditional self-denial and subservient roles of the past. The new model of female consumer created an alternate to the previous generation’s stringent control over gender roles. The Modern Girl created a new set of standards for women that encouraged them to understand who they were as individuals, or at least who they wanted to be.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Mariko Inoue. “Kiyokata's Asasuzu: The Emergence of the Jogakusei Image.” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 51, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 433.

⁵⁵ Barbara Sato. *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books. 2003), 19.

Modern technology increased exposure to advertisements that promoted the image of the Modern Girl. These advertisements bombarded consumers with a constant flow of commercialized images and ideas through newspapers, magazines, movies, radios, and records. Various companies used advertisements to portray the Modern Girl as independent both emotionally and physically, but more importantly, financially. Women who sought independence from husbands or fathers needed the economic means to sustain that independence. A genuine and successful push for independence by women demanded financial stability. As a result, Japanese women who sought to become a Modern Girl broke away from the traditional roles as mothers to enter the workforce in newly created jobs made possible by industrialization.

In Europe, industrialization created a significant rise in the demand for labor. In the eighteenth century England was the first nation to industrialize because of three fundamental qualities; land, labor, and capital. England experienced a significant increase in available food as a result of the agricultural revolution. The increase of food changed the lives of individuals in two ways. Firstly, an abundance of available food lowered prices which improved the caloric intake of diets. In turn, more food meant a healthier society. People with more food were able to provide for more children. An increase of population strengthened the workforce, which supplied more available labor for developing factories. In addition to labor, England had an abundance of easily accessible coal. Unlike other countries that industrialized, England's coal was located close to the surface of the soil. With an increased labor market, coal mining became a highly popular and easy profession to obtain. Miners in turn provided the fuel that made mechanization possible.

In the British context, industrialization had the effect of creating a new economy for businesses and consumers. This “new” economy proved advantageous for women by creating new jobs that had previously not existed. In the “new” economy, women found their services needed and entered the workforce as secretaries, typists, shop girls, bar maids, models, and other various jobs. Although women found available positions, they experienced a lower pay rate than their male counterparts. Similar to the European industrial revolution, Japan and Korea experienced a period of significant industrialization. Occurring first in Japan, industrialization eventually spread to Korea. The rise of factories and mechanization within Korea aided in the creation of new jobs, many of which women sought as a means of economic independence.

Meanwhile, Japanese and Korean colonialism had the effect of strengthening economic and political ties between the two countries. As the two countries merged closer together, consumerist trends for women naturally transferred between the nations and flourished. The Modern Girl of Japan became the Modern Girl of Korea. Companies that originally published advertisements within Japan found a new market in industrialized Korea. As in Japan, advertisements exposed Korean women to a new lifestyle that included modern fashions, devices, and accessories.

To encourage revenue, advertisers placed advertisements in a wide-range of media outlets; such as magazines. During the Taishō period (1912-1926) of Japan, magazines supported a more liberal role for women and girls. These magazines empowered the impressionable minds of both Japanese and Korean women by encouraging consumerism as an escape from the rigid status quo of traditional outlooks.

One such magazine was the popular Japanese *Shōjo Kurabu* (Girls' Club). Aimed at 'modern' young ladies, *Shōjo Kurabu* instilled readers with a sense of hope and optimism to pursue careers or develop self-confidence.⁵⁶ The popularity of this magazine reflected the growing concern of women for independence and the desire to embrace modern ideals.

Published monthly in the 1920s and 1930s, *Girls Club* offered readers a series of versatile and informative stories about modern lifestyles. It contained short stories, poems, fairy tales, humorous cartoons, articles on etiquette, and more importantly, Western fashion. What made *Girls Club* unique and helps to explain its popularity was its focus on Western-styled modernity. The covers of *Shōjo Kurabu* regularly depicted artistic images of Japanese women wearing Western fashions. For example, the 1915 issue of *Shōjo Kurabu* depicts a young woman as she sits and sews on the floor. The girl's innocent hobby is contrasted by her stylish modern clothes and luxurious surroundings. She wears a lavish red dress that exposes her thighs and neck. Her straight black hair is cut short, in the style of an American flapper. She is surrounded by various objects that depict a modern lifestyle. The silver candles on either side of a large mirror on the wall aid the young lady in her stitching. Beautiful flowers on top of a fine wooden table further enhance the appearance of financial success.⁵⁷ Clearly, management chose the cover with the intention to entice readers with the possibility of an alternative lifestyle. As *Shōjo Kurabu* sales increased, one can assume its readers embraced and emulated the values it promoted. The success of the magazine clearly represents the desire of girls as they dreamt about lavish and independent lifestyles.

⁵⁶ Inoue. "Kiyokata's Asasuzu: The Emergence of the Jogakusei Image," 439.

⁵⁷ See 1915 illustrated cover of *Shōjo Kurabu* by Koji Fukiya.

Equally as popular as *Shōjo Kurabu* was the monthly publication of *Shōjo Gahō* (Girls Illustrated). It also catered to the aspirations of young women to be Western and modern. Unlike *Girls Club*, *Girls Illustrated* appealed to a more mature audience of women. The cover of the January, 1933 edition of *Girls Illustrated* featured a drawing of a stylish woman with short hair (a practice that was not yet socially accepted by traditional Japan), western-style dress, and (shockingly) clasping a playing card in her right hand.⁵⁸ The woman's hairstyle and garb resembled the typical American flapper of the 1920s. The playing card in the woman's hand makes the illustration especially provocative. In the early twentieth century, gambling was a "modern" practice, reserved exclusively for men. By using the card, *Girls Illustrated* sought to blur the boundaries between men and women in Japanese society. The card demonstrates a willingness, or desire, for women to break free from the shackles of Japanese traditionalism.

A later issue of *Girls Illustrated*, published in December 1933, portrayed a drawing of a modern Japanese woman as she lights a candle.⁵⁹ Similar to the January cover, the woman sports a short modern haircut. She wears a beautiful red dress that is sure to arouse desire in the reader. In addition, her neatly lacquered red fingernails compliment the dress. The picture highlights the clear and unmistakable Christian cross necklace around the woman's neck. Similar to the playing card, the Christian cross highlighted individualism and challenged readers to be independent of societal expectations. Christianity, a Western religion, was the antithesis of traditional Japanese religions.

⁵⁸ See January 1933 illustrated cover of *Shōjo Gahō* (Girls Illustrated) by Koji Fukiya.

⁵⁹ See December 1933 illustrated cover of *Shōjo Gahō* (Girls Illustrated) by Koji Fukitani.

Christianity focuses on the concept of individualism and originally brought to Japan in the sixteenth century by Portuguese Catholics. Followers of Christianity believe salvation lies in the good or bad choices of the individual. In contrast, Japanese society is traditionally structured around Confucianism, which stresses the obedience of an individual to another of higher social standing. According to Confucianism, order within a society should be based on hierarchy. In regards to Japanese society, Confucianism stressed the first level of obedience of subject to ruler. Within a family, the father demanded respect from his wife and children. Traditional Japanese intellectuals believed that Confucianism structured society in a way that created a harmonious government and lifestyle. As Christianity spread throughout Japan, some intellectuals questioned the longstanding tradition of Confucianism, and instead supported Christianity as a form of modernization. They believed that “only if Japan accepted Christianity could it gain equal footing with the countries of Europe and America and be able to shed the light of the new Japan over the world”.⁶⁰

However, many Japanese individuals perceived Christianity as a Western concept that threatened the success and future of Japan. Some individuals went so far as to associate Christianity with “a general feeling that the Meiji modernization process somehow ‘went wrong.’”⁶¹ Many Japanese people came to associate the spread of Christianity with the end of traditional Japan. Hence, the appearance of a cross in a Japanese magazine does more than advertise a fashionable religion; it symbolizes a new era of choice and a break from the traditional conservative values.

⁶⁰ Helen Ballhatchet. “Confucianism and Christianity in Meiji Japan: The Case of Kozaki Hiromichi.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1988): 357.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

Japan's push for modernity appeared as a constant theme among girls' magazines in the 1920s. The appeal of modern living for women eventually spread to Korea. Publications such as *Shōjo Kurabu* and *Shōjo Gahō* expressed a new ideal for Korean women to emulate. Subscribers of women's magazines happily turned from the subservient roles of the past to embrace consumerism as a way to personal liberation. The success of girls' magazines in Japan served as an example that Korean publishers modeled. As with Japanese women, Korean women also saw the potential for liberation through consumerism.

As in Japan, once introduced, consumerism took root in colonial Korea and the publication of new magazines increased. *Yeoseong* (여성, Woman), first published April 1, 1936, was the most popular Korean women's magazine during the colonial period. With over fifty-seven editions printed, the monthly magazine revolved around the multifaceted daily challenges and desires faced by modern Korean women.⁶² Reflecting the political atmosphere of Korea, the magazine published articles in a mixture of three different languages. Although the magazine's main articles were predominantly in Korean, the magazine also had articles and advertisements in Japanese, *Hanja*, and *Hangeul*.⁶³ The majority of the magazine reflected the language of its target audience; Korean women. The mixture of languages throughout the magazine provided for maximum readership. By the 1920s, Japan successfully implemented a policy within Korea that compelled all schools to

⁶² Bae-yong Lee, *Women in Korean History* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2008), 282.

⁶³ Due to Korea's proximity and historical interactions with China, the written language of Korea originally relied heavily on Classical Chinese. In the fifteenth century, King Sejong the Great revised the Korean language and created the new form of writing *Hangeul*. His creation of *Hangeul* moved away from Classical Chinese characters and used native Korean symbols blocked together to form words. *Hangeul* is traditionally augmented by the occasional use of Classical Chinese characters. A more heavily augmented use of Classical Chinese characters in *Hangeul* is referred to as *Hanja*. *Hanja* and *Hangeul* were the official writing styles of Korea up until Japanese colonization. Following the defeat of Japan, Korea phased out the use of Classical Chinese characters and fully adopted the use of *Hangeul*.

teach in Japanese. Therefore, many of the ethnically educated Korean population were able to read the articles within *Yeoseong*. Unfortunately for many, Koreans living outside of major cities lacked the language skills needed to read the magazine. Regardless of reading ability, the magazine was filled with an abundance of images that showed a different approach to modern living.

Yeoseong appealed to women of all ages with pages filled by articles and pictures that displayed the latest trends in modern fashion and domestic arts. The magazine also offered readers advice columns, where they could find information on topics related to domestic activities. Advice columns or articles used language that empowered women in what was then a strictly male dominated society. To achieve this, advertisers conflated the concept of domesticity with empowerment. For example, one of the magazine's advertisements claimed: "This product makes our meal more delicious and brings more power to women. Beauty and peace is the most important thing that makes women stronger."⁶⁴ The use of "beauty" and "power" in the article reflects a growing concern for appearance and ability. Tying cooking to beauty, *Yeoseong* pressured women to conform to the advice in the article or remain 'weak' and 'ugly.' Likewise, the magazine's articles reinforced the need to keep pace with the new ways of the future, or be left behind.

Yeoseong also used advice columns as a means to dialog with readers. The magazine allowed women to send their queries or concerns for consideration for publication. The magazine printed popular questions from readers with insightful responses. Questions posed by readers reflected the troubles and concerns in the daily lives of women. One young

⁶⁴ *Yeoseong* (여성). July 1937. Print. Translated by Hyeong Bin Yun. 15 May 2013. 49.

reader asked the timeless question “How do I rid myself of pimples?”⁶⁵ Another reader wondered how she could make face cream or powder by herself. Both of these queries demonstrated a growing concern for appearance and sex appeal. Women had grown considerably anxious with their public image and wished to alter their circumstances both superficially and economically.

Yeoseong also gave readers the option of expressing displeasures. During one edition published April, 1937, a middle-aged reader described her growing distress over a seasonal product that caught her eye; the purse. The reader states that “The handbags are so beautiful, the color is too beautiful, but I can’t afford it because it is too expensive.”⁶⁶ She vents her frustration over the inability to purchase the purse. She further laments the fact that the beautiful product will instead be sold to a rich woman or *gisaeng* (a Korean female artisan). As *Yeoseong* introduced products and concerns over self-image, a new generation of female consumers was born. As the account of the purse illustrates, *Yeoseong* inculcated the belief that women’s future success relied on the ability to successfully adapt to modern trends.

In time, *Yeoseong* altered the conventional notion of femininity in Korean society. Women pushed the boundaries of longstanding traditionalism. As women freed themselves from patriarchy, they began buying modern products. On the pages of *Yeoseong*, there was an abundance of Western domestic images that portrayed modern living. This is found in the form of Westernized models with the latest fashions worn by foreigners such as purses and perfume. For example, one advertisement displays a Caucasian-esque woman

⁶⁵ *Yeoseong* (여성). April 1937. Print. Translated by Kang Minjae. 22 April 2014. 51

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

applying lipstick. She uses of a hand-held mirror and wears a modern Western outfit including a belt, headband, and ruffled dress. The caption above her proclaims that “making up our faces is one of women’s vital responsibilities.”⁶⁷ The advertisement not only advises women that it is their duty to appear beautiful, but also reinforces that it is the shared belief of all. Advertisements similar to this one fostered an acceptance of the necessity of cosmetic enhancement. The notion of solidarity among women, led readers to believe that if they did not share the magazine’s values, then they ran the risk of being excluded from the community altogether.

As a result, advertisements similar to the ones found in *Yeoseong*, attacked the traditional role of Korean women and threatened their status vis-à-vis other women. Consumerism granted a greater sense of empowerment for women, but also created greater demands upon appearance. Therefore, the new modern woman and all that it entailed introduced women to a brave new world of pressure from society’s expectations. Women demanded more of themselves and each other in the form of behavior, style, image, and sex appeal. They compared themselves to the models in magazines. The added pressure perfecting the right image made women enter the workforce in order to afford new fashions and cosmetics. With money, women could purchase the products necessary to attain the level of beauty depicted in the magazines. To attain work, many women resorted to behavior that they previously might have considered un-filial or non-traditional. Many women left the rural Korean countryside in search of higher paying jobs in the cities. As Koreans looked for

⁶⁷ *Yeoseong* (여성). July 1937. Print. Translated by Hyeong Bin Yun. 15 May 2013. 49.

a means to attain financial independence in urban centers, they became vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Aside from modernity that pushed Korean migration, economic changes also contributed to a rise in urbanization. Under Japanese rule, Korean farmers experienced an increase of economic hardships. During colonialism, Japan integrated a variety of new economic policies to increase the production of food within Korea. Intended to alleviate rice shortages at home, Japan instituted policies that restructured land and land policies within Korea. Under new restrictions, Korean farmers were unable to secure a steady living. The inability to make a living, forced many Korean farmers to abandon ancestral farming lands for survival and seek out alternative methods of livelihood.

Prior to 1910, Korean law prohibited Japanese citizens from owning land within Korea. After annexation, Japan altered governmental regulations and sanctioned widespread Japanese land ownership. The grab for land by Japanese landowners was initially small, but grew exponentially as Japan and Korea merged closer and closer together. By 1909, Japanese landowners had acquired around 60,000 *chǒngbo* of residential and cultivated land. By the 1930s, the amount of cultivated land under Japanese ownership expanded to an astounding 600,000 *chǒngbo*.⁶⁸ Although the amount of Japanese landowners never exceeded Korean landowners, the significant rise in foreign ownership caused a widespread decline in the quality of life for Korean tenant farmers and workers. Once Japanese landowners obtained a sizable portion of Korea land, they proceeded to integrate a more modern approach to taxation that incorporated heavier fines on farmers. Many famers earned a meager salary

⁶⁸ Kie-Chung Pang and Michael D. Shin, eds. *Landlords, Peasants & Intellectuals in Modern Korea*. (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2005), 142. A *chǒngbo* is equivalent to 2.45 acres.

from work and faced extreme hardship as a result of higher taxes. By 1930, an official survey estimated that the overall accumulated debt of Koreans farmers ranged somewhere between 500 to 800 million yen.⁶⁹ Unable to comply with the increased burden of taxation, Korean farmers went bankrupt. With few options, thousands of Korea landowners sold property rights to Japanese landlords eager to expand their share of land.

Throughout history, The Japanese diet has relied on rice as a main source of nourishment. As a result of Japan's modernization, the demand for rice increased. Soldiers dispatched abroad required a constant flow of incoming food and supplies. Japanese officials relegated a significant portion of rice production for military campaigns in Asia. As a result, Japan began the increased importation of rice in the late 1890s to meet the rise in demand.

Japanese officials saw expansion as a valuable factor in the production of food. Agricultural expansion and exportation became a key feature for colonial Korea.⁷⁰ Using a variety of methods to strengthen the stability of local landlords and increase the amount of available land for purchase by Japanese tycoons, Japan redeveloped and redistributed land making Korea their primary source of rice exportation.

This land reform required planning, foresight, and documentation. First and foremost, officials required a census to determine the amount of land available for development. Japanese officials required all current landowners to provide proof of ownership of farmland to assist in the cataloging of Korean property. Landowners proved property ownership with certified titles. For wealthy landlords, this was feasible, but for many of the partial owners, tenants, and squatters accustomed to traditional cultivation

⁶⁹ Ibid., 140.

⁷⁰ Eckert. *Korea Old and New a History*, 284.

rights, this new act ensured their removal from the land.⁷¹ Consequently, Japanese landowners acquired or purchased the rights to vast areas vacated by “illegal residents,” or “squatters.” Essentially, the first step in the redistribution of land strengthened the landholdings and power of Japanese entrepreneurs at the expense of impoverished Korean farmers.

The second phase of land redistribution consisted of the *Program to Increase Rice Production* or simply PIRP. The Japanese government invested tens of millions of yen into irrigation, water control, fertilizers, and research to develop a higher yield of rice for farmers in Korea. The cost of improved irrigation methods fell on the lower class to pay for such land modifications. While Japanese landlords and capitalists utilized invested capital to increase production and essentially profits, poor Korean peasants bore the debts from the high-interest loans and became easy targets of exploitation.⁷²

The success of the PIRP initiative flooded the Japanese market with rice. Within twenty years, “from 1915 to 1935, net imports of rice from Korea to Japan rose from 170 to 1,212 thousand metric tons per year.”⁷³ The increased production of rice in colonial countries naturally alleviated the pressure on domestic production. The surplus of rice allowed Japan to shift agricultural resources to the military. By 1934, government storage of rice reached a peak of 1.4 million tons.⁷⁴ Unfortunately for Japan, rice harvests are not always as abundant.

⁷¹ Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008), 102.

⁷² Kie-Chung Pang and Michael D. Shin, eds. *Landlords, Peasants & Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, 136.

⁷³ Yujiro Hayami. “Rice Policy in Japan's Economic Development.” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 54, no. 1 (Feb., 1972): 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

In 1939, Japan and Korea experienced a severe drought that virtually halted the production of rice. As a result, Japan relied more and more on the exportation of Korean rice for survival.

Korean diets also centered on rice. Hence the exportation of rice impacted the entire country. As the demand for rice increased, the supply diminished and increased the value. As Japanese consumers demanded more rice from Korea, increased taxes forced Korean farmers to sell the valuable crop. With the majority of available rice stipulated for export, Korean farmers survived economically and physically by consuming the less nutritious source of millet. Widespread Korean consumption of millet resulted in a continued per capita decline of rice consumption during the colonial period.⁷⁵ The exportation of rice to Japan, more colloquially known among Koreans as the ‘starvation export,’ proceeded to drain the countryside of valuable food that further impoverished Korean producers and their families. Dismal circumstances as a result of rice shortages forced many Korean farmers to migrate to urban areas for their livelihood.

Korean peasants experienced unprecedented levels of hardship from a combination of rice exportation, taxes, and loss of land. The exponential increase in land ownership by the ruling class exacerbated the loss of small-scale farming and increased the poverty of lower-class rural families. As a result, the vulnerability of women dramatically increased. Whether voluntary or forced, women’s actions after land removal made them new targets for sexual exploitation by Japanese recruiters. Desperation had created a new opportunity for manipulation. In search of jobs for economic stability or capital to fund their transformation into modernity, women accepted occupations that they previously would have

⁷⁵ Eckert. *Korea Old and New a History*, 284.

refused because of unconscionable or amoral reasons. Advertised positions such as factory work, waitresses, entertainers, or prostitution, offered a much-needed financial reprieve from oppressive economic conditions of colonialism.

Recruitment

As the Japanese Empire expanded throughout Asia, military officials demanded more brothels in order to accommodate the increase of troops. Newly established brothels within China acquired a majority of their women from Korea. To ensure a steady supply of women, Japanese officials incorporated and restructured previously established Korean prostitution networks. At first, Japanese officials integrated a new set of standards for all brothels within Korea. The government adopted a series of policies in 1916 that modified all pre-existing brothels and established a Japanese system of ownership. Formally known as the “Brothel and Prostitution Control Regulations,” these new laws required work permits and set a minimum age limit for prostitutes. Ratification of the new standards allowed Japanese officials to control and standardize brothel activity, thereby creating an avenue for military recruitment. Furthermore, the new regulations provided a more legal and controlled environment for patrons and prostitutes, and made the business of prostitution a governmental endeavor. With the integration of new policies, Japan solidified its administrative control over brothels throughout Korea.

One of the new restrictions forced Korean pleasure houses to relocate to government-designated jurisdictions. A standardized district for brothel activity within Korea ensured tighter control over the industry. In addition, relocation made it more difficult for independent organizations to operate. To ensure relocation, Japan created new provinces

throughout Korea specifically for Korean brothels. Government officials granted most Korean operators a limited extension on relocation deadlines in order to insure compliance with newly enacted ordinances. Essentially, the act of relocation presented the government with an opportunity to firmly place operations under its control.⁷⁶

Another method the Japanese government used to control prostitution was restricting the freedom of prostitutes and developing connections with Korean pimps. The Japanese used its connections with previously established Korean brothels as a framework for the new system. The earlier existence of Korean brothels supplied Japan with a foundation to develop, manage, and recruit women for additional state-sanctioned centers. Under Japanese employ, Korean middlemen proved to be ideal pimps in the Japanese sex trade. Korean middlemen had a long history and knowledge of the day-to-day operations of existing brothels. Additionally, they sought to incur favor with their Japanese colonizers. Koreans that provided women for Japanese-run brothels, became valuable components of the system and therefore, more likely to survive.

As comfort stations assumed a sanctioned role under the auspices of the Japanese Empire, the system of recruitment adjusted accordingly. First and foremost, the Japanese relied on the ability to fill Chinese brothels with *karayuki-san* from Japan. With such a large and constantly growing mobilization of forces within China, soldiers' demands drastically outweighed the supply of available Japanese women. Higher demand for prostitutes stimulated the need for a more structured and broader scope of recruitment by the Japanese

⁷⁶ Song Youn-ok. "Japanese Colonial Rule and State-Managed Prostitution: Korea's Licensed Prostitutes." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 5 (1), special issue, The Comfort Women. (Spring 1997): 179.

government. Japanese officials responded to the increased demand for women by adopting drastic measures for recruitment that included force, deception, and coercion.

This system of recruitment fell originally under the official euphemism of *Kunro Jungshindae*. Interpreted as ‘Voluntary Committing Body Corps for Labor,’ it was more colloquially known as “virgin recruitment” due to the high volume of young women targeted by the operation. At first, *Kunro Jungshindae* served as a human mobilization network in Korea for Japanese military purposes. Created at the behest of Japan, programs like the *Kunro Jungshindae* originally intended to mobilize laborers for various Japanese-run projects throughout Korea. The Japanese invasion of China forced many Korean males to join the war effort on the side of Japan. The large percentage of skilled Korean laborers drafted by the Japanese army drained factories of its skilled labor. As a result, many Korean factories experience a period of underproduction. During this period, Korean factories employed an all-male workforce. As Japan demanded a higher percentage of Korean men for the military, factories experienced a significant loss of available workers. To avoid a decrease of factory output, the Japanese government instituted a series of recruitment campaigns to keep factory production stable. The *Kunro Jungshindae* served to fill factories running below capacity with enlisted Korean ‘volunteers.’ In reality, most recruiters pressured Korean citizens to join the war effort or face harsh repercussions that included physical abuse and confiscation of personal property. The demand for eligible workers proved a unique avenue for fulfillment of comfort station quotas. The Japanese used the *Kunro Jungshindae* to exploit the innocuous connotation of enlistment for work units, and thereby identified, documented, and located potential recruits for prostitution.

During *Kunro Jungshindae* recruitment campaigns, recruiters focused and recorded the age of all applicants. Recruiters used the data collected to identify all eligible women for the possibility of prostitution. According to Japanese regulations, prostitutes needed to be at least eighteen years old in Japan and at least seventeen in Korea.⁷⁷ Although the government of Japan regulated the age that women could become eligible for prostitution centers, army brothels cared little whether or not a woman was of legal age. The majority of Japanese brothels had no age requirements. Recruiters sent girls as young as eleven years old to brothels.⁷⁸ There is no record of any prostitute being younger than eleven, but ages vary all across the spectrum with the majority of women under twenty. In accordance with army regulations, prostitution centers desired younger women as a measure to prevent exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. The army believed that a younger woman offered the benefit of fewer previous sexual partners. Young and sexually inexperienced prostitutes reduced the risk of sexual infections prior to arrival. Recruiters used *Kunro Jungshindae*, and a pretense for labor employment to target young and healthy single girls for comfort stations. Consequently, the *Kunro Jungshindae* provided Japanese recruiters with a collection of data that identified potential applicants for recruitment. The data identified women and categorized all available girls in every village, town, city, and province.⁷⁹ The collection of data made it easy for traffickers to identify and capture woman for comfort stations.

⁷⁷ Kratoska ed. *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire*, 311.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁷⁹ Dai Sil Kim-Gibson. *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women*, (Iowa: Mid-Prairie Books, 2000), 42.

Korean families feared *Kunro Jungshindae* to such an extent that statistics record a noticeable spike in marriages for women under twenty.⁸⁰ Koreans believed that recruiters targeted only single women. Consequently, periods of recruitment align with a noticeable spike in Korean marriages. To decrease the risk of recruitment, women either entered “unusual” marriage arrangements or doctored marriage certificates. Within Korean society, the parents of a child typically arranged a potential suitor. Unusual marriages often occurred out of necessity, not desire. Korean women believed that marriage was their only chance to escape forceful service within a brothel.

To avoid *Kunro Jungshindae*, parents often married their young daughters to older men. For example, the parents of a Korean girl forced her to marry a widower twice her age with three children already present in the family. Korean villagers’ believed even mismatched partners were preferable to recruitment.⁸¹ Although a highly conservative society, necessity overruled desire. Women, forced to marry out of necessity, quickly revoked their sacred vows after Korean liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. After the war ended, a noticeable spike of marriage annulments and divorces occurred among Korean brides, something uncharacteristic of a highly traditional society.⁸²

Japanese colonization imposed harsh restrictions on Korean families and married individuals. Restrictions often limited the amount of work available for Koreans. To avoid starvation, many women sought work in other villages or other countries. Many employment agencies deceived destitute women eagerly seeking steady work. Japanese recruiters

⁸⁰ Yoo. *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 114.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸² Alice-Yun Chai. “Asian-Pacific Feminist Coalition Politics: The Chōngsindae/Jugunianfu (“Comfort Women”) Movement.” *Korean Studies*, 17: 67-91. (1993): 70.

pretended to offer struggling women potential careers as nurses, waitresses, maids, typists, or any other position that seemed appealing. Such “positions” often promised a sizable salary that could be used to aid the family unit.⁸³ Most indigent women willingly applied for positions in order to alleviate the poverty they experienced back home. Occasionally, recruiters openly employed women for positions at comfort stations. Although recruiters sometimes mentioned comfort stations, it is obvious that these programs were misrepresented to enlistees. According to the *U.S. Office of War Interrogation Report No. 49*, “initially, Korean women assumed that comfort service consisted of visiting wounded soldiers and generally making the soldiers happy.”⁸⁴ In the face of hunger, women may have overlooked the imminent danger work programs presented.

Korean men also experienced severe economic hardships as a result of colonialism. To survive financially, many Korean men accepted positions as recruiters for the Japanese army. With widespread rural poverty, “procurement was one of the few opportunities for employment available to Koreans, who were excluded from many means of earning a livelihood under colonial rule.”⁸⁵ The Japanese viewed Korean middlemen as a valuable asset. Korean men provided Japanese officials with information about local culture, customs, and more importantly women. One advantage Korean recruiters had over Japanese recruiters was culture. Korean women uniformly perceived every Japanese person as potentially dangerous. However, Korean recruiters worked hard to foster a relationship with their intended victims. Of course, parents taught women to be wary of any situation, but in

⁸³ Carmen M. Argibay, “Sexual Slavery and the Comfort Women of World War II.” *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 21, no.2 (3003): 378.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁸⁵ Song Youn-ok. “Japanese Colonial Rule and State-Managed Prostitution,” 183.

the case of Korean recruiters, women were more willing to enlist. Korean recruiters sought out desperate women outside of official employment agencies and deceived them with offers of employment and good wages. It wasn't difficult for many recruiters to enlist willing and vulnerable applicants.

Increased vulnerability among Korean volunteers was most likely attributed to being young, naïve, and for the most part illiterate. According to a national survey on literacy rates in 1930, an overwhelming 920.47 out of 1,000 Korean women were unable to read.⁸⁶ Illiteracy often increased the chances of abduction due to the inability to read written contracts. Many recruiters described positions on paper to volunteers differently than what may have been on a written contract. Another reason for such a high rate of successful manipulation by Koreans against Koreans was achieved by invoking nationalism. From a Korean perspective, widespread poverty was the result of Japanese colonialism. Therefore, Koreans widely accepted the notion of the enemy as wholly Japan, and believed that only a traitor or non-Korean aided the Japanese.

In times of severe need, Korean families simply sold daughters to contractors to pay off debts or reduce the number of household members.⁸⁷ Recruiters took these women to local lodgings where they waited for valid documentation to travel outside of Korea. During temporary transit between countries, recruiters fed women and treated them relatively well, despite the fact that their movements were restricted and monitored.⁸⁸ Upon arrival in China, Japanese officials systematically appropriated women for each sector determined by demand,

⁸⁶ Ibid., 190.

⁸⁷ Yoo. *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 106.

⁸⁸ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 38.

thus beginning their lives as comfort women. Even though various agencies recruited women using different methods, it is unequivocal that “these people worked together, sometimes individually and at other times collaboratively, but always under a keen military eye.”⁸⁹

Evidence suggests that Japan preferred Korean women for comfort stations over other nationalities. Unique features of Japanese society created a strong bias and preference for Korean women. Although Japanese incursions within the heartland of China provided opportunities for the ‘employment’ of Chinese women, the military avoided such encounters whenever possible. Japanese officers only exploited Chinese women in the absence of women from other racial backgrounds. As a result of wartime activities and the constant disruption on the mobilization of women, rural Korean communities saw the greatest percentage of girls sent to brothels.⁹⁰ Due to a long history of animosity against China and racial hierarchy within Japan, Japan had a strong aversion towards Chinese women. Japanese people considered the Korean race a close relative, and therefore believed them to be a stronger candidate for assimilation. In addition to racial preferences, Chinese women also posed the greatest risk for enemy infiltration. In extreme cases of need, Japanese recruiters forced or enlisted Chinese women for prostitution. Within Japanese brothels, Chinese women had the advantage of gaining valuable insights to military campaigns. China and Japan have a long history of cultural interactions. As a result, Japanese is a popular and useful language among Chinese traders and businessmen. Many Chinese women used the unfortunate circumstances of their position within brothels to extract valuable information

⁸⁹ Kim-Gibson. *Silence Broken*, 49.

⁹⁰ Hayashi Hirofumi. “Japanese Comfort Women in Southeast Asia.” *Japan Forum* 10, no.2 (September 1998): 211.

unintentionally provided by Japanese customers. Chinese women found ways to use the information gathered during “sessions” to the benefit of the local Chinese resistance forces. Japanese brothel owners understood the risk that Chinese women posed to secrecy and sought to avoid any potential lapses in security by primarily recruiting Koreans.

The Japanese also used Korean women for comfort stations because of the advantage of cultural barriers. Japan established the majority of their comfort stations throughout China. Koreans, housed in prostitution centers in China, were disoriented by their surroundings. Many Korean women kept in brothels had never left home prior to being ‘enlisted’ by recruiters. Held in comfort stations throughout China, Korean women experienced unfamiliar territory, language, and culture. The Chinese saw Koreans as obvious outsiders among the locally homogenous communities. As the Japanese removed Koreans from their natural environment, they became a more vulnerable and controllable product for exploitation. Consequently, the Japanese desired Koreans for comfort stations in lieu of other ethnicities because of their ability to manipulate and control them during displacement.

Colonialism and the *Gisaeng*

Colonialism presented an abundance of new opportunities for Japanese citizens to travel to and from Korea for both business and pleasure. As Japanese tourism increased, so did a greater fascination with local Korean traditions and customs. In addition to local foods, arts, and sights, Japanese men sought to fulfill their desire for the exotic. Similar to the geisha of Japan, Korea had a class of female artisans referred to as *gisaeng*. Korean society revered *gisaeng* for their artistic qualities. Organized by the Korean state as early as the Silla period (late seventh to early tenth century), *gisaeng* constituted a caste in society that

functioned as a guild. This was due to the majority of *gisaeng* passing down their unique set of trade skills from mother to daughter. Trained from an early age, *gisaeng* often acquired one or more different talents such as writing poetry, dance, music, or calligraphy. In addition to artistic qualities, some *gisaeng* performed practical functions that ranged from needlework to medical assistance. Although primarily accepted by society as highly skilled female artisans, many *gisaeng* also offered clients the option of sexual services.

The hierarchy of the *gisaeng* class consisted of three distinct ranks. The lowest rank of *gisaeng* specialized in sexual work, while the middle group acted as entertainers and part-time prostitutes. “The highest rank, considered either exceptionally artistic or beautiful, served high officials and performed at state functions.”⁹¹ For many *gisaeng*, sexual availability and artistic skills served as an avenue for upward mobility within society. Although not permitted to marry, some *gisaeng* became “concubines or secondary wives for government officials.”⁹² Official relationships with bureaucrats allowed the women to retain a modicum of respect, while also practicing a needed trade permitted by society. As a result of Japanese colonialism in Korea, the role of the *gisaeng* shifted from artistic skills to predominantly sexual services. As transportation increased between Korea and Japan, so did the demand for *gisaeng*.

At times, the Japanese demand for Korean women bordered on obsession. Japanese domination over Korea presented new areas of sexual fascination. As Japanese Colonialism expanded over all aspects of Korean life, a sense of nostalgia arose for Korean

⁹¹ John Lie. “The Transformation of Sexual Work in 20th-Century Korea.” *Gender and Society*, 9, no.3 (June 1995): 312.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 312.

artifacts and pleasures. Japanese men prized *gisaeng* for their sexual allure and availability. After Japan annexed Korea in 1905, *gisaeng* fell under the auspices of Japanese management. As a result, Japanese administrators overlooked the artistic qualities of the *gisaeng* class and instead regarded the profession as a strictly sexual commodity and categorized them accordingly. Without proper distinction between classes, *gisaeng* fell under the same category as regular licensed sex workers. Japanese regulations also required the *gisaeng* to receive regular health inspections alongside common prostitutes. As a result of official Japanese classification, the *gisaeng* profession lost the respect it had earned through talent and skill. Reduced in status, the *gisaeng* were removed from their traditional role in society by the Japanese.

Under Japanese rule, *gisaeng* acquired a new identity incorporated under the umbrella of the entertainment business. New forms of media like radio, postcards, newspapers, and travel literature popularized the sexual allure of the *gisaeng* over their traditional artistic qualities. By glamorizing their trade in periodicals which ran in three languages, *gisaeng* shifted from the obscure to the mainstream. Consequently, sexual fascination with Korean women burgeoned. Japanese tourists that sought a uniquely Korean experience could purchase sexual tours.⁹³ In essence, Japanese patrons purchased the sexual access to *gisaeng* as part of a perceived authentic Korean experience. *Gisaeng* represented a primitive aspect of Korean life prior to colonization. Tourists that sought their company

⁹³ Japanese led sex tours within Korea lasted well into the 1970s. Lured by travel agencies that boasted a "Complete *Gisaeng* service--a man's paradise," Japanese companies rewarded diligent workers by all-expense paid trips to Korean brothels. Supported by the Korean government, sex tourism generated \$100 million dollars between January 1973 and June 1973 alone. By providing such an enormous boost for the Korean economy, *gisaeng* tourism epitomized the ugly relationship between economic growth and sexual exploitation. As cited in Matsui Yayori and Lora Sharnoff's "Sexual Slavery in Korea." Published in *A Journal of Women Studies*, Spring 1977 issue.

could purchase directories such as the 1918 *Treasury of Korean Beauties*. Guidebooks offered the locations of pleasure districts as well as critiques and reviews for current *gisaeng* working throughout the area. Colonial media removed the artistic nature from the profession and portrayed the women as solely sex objects. Advertised as sexual commodities, *gisaeng* lost all semblances of artistry from their class. Such hyper-sexualization that surrounded *gisaeng* likely altered the perception of Korean women in the countryside. As a result, Japanese troops likely associated every Korean woman as sexually experienced and available.

Advertisements in the colonial media effectively blended the boundaries between *gisaeng* and Korean women. Many Japanese travelers and soldiers were likely unaware of the differences between the *gisaeng* and common Korean women. Soldiers that desired an authentic *gisaeng* experience, likely believed that all Koreans provided the same sexual pleasures as a *gisaeng*. Soldiers that sought to obtain the same sexualized-Korean experience that *gisaeng* offered were possibly more likely to visit a comfort station. Well primed by the media, soldiers had a preconceived opinion of their Korean prostitutes. Although most comfort women were Korean, not *all* Korean women had been *gisaeng*. Influenced by the media, images and stories encouraged Japanese soldiers to view all Korean women as *gisaeng*. Instead of viewing comfort women as female victims, Japanese soldiers likely identified them as hyper-sexualized whores. As soldiers funneled their sexual desires and fantasies towards comfort stations, traffickers required a higher volume of Korean workers to meet the increased demand. Therefore, the commercialization of the *gisaeng* may have inadvertently accelerated the supply of comfort stations with primarily Korean women. In any case, the effects of Japanese colonial regulation of *gisaeng* increased the demand of

sexual labor and sexualized “a profession that had once enjoyed a modicum of respectability.”⁹⁴

In contrast to the professional *karayuki-san* from Japan, recruiters also sought Korean women because of their assumed racial inferiority and culturally adopted practice of chastity. Korean patriarchy heavily emphasized the need for female purity and chastity that was widely accepted among the native populace. Society regarded virginity as more precious than life itself.⁹⁵ Korean women continued to value their virginity under Japanese colonialism. Japanese militants exploited this, forming clubs devoted to de-flowering Korean girls. Apparently in the southern province of Jeolla, a Japanese police unit formed a Virgin Girls Club which provided virgins for military mobilization.⁹⁶ The deplorable antics of the Japanese police unit would likely not have existed without a high number of virgins. The cultural value that Koreans placed on virginity is a result of filial duty and the role women played in society. These roles were established in the sixteenth century as a result of foreign invasion by the nation of Japan.

The Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) provided a lasting paradigm for the importance of virginity among Korean females. During the Joseon Dynasty in the last decade of the sixteenth century, Japan initiated two military invasions of Korea. Initially, Japan wished to conquer Korea and then invade China. In 1592, Japan invaded Korea from the southern city of Busan. The Chinese Emperor Wanli (r. 1572-1620) viewed the Japanese incursion into

⁹⁴ Everett Taylor Atkins. *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910-1945*. (London: University of California Press, Ltd. 2010), 177-178.

⁹⁵ Sarah Chunghee Soh. “Women’s Sexual Labor and State in Korean History.” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no.4 (Winter-2004 2004): 171.

⁹⁶ Chai. “Asian-Pacific Feminist Coalition Politics: The Chōngsindae/Jugunianfu (“Comfort Women”) Movement,” 69.

Korea as a threat to China and responded by sending a force of soldiers to halt the advance of Japanese troops northward. Although heavily outnumbered by the Japanese, the combined Korean and Chinese forces succeeded in halting the Japanese assault. At an impasse, both Japan and China agreed to withdraw troops and negotiate a treaty. After failing to settle on the terms for the treaty, Japan and China resumed hostilities. Japan again invaded Korea in 1597 with the intention of conquering China. In the second invasion of Korea, Japan faced unexpected hardships that eventually doomed the campaign. Several factors contributed to the failure of the second Japanese invasion of Korea. China knew that Japan intended to attack and prepared accordingly. In addition to the heavily anticipated attack by Japan, the great Japanese general Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) died, leaving troops demoralized. Ultimately in 1598, Japan realized the futility of their invasion and ordered a complete retreat of Korea.

Although Japan's intent was to occupy China, Japanese troops attacked and raped Korean civilians. During the Japanese offensive, a large number of Korean women committed suicide after being violated, or raped, or to avoid being raped by occupying Japanese forces.⁹⁷ After Korean and Chinese forces thwarted the Japanese assaults, the reigning Korean king decided to honor the bravery and loyalty exhibited by his subjects. King Seonjo (r. 1567-1608) bestowed three different awards to citizens. These awards depended upon the bravery displayed during the Japanese invasion. The three types of royal awards emphasized loyal subjects (*ch'ungsin*), filial sons (*hyoja*), and virtuous women (*yölyö*). What makes the award categories so significant is that the ratio of women to men

⁹⁷ Sarah Cungee Soh. "The Korean 'Comfort Women': Movement for Redress." *Asian Survey*, 36, no. 12 (Dec., 1996): 1229.

recipients was nearly 5:1, clearly placing a higher societal value on female virtue over male obedience.

Another example of the value placed on virginity within Korea occurred during an invasion from Manchuria in the seventeenth century. The Manchu came to power after they overthrew the ruling Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in China. Korea, a tributary state of China, developed animosity for the Manchu as a result of the coup. A large faction of Korean militants, unhappy with Manchu leadership, formed an anti-Manchurian alliance. As rulers of China, the Manchu sent two military expeditions to Korea in 1627 and 1636 to quell the growing anti-Manchurian faction within the countryside. During their invasion, the Manchu forces managed to abduct hundreds of thousands of Koreans and return with them to China.⁹⁸ Of the female victims that managed to escape and return home, many were regarded as defiled and rejected by their families. In addition, the return of these “impure” women had such a major impact on society that a new moniker was created to bestow upon women that returned home after being captured by the Manchu. Koreans referred to them as *hwanyangnyŏn*. In Korean, *hwanyangnyŏn* means a promiscuous woman or slut. *Hwanyangnyŏn* was an alteration of the former Korean word *hwanyangnyŏ*, which meant literally a home-coming woman. The Korean vernacular still used the harsh epithet for promiscuous women up until the mid-twentieth century.⁹⁹ This is significant in that it demonstrates the value Korean society placed upon women’s chastity and the consequences that many women faced for failure to meet social standards. Society valued chastity to such an extent that many comfort station victims experienced a deep shame as a result of forced

⁹⁸ Soh. “Women’s Sexual Labor and State in Korean History,” 171.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

prostitution. Korean society traditionally regarded female virginity necessary for marriage.¹⁰⁰ If Korean women returned home after being violated, they often faced ostracism for being “impure.” To avoid shame, many women reluctantly “accepted” their position as prostitutes in Japanese brothels. Consequently, many Korean women felt that they only had two options after being abducted by Japanese recruiters; they could either submit themselves to the shame of sexual exploitation or commit suicide to preserve their chastity.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately for many Korean women, Confucianism only condones the act of suicide in extreme cases.

Aspects of Confucianism teach that suicide is an acceptable fate only if humans are unable to meet the expected values of a society; chastity being a uniform value for women within Korea. Accordingly, Confucianism stresses that a woman must preserve her virginity according to societal standards; otherwise she risks being perceived as an outcast and culpable for her actions. Women victimized within comfort stations, unable to comply with the societal expectations for suicide, experienced guilt and shame. Shame led many victims to hide their rape, commit suicide, or accept their fate, thereby creating a more malleable victim for continued Japanese victimization.

Besides the strict adherence to chastity by the Korean population, Korea’s strong historical roots in Confucianism also played a key role in susceptibility of Korean women to Japanese assimilation. Under the auspices of Confucianism, the family unit is regarded as the foundation for a well-regulated and lawful society. Managing a well-run family relied on five inflexible human regulations concerning status. Ranks of subservience within Korean society

¹⁰⁰ David Andrew Schmidt. *Ianfu - The Comfort Women of the Japanese Imperial Army of the Pacific War: Broken Silence*, (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd 2000), 16.

¹⁰¹ Wantanabe, “Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women,” 10.

consisted of the “righteousness between ruler and subject, love between father and son, differentiation between husband and wife, ordination between older and younger, and trust between friend and friend.”¹⁰² Koreans that followed Confucianism’s five human relegations created a highly patriarchal society prior to Japanese colonization. In this way, Confucianism, so deeply ingrained by the five-century rule of the Joseon dynasty, defined women as little more than objects to be controlled and managed. The dynamic relationship between husband and wife was so strictly observed within Korean families that it mirrored the relationship between king and his subjects, or father and son.¹⁰³ As a result, many Korean women had already existed within a society heavily dictated by men prior to annexation. For women, Korean oppression was simply replaced by Japanese oppression during occupation. Having played a compliant role in society, Korean women made for a suitable and convenient subjects for conquest. Ultimately, Confucianism taught Korean society to value the virginity and obedience of women. Although Korean obedience to Japan might be overlooked in the face of occupation, virginity could not.

Japanese soldiers most likely desired women with less sexual experience as a result of shared beliefs in Confucianism. Within traditional Japanese culture, rape possesses a certain mystical property. In many instances, soldiers “believed that raping virgins would make them more powerful in battle.”¹⁰⁴ This type of thinking offers proof of a society that condoned sexual violence. For instance, some soldiers wore amulets made from the pubic

¹⁰² Clark W. Sorensen. “The Myth of Princess Pari and the Self Image of Korean Women.” *Anthropos*, Bd. 83, H. 4./6. (1988): 405.

¹⁰³ Insoon Han Park and Lee-Jay Cho. “Confucianism and the Korean Family.” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 26, no. 1, Families in Asia: BELIEFS AND REALITIES. (Spring 1995): 124.

¹⁰⁴ Chang, *The Rape of Nanking*, 49.

hair of their sexually assaulted victims, which they believed possessed magical properties that would prevent injury.¹⁰⁵ The spread of this belief likely increased the rate of rape by the Japanese military. The continuation of rape could only be sustained with the constant influx of fresh victims. Japanese soldiers likely coveted Korean females because of their adherence to maintaining their virginity providing the soldiers with sexual souvenirs that they believed protected them against harm. Although rape was a popular crime for Japanese soldiers, it was not altogether accepted. Soldiers likely turned to rape and visitation of comfort stations because of peer pressure. Many soldiers may have found it easier to visit comfort stations with the impression of Koreans as subhuman. Many soldiers lowered the value of human life and prostitutes by defining them with debasing terms.

Throughout World War II, the Japanese used a variety of sexual epithets to describe comfort women and stations. Many euphemisms arose from the military's need to define the position and status of the women as they related to soldiers. In such cases, officials originally described prostitutes in ledgers as supplies or gifts, but other sources ascribe additional terms such as comfort women, prostitutes, or more accurately as enforced sexual slaves.¹⁰⁶ Many soldiers compared comfort stations to the unavoidable function of a human body. Similar to a human's desire to expel bodily fluids for survival, soldiers referred to comfort stations as hygienic public toilets.¹⁰⁷ Associating comfort stations with hygienic toilets served two purposes. First, the military linked comfort stations with sanitation. As a result, soldiers thought of prostitutes in comfort stations as disease free. Additionally, the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁶ Chosun Media, "‘Comfort Women’ Were Sex Slave," The Chosun Ilbo. 1 September 2013. Accessed August 31, 2013. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/07/12/2012071201339.html

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 71.

appellation of hygienic public toilets effectively made visitation an appropriate and justifiable offense in the eyes of the military. This type of language effectively removed all humanity from the women and soldiers alike.

Similar to the moniker used for comfort stations, many soldiers dubbed prostitutes with derogatory nicknames. Most soldiers simply referred to the women and stations as ‘*pi*,’ or the Chinese slang word for the vagina.¹⁰⁸ Some of the worst epithets described sexual expectations. On a regular basis, soldiers refrained from denoting the women as human, instead simply referring to them as ‘*niku-ichi*,’ or 29-1. The debasing Japanese term of “29-1” related to the amount of soldiers each woman was expected to service on any given day.¹⁰⁹ Corroborating use of the term ‘*niku-ichi*’ is the statement made by comfort women survivor Ms. Koon Ja Kim at a United States committee hearing on foreign affairs in 2007. During her testimony, Ms. Koon Ja Kim stated how “it was common to be raped by 20 different soldiers a day, and on some days, it was as high as 40.”¹¹⁰

Through the use of language, the military effectively removed all stigma from the forced enslavement of women for sexual services. As soldiers used derogatory terms to describe prostitutes, they were effectively removing themselves from the reality of the situation. Many soldiers instead believed that visits to comfort stations were a natural part of military life. Widespread acceptance for comfort stations gradually grew as the war progressed. Soldiers that normalized sexual violence, naturally felt unaffected by the act of

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Chunghee Soh. “From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves: Theorizing Symbolic Representations of the ‘Comfort Women.’” *Social Science Japan Journal*, 3, no. 1 (Apr., 2000): 71.

¹⁰⁹ Chai. Asian-Pacific Feminist Coalition Politics: The Chōngsindae/Jugunianfu (“Comfort Women”) Movement. *Korean Studies*. (1993): 71

¹¹⁰ Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, *Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment*. 110th Cong., 1st Sess., February 15, 2007, 32.

rape within comfort stations. The Japanese military strongly supported the notion that sexual aggression must be controlled and channeled. Therefore, Japan standardized comfort stations as sexual outlets for troops to curtail unaccounted violence outside the purview of the military. Contemporary attitudes within Japanese society still defend the necessity and normalcy of military prostitution stations. Similar to the original advocates of Japan's modernization and military installation of comfort stations, Mayor of Osaka Toru Hashimoto recently stated that prostitution centers exist to "'maintain discipline' and provide relief for soldiers who risked their lives in battle."¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Fujita, Akiko. "Japanese Politician Stirs Ire Over US Troop, Wartime Sex Slaves Comments." *ABC NEWS*. May 27, 2013. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/japanese-politician-wartime-sex-slaves-inexcusable-refuses-retract/story?id=19263854#.UaN-N9KNlc0> (accessed September 24, 2013). The mayor of Osaka was recently questioned during a press conference regarding the circumstances of United States military troop's visitation to prostitution centers within Japan. According to Mayor Toru Hashimoto, the U.S. troops patronize adult entertainment industries to curtail the spread of rape. He later remarked that, "if you don't make use of those places you cannot properly control the sexual energy of those tough guys." Hashimoto later apologized for his remarks and mentioned the stations as an inexcusable act that violated human rights.

CHAPTER IV

WHY AN ISSUE TODAY?

It was not until the end of WWII that the abuses committed by Japanese soldiers attracted international attention. South Korean comfort women confronted Japanese officials and Japan as a nation with allegations of crimes against humanity. Although many Japanese leaders faced trial and admitted guilt for a variety of brutal crimes at the end of World War II, the existence of comfort women during the war is still a highly contested issue within Japan. If the survivors are to receive the redress and resolution they desire, Japan must first acknowledge their crimes and admit their heinous transgression against the people of Korea. Despite a surfeit of incriminating evidence regarding the role of Japanese soldiers in recruiting comfort women, there are still those that refuse to acknowledge the facts and take responsibility for the actions of their nation.

Creating awareness of the comfort women issue has been a continual struggle for advocates since the first accounts began to surface after WWII. The first major breakthrough occurred in the early 1970s when Japanese reporter Senda Kako stumbled upon wartime images of women marching with what appeared to be the Japanese military. Kako eventually recognized that the women in the photographs resembled traditional Korean women. With further research and interviews with war-time eyewitnesses, Kako published his findings in 1973 under the title of *Jugun Ianfu*, or Military Comfort Women.' Kako's book was one of the first published accounts of forced prostitution by the Japanese military, but not the last.

As if to confirm Kako's accounts, a 1977 publication of a Japanese soldier's wartime memoir focused more attention on the issue of comfort women. Re-published in 1983, Seiji Yoshida's "*My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*," described the details of Japanese forces pressing women into sexual servitude.¹¹² Yoshida, a Japanese native and former chief of the National Service Labor Recruitment branch office, described in "*My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*" the forceful recruitment of women relegated to comfort stations. As head of the Mobilization Department, Yoshida relates how he personally rounded up 5,000 Koreans, including 1,000 Korean women with the assistance of the Japanese police in the Southern Jeolla Province of Korea.¹¹³ After abducting women, Yoshida admitted that he then handed over his captives to the Japanese Imperial forces to be assigned to brothels.

In addition to the province of Jeolla, Yoshida also described the act of enlisting Koreans from Jeju, and island off the southern coast of South Korea. Yoshida states that over the course of a week in 1942 he successfully recruited 205 Korean women from a local button factory on the island. Yoshida admitted using deception or force as a means of recruitment. He originally promised each woman thirty yen per month for their work as 'Teishintai,' or Volunteer Labor Corps.¹¹⁴ Although Yoshida's memoir coincides with allegations presented by surviving comfort women, there still exists certain gaps throughout his narrative.

¹¹² Originally published under the Japanese title *Watakushi no senso hanzai: Chosenjin Kyosei renko*, the book still remains in Japanese with no additional language translations offered.

¹¹³ Ailee Moon and Young I. Song, eds. *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 1998), 246.

¹¹⁴ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 153.

What makes Yoshida's account questionable are the findings by a newspaper publishing company of Jeju island. According to research by the local newspapers, no such village described by Yoshida existed, nor was there any evidence that the Japanese army had ever been to that place.¹¹⁵ Due to several inconsistencies in Yoshida's story, his entire memoir remains questionable. After reviewing "*My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*," the local newspaper *Jeju Ilbo* attempted to locate the village and survivors of the supposed kidnappings. According to the field work of newspaper correspondent Heo Yeong-seon, the incident never took place. During her fieldwork, Heo interviewed eighty-five year old Chon Ok-tan, a local resident of Jeju. In Chon's words, "It's not true. There are only a little over 250 houses in this village. If an incident that serious, where fifteen people were abducted, had taken place, everyone would have heard about it. But no one did."¹¹⁶ The local newspaper's findings also coincide with similar field work done by Japanese History Professor, Hata Ikuhiko. Apparently, unable to corroborate the claims by Yoshida, Ikuhiko went on a research trip to the island of Jeju to ascertain the truth. On the island, Ikuhiko spoke with five men that had worked in the infamous button factory, where Yoshida claimed Japanese soldiers had drafted Koreans for mobilization. After speaking with the five

¹¹⁵ Nobuo Ikeda. Truth About Japan. "*An Introduction to the "Comfort Women Issue" for The New York Times (PDF)*. Web. Published June 4, 2013. Accessed September 21, 2013. <http://ikedanobuo.livedoor.biz/nyt-e.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Hiromichi Moteki. "The Truth About the "Comfort Women." Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact. 2. Although Moteki sights evidence that appears credible, it should be noted that he is the secretary-general of the rightwing organization known as the Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact. He has published several articles surrounding comfort women and seeks to discredit their current claims of forced sexual servitude. Moteki desires to reveal that the Japanese military had no connection with forced prostitution in overseas war zones. Therefore, his work could be criticized as a result of his agenda and highly nationalistic connections with Japan.

surviving workers from the factory, Ikuhiko confirmed that, “some male workers had been conscripted but concluded that no female workers had been drafted to be comfort women.”¹¹⁷

Ikuhiko’s findings explain why there are inconsistencies in primary testimonies related to the supposed capture of women on Jeju. His research also explains why the public has two scenarios to choose from. On the one hand, Yoshida asserts that the Japanese took women from the island. On the other, Ikuhiko was unable to verify the events of the raid, leaving Yoshida as an unreliable source. Although the admission of guilt by a former Japanese recruiter appears to be factual evidence, doubt is created by the Korean natives of Jeju. When interviewed, they asserted that the raids did not take place.

Koreans almost uniformly support claims made by comfort women, but the natives of Jeju may have denied the raids because of two possibilities. The first possibility being that Japanese raids on the island of Jeju truly did not take place. The other alternative lies with the ethnic or political background of the natives. If the natives had Japanese relations or sympathized with the Japanese as a result of occupation or friendship, they likely denied the idea of Japanese raids out of loyalty. Ultimately, the absence of hard facts and lacuna in memory serve to discredit any evidence Yoshida’s book may present. Considering the highly nationalistic tone of the comfort women issue, contradictions pose a convenient excuse for the Japanese to avoid confirming the truth of the matter.

Under harsh criticism and accusations of falsehood, Yoshida later admitted the fabrication of his story regarding the events that took place on Jeju Island.¹¹⁸ The admission

¹¹⁷ Soh. *The Comfort Women*, 153.

¹¹⁸ Nobuo Ikeda, “An Introduction to the “Comfort Women Issue” for *The New York Times*,” June 4, 2013. Last modified September 21, 2013, <http://ikedanobuo.livedoor.biz/nyt-e.pdf>.

of falsehood by Yoshida places all of his statements about comfort women into question. One possibility for Yoshida's story may have been an attempt to attract publicity, and earn money from book sales. There is, of course, the very real possibility that the Japanese government pressured Yoshida to recant his story. Japan as a nation has a great deal at stake in regards to the accusations of forced prostitution. Honor plays a large role within Japanese society. Japan faced a great deal of humiliation as a result of losing World War II against the West. Japan likely desired to move beyond the events of WWII and leave the difficult aspects of the past behind. The issue of comfort women threatens to tarnish Japan's historical memory. The allegations of Yoshida and surviving comfort women threaten to re-focus global attention on Japan's humiliating defeat. Consequently, it is possible that Japan pressured Yoshida to recant the statements of his memoir. Unfortunately for Japan, Yoshida's original work in the 1970s awakened many other scholars to the possibility of forced prostitution during World War II.

One of the first advocates for bringing attention to comfort women was Yun Chung-ok. A Korean native and youth during the final stages of the war, Yun published several articles and books in the 1980s addressing the issue of sexual slavery. Although Yun's publications created a growing movement for redress and full disclosure of comfort women, her sources are questionable and raise doubts about the validity of her early publications. Yun's research is unquestionably valuable and highly academic, but it should be noted that she first learned of comfort women through an unnamed Japanese source

published in the 1980s.¹¹⁹ Given that the original and only publication of an account of comfort women by a private party in the early 1980s within Japan was Yoshida's "*My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*." Yun's unnamed source in all likelihood was his dubious narrative. Yun's publications and research may have been based on Yoshida's 're-canted' testimony. If Yoshida's work is considered unreliable, then Yun's work must also be considered as a potentially unreliable source.

Although Yun's research and findings draw from an abundance of various sources, her connections with Yoshida's work leads some scholars to discredit her work entirely. Likewise, many researchers rely on narratives that are informed by some aspect of Yoshida's publications. One cannot escape Yoshida's influence on the historiography of comfort women. Japanese nationalists that seek to discredit comfort women cite Yoshida and the researchers that he influenced. Whether or not Yoshida told the truth is irrelevant. Yoshida's story inadvertently undermined a large community of researchers and advocates for the disclosure of comfort women.

Further, the Japanese media focused on the weaknesses in Yoshida's account in covering the story. Over the past ten to twenty years, Japanese newspaper articles provided conflicting and confusing information regarding the entire existence of comfort women. Criticism of Yoshida and comfort women is not simply confined to newspapers within mainland Japan, but presents itself in a variety of media sources. In the early 1990s, the weekly news magazine *Shukan Shincho* published several articles questioning the existence of comfort women. For example, in 1992 *Shukan Shincho* published the article, "A Plot May

¹¹⁹ Based upon leading comfort women researcher Sarah Soh. In her article, "The Korean "Comfort Women": Movement for Redress," Soh relates that around 1980 Yun Chung-Ok began her research surrounding the issue after reading a book by a Japanese source. (Redress 1233-1234)

Exist behind the Escalation of This Comfort Women Issue” to undermine the claims of Yoshida. Within the article, *Shukan Shincho* used statements by Japanese researchers to discredit Yoshida’s work. *Shukan Shincho*’s article cites inconsistencies in Yoshida’s confessions and draws upon the field research of Japanese professor Kunihiko Shin to argue that no one can corroborate the assertions made by Yoshida. Focused around the field work of Shin, the news magazine alleged that, “The idea of the institutionalized comfort women is a farce. It is far from the truth.”¹²⁰ At the heart of *Shukan Shincho*’s publication is the issue of Japan’s integrity. They wish to portray comfort women as an attack on Japanese credibility. Wishing to discredit comfort women, weekly issues of *Shukan Shincho* included titles such as, “A Grand Fictional Report by Asahi Shimbun’s Seoul Correspondent on Institutionalized Comfort Women,” or “The Origin of The Falsehoods of The Forced Mobilization of Comfort Women.”¹²¹ Although people may never purchase the newspaper, the titles send a clear message that comfort women are a fabrication.

Despite containing some valid and accurate data, Japanese publications serve to create a source of doubt for the national collective consciousness. Some articles have further clouded the truth of comfort women, making it more difficult for the public to ascertain the facts. This ultimately frames the discourse as a “We” versus “Them” campaign. The “We” represents national pride and loyalty; the “Them” represents humiliation and disloyalty. The controversy over Yoshida has undoubtedly provided a plausible platform for Japanese

¹²⁰ Alan Gamble and Takesato Watanabe. *A Public Betrayed: An Inside Look at Japanese Media Atrocities and their Warnings to the West*, (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc. 2004), 334.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 335-336.

loyalists to deny any truth that may exist. They cite Yoshida's contradictory statements to help further discredit any accusations or testimonies of survivors of forced prostitution.

Japanese and South Korean newspaper articles on the discrepancies of Yoshida's accounts have repercussions that reach beyond the issue of forced recruitment alone. The Yoshida incident undermined the claims of countless women and strengthened the cause of skeptics and Japanese nationalists seeking to eradicate anti-Japanese sentiment. Although many Japanese citizens deny the existence of forced sexual slavery during WWII, the fact remains that many prostitution centers existed. The women that occupied comfort stations lived under Japanese owners and operators. The Japanese deny that they forced any women to endure sexual exploitation. In the past thirty years the idea of consent has been put to the test. What is the meaning of consent and how can a person grant it? More importantly, can a woman that grants consent, still be the victim of rape? These questions have guided much of Kathleen Barry's work. Leading expert in the field of sexual abuse, Barry proposes answers to the questions about sexual violence. Using Barry's principles, comfort women are categorized as victims of sexual slavery.

Sexual slavery and the trafficking of women is not confined to any one location or time period, but has been a moving and shifting form of business for many entrepreneurs throughout the course of recorded history. Although the participation or exploitation of Korean women in comfort stations is still "culturally" debatable, the research of Barry and other scholars provides a strong case against the actions of the Japanese military. Whether or not Japanese recruiters deceived, abducted, sold, or willingly enlisted women continues to be a highly contested issue among some researchers. The fact remains that women subjected to any form of sexual transgressions against their consent is considered criminal. Non-consent

occurs in the form of a single assault, or multiple sexual violations over an extended period of time. Women subjected to multiple sexual violations can be classified as living within the confines of sexual servitude. Foremost scholar on the subject, Kathleen Barry, more specifically defines sexual slavery as simply whether or not a woman or girl can free herself from her situation, regardless of how she entered those conditions.¹²² Barry also argues that as long as any woman is held in sexual servitude, intercourse is by definition rape.¹²³ Using Barry's research, any defense of the Japanese soldiers and their actions during World War II appears not only groundless, but criminal.

Even though Barry's definition of rape applies to the circumstances of comfort women, there are flaws. One problem with Barry's theory lies with the lens of society. Some individuals believe that complacent victims during a sexual assault are granting consent. More specifically, some individuals believe that if a female victim of rape fails to fight back, "then it is assumed that she was to some degree complicit in the assault."¹²⁴ Comfort women for the most part were incapable of retaliation. The Japanese used fear and manipulation to control women. Additionally, Japanese soldiers raped the victims of comfort stations daily. These women eventually gave up all hope of escape and simply fought for survival. This usually meant complying with any and all demands made of them. When looking at the conditions of compliant victims through the lens of some individuals, comfort women appear passive, and therefore complicit. Essentially, some people assert that if a victim of rape appears complicit or docile during an attack, then the attack can no longer be considered

¹²² Kathleen Barry. "Female Sexual Slavery: Understanding the International Dimensions of Women's Oppression." *Human Rights Quarterly*, 3, no. 2 (May, 1981): 48.

¹²³ Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1979), 34.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

legitimate. As a result, many perceive the victim of a docile attack can no longer be accepted as a true victim.¹²⁵ This belief undermines the claims of many rape victims like comfort women. Barry's work explains the sober reality of why some individuals may still place part of the blame on the victim, as opposed to the attacker. Barry further asserts that some societies may share the belief that a complicit victim is by fault not a true victim. This type of argument appears to reside in much of the Japanese psyche and has altered their perception of victims of sexual abuse. Whether clinging to the denial of culpability as a result of national pride or due to a stubborn refusal to admit guilt, Japan has cemented its legacy in the eyes of a larger audience that has awakened to the truth of forced prostitution during WWII. The conflicting accounts and admissions of guilt from participants suggest that something sinister did indeed happen. The question now is, how do we address the real issue and attempt to make things right? In the wake of such vastly contradictory positions lies the current story of how the issue is represented and addressed on the internet and in popular culture.

The internet phenomenon has had a varied effect on the issue of comfort women. Many online authors use the internet to either undermine the testimonies of survivors or support their claims of sexual servitude. Bloggers or 'netizens,' display polarized positions through the use of Japanese and Korean websites like JapanCRUSH or KoreaBANG. These websites post weekly articles in English that cover sensational stories of both Japan and Korea. Despite the fact that weekly articles are posted in English, the online news websites acquire a consistent stream of comments in other languages. Although constructive

¹²⁵ Ibid., 35.

discussion on contemporary issues can be enlightening, malicious discourse poses as a great hindrance to the acceptance of historical facts. As in the case of comfort women, personal attacks are often done by unqualified and anonymous individuals who believe that their version of history is the most accurate.

In July 2012, KoreaBANG posted the article, “*Japanese Netizens Protest Against Comfort Women, Koreans React.*” The website’s article related the story of a Japanese protest against Korea’s allegations of forced sexual slavery during World War II. The Korean website posted the article to highlight Korea’s growing intolerance against the handling of the comfort women issue globally. Furthermore, KoreaBANG described the attempt of Japanese Netizens to stage an official Twitter protest against a resolution adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives in early July, 2012. Resolution 121 demanded that the Japanese government “officially and clearly admit, apologize and assume historical responsibility for the forced mobilization of comfort women by the Japanese army during World War II.”¹²⁶ Concerned Korean readers of the article had a contradictory and negative opinion about the heated reactions posted by Japanese Netizens. One blogger giving a firm and fervent opinion about the Japanese protest remarked, “Those scumbags don’t know how to apologize about their past. I just want the archipelago to completely sink.”¹²⁷ A majority of Korean bloggers took an equally aggressive stance against Japan’s Netizens. The continued online quarrels suggest that the issue of comfort women is not only of historic accuracy, but of nationalism as well.

¹²⁶ “Japanese Netizens Protest Against Comfort Women, Koreans React,” *KoreaBANG*, last modified December 11, 2012, <http://www.koreabang.com/2012/stories/japanese-netizens-protest-against-comfort-women-koreans-react.html>.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

In direct contrast to the opinions held by the bloggers of KoreaBANG that support the allegations of comfort women, the articles published by JapanCRUSH seek to invalidate all claims of forced sexual slavery. In October 2012, JapanCRUSH posted the article, “*Korean Comfort Women Posters Put Up at Japanese Universities.*” The article, which detailed how comfort women posters appeared near Japanese universities stimulated negative and heated online reactions among Japanese bloggers. The internet story, sourced from Yahoo News, related the incident of a South Korean professor from Sungshin Women’s University in Seoul. The unnamed Korean professor posted ten thousand posters about comfort women with the large heading ‘Do You Remember?’ on the walls near several prominent Japanese universities. The Yahoo News article, reposted by JapanCRUSH on October 30, 2012, had already acquired a total of 137 comments on the posters’ contents by December 2012. Bloggers’ comments varied in response, but all agreed that the professor’s actions were uncalled for and preposterous. One blogger wrote, “Even if they ask ‘Do you remember?’ I mean, the whole thing never even happened anyway.”¹²⁸ Another blogger advised that Koreans should, “Do us [Japanese people] a favor and stick to brainwashing your own country.”¹²⁹ Comments like these typify the responses posted and underscores how the facts surrounding WWII are still denied by some Japanese citizens. Another blogger responded, “Don’t advertise for North Korean whores in universities!!!”¹³⁰ Clearly, the opinions expressed by bloggers on JapanCRUSH are not factually accurate and can be very

¹²⁸ “Korean Comfort Women Posters put up at Japanese Universities,” *JapanCRUSH*, last modified December 10, 2012, <http://www.japancrush.com/2012/stories/korean-comfort-women-posters-put-up-at-japanese-universities.html>.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

misleading to online readers. Blogs are used not only to deny Japan's actions, but also to raise questions as to the validity of the facts of comfort women. Comments posted by bloggers express the outrage against an issue that occurred nearly seventy-five years ago and the ramifications it has on the general opinions of online readers between the countries of Japan and Korea today.

In addition to blogging, another aspect offered by the websites JapanCRUSH and KoreaBANG is the ability to 'like' or 'dislike' an article. Many people actively express their support or disapproval of weekly articles by clicking 'like' or 'dislike' next to the article's heading. When KoreaBANG posted the article, "*Japanese Netizens Protest Against Comfort Women, Koreans React*," one blogger challenged, "Who are you people who click 'dislike'? Are you guys Japanese?"¹³¹ The blogger's comment suggests that any differing belief about comfort women displays a negative or antithetical approach to Korean nationalism. In reality, negative feedback for articles could be based on several different factors. Given the volatility of the topic, the line is clearly drawn. Either you support comfort women and are considered pro-Korean, or against the issue and perceived as an obvious Japanese collaborator.

One of the many obstacles that supporters of comfort women face is the lack of "irrefutable" evidence. Comfort women have chosen to help raise awareness of their history by recording personal narratives. Indeed, comfort women have recorded countless personal testimonies about their capture and exploitation by the Imperialist Army. While sound provides a way to preserve the past, it has also given rise to a new form of documentation –

¹³¹ Ibid.

that of song. Through the research and aid of Dr. Joshua Pilzer from the University of Chicago, comfort women have recorded the destitute conditions that they endured at the hands of the Japanese.

During his year of research at the House of Sharing in Seoul, a living museum for the survivors to educate the public, Pilzer documented and recorded approximately twenty-seven unique narratives or ballads sung by surviving Korean comfort women. Musical titles included songs like Pak Duri's, "Ballad of Life's Trials," about her experiences as a survivor.¹³² Such songs provide an outlet for many victims that could not otherwise come to terms with their rape and exploitation. For example, some individuals believe that song has the ability to heal and console the living. Therefore, song can be a "particularly useful tool for people [comfort women] who have been hurt and had their social relationships damaged or destroyed."¹³³ Korean society almost uniformly ostracized comfort women survivors upon their return after the war.¹³⁴ When coming together to sing, victims are able to find strength and healing in sharing their experiences.

In addition to music, artwork has also provided an avenue for artists to express the abuse endured by comfort women and bring attention to the subject. Unlike other mediums that have achieved recognition for survivors, artistry must balance the thin line between expression and objectification. One of the greatest challenges for artists that depict comfort women is revealing the circumstances and plight of the women, without creating a

¹³² "Songs," *Oxford University Press: USA*, last modified December 10, 2012, <http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199759576/songs/>

¹³³ Joshua Pilzer, *Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese 'Comfort Women.'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

sense of objectification or presenting the women as an erotic spectacle.¹³⁵ In the 1980s, Tomiyama Taeko tried to capture comfort women in a favorable light with her creations and personal experiences.

Tomiyama lived in Manchuria during the Japanese occupation in WWII. A privileged Japanese youth, Tomiyama used her personal experiences and eyewitness accounts to bring awareness to the painful memories of war in her series *A Memory of the Sea*. Consisting of a series of six paintings about Japanese occupation, *A Memory of the Sea* tells the story of the lives lost during the war “through the narrative of terror, suffering, futility, and inhumanity that lingers through time.”¹³⁶ Although the six images are all relative to the circumstances of war and the individuals involved, comfort women are strikingly represented by the last picture of the series. Untitled, the last piece of Tomiyama’s series differs from the previous five not only in imagery, but material. Tomiyama produced her final piece of the series using stencil on rice paper. Her piece attempts to evoke a more emotional response towards the situations of comfort women after liberation. To stimulate sympathy, Tomiyama drew two giant fish that are comprised of different women as they travel in the water. The fish are characteristically ghastly and meant to represent the unfortunate ending that occurred for many of the women during the war. The fish allude to the uncomfortable reality that Japanese soldiers sent some women to a watery grave, and then they in turn became food for fish. Upon comment about the image, Tomiyama remarked

¹³⁵ Oh and Stetz, eds. *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*, 203.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

that although half a century has passed, many of the Korean women are still unaccounted for, and likely abandoned.¹³⁷

Mona Higuchi is another artist that seeks to bring attention and support for comfort women in popular culture. Unlike Tomiyama, Higuchi took a three dimensional approach to her work that focused on survival and hope. Higuchi created an enormous assortment of interlinked bamboo matrices that housed over eighteen-hundred paper squares cut by hand. Originally displayed at a local museum in Boston, Higuchi's, *Bamboo Echoes*, is divided in half to lead the viewer's attention toward the central figure of the bodhisattva-- an enlightened being. Using the Buddhist image, Higuchi created a space of peace and compassion for the women who struggled for so long alone. Although the bodhisattva has a direct meaning for the women, the surrounding lattice of bamboo can be interpreted in several different ways. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, interpretations of *Bamboo Echoes* hinges on gender, nationality, age, or awareness of the observer.

Students from a local high school that viewed the exhibit responded in a variety of ways. One student thought that the bamboo squares might represent a cage that comfort women are forced to live in with their memories. Another student remarked that the squares represented the hope still shining within comfort women.¹³⁸ Both student responses are valid, but the latter more aligns with the artist's concept of the piece. Unlike other documented images and paintings, Higuchi chose to avoid overt images of enslaved women or sexual abuse. She instead tried to create an environment infused with understanding, compassion, healing, and hope. As a topic that is rarely discussed in the United States due to lack of

¹³⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 215.

empathy, ignorance, or apathy, *Bamboo Echoes* has brought awareness to viewers since its creation.

Popular culture differs not only from person to person, but country to country as well. The appeal of many forms of media depends upon a person's class, gender, age, or proximity. For some audiences, literary history provides an important method of learning. Historical narratives offer a valuable approach to history because they are widely accessible in most countries and give readers the option of first-person perspective. Unlike history books, a historical novel can interest a reader on a more personal and relatable level. Using the protagonist as a voice for the comfort women movement, Theresa Park in her novel *Gift of the Emperor* describes a fictitious account of a young woman captured by the Japanese and forced into sexual slavery.

Published in 1997, *Gift of the Emperor* received positive accolades from reviewers and is still required reading for some entry level college students in the United States. The novel introduces students to the world of a single woman and how she comes to find herself enslaved during WWII and after. Using the lead character and her friends as a focal point for the minutiae of the system, the book allows readers to “explore the day-to-day accounts of these [comfort] women to demonstrate who they were and how they lived,”¹³⁹ giving her work a more intimate feel. Although fictional, Park thoroughly researched the subjects of her story. Her novel details the actual conditions of the victims, in order to bring about a better understanding of the situation. In doing so, Park has given another voice to those women of Korea who clung to life with battered bodies and shattered spirits when

¹³⁹ Kim Jinhee and Jacqueline Pak. “*The Comfort Women: Controversy, Culture, and Context*,” Web, 16.

death was preferable. Through her work, Park has again urged the world to finally listen to the resounding voice of truth.¹⁴⁰

Different forms of media have offered an outlet for comfort women to express the pain they experienced during the Pacific War. Due to the strained relationship currently present between Japan and Korea, the issues surrounding comfort women are a springboard for heated arguments and debate. Although debate often results in disagreement or accusations, it raises the question of what really happened during the war and why does it matter? Artists like Higuchi and Park attempt to convey the lives of comfort women and offer a platform for awareness. Through artistic expression, comfort women and their advocates attempt to reclaim a history, by which they are a part of. Some comfort women will not live long enough to receive their apologies. Consequently, many survivors will continue to seek compensation for the painful memories of their past.

¹⁴⁰ Oh and Stetz, eds. *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*, 222.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Comfort stations were anything but a haphazard attempt at prostitute mobilization. They were the result of a massive reorganization of a previously established system. As the Japanese expanded West, they brought with them the tools of a highly developed nation entrenched in traditional customs and beliefs. Such antiquated notions as female inferiority ultimately played out on the battlefield and management of military operations. These beliefs led to an uncontrollable and unaccounted for violence against the local population. Comfort stations became not only a prime example to the extent of military violence, but also served as unavoidable reminders of the total control that the Japanese exhibited over the life of Koreans during the first half of the twentieth century.

Because of comfort stations, Japan has been a constant target for criticism and shame. This visibility has created a growing movement for redress. In the eyes of much of the world, Japan needs to admit culpability and seek redemption for their heinous actions. Japan's demonization (although warranted in some cases) is a view fervently projected by all Korean nationals. At the root of this belief lies the issue of comfort women. Did the Japanese systematically coerce an entire population of young Korean women into prostitution? Almost all Koreans and the majority of informed participants would say yes. The hard truth of the matter is that once you get beneath the issue at hand, there resides a hidden truth. The unavoidable fact is that the Japanese military forced some Koreans to submit to countless

sexual assaults on a daily basis. The Japanese did abduct some Koreans from their homes and schools. Some recruiters forced Korean women to sign up for prostitution centers disguised as work programs. Although the Japanese military ultimately deserve a majority of the blame for forced sexual servitude, their actions do not account for the entire picture. The real heart of the matter lies at the root of Korean life. Unfortunately for many supporters of comfort women, a portion of the blame for the rise in Korean women that populated comfort stations resides with the actions of Koreans. The Japanese did not urge Korean women to break from Confucian traditions. The Japanese did not push Korean women to leave their homes in search of a modern lifestyles. The Japanese did not sell their daughters to human traffickers. Japan fostered the environment that heightened the vulnerability of women, but it was Korea as an independent body of individuals that responded to the policies of Japanese annexation. Koreans often reacted to societal changes in ways that appeared unavoidable and ensured survival, but not always. Japanese personnel did betray, deceive, or capture a majority of the women within comfort stations, but not all. Some Koreans willingly entered the system in search of different lifestyles and found that they could not escape. Japan does deserve a majority of the blame for the events that transpired as a result of their formal annexation over Korea in 1910, but not all. The loss of an entire generation of Korean women was the result of the intrinsic customs and values of the Japanese and Korean people as they modernized and adapted to a changing world.

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