

THE NEXUS BETWEEN COMFORT WOMEN, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SOUTH KOREA

Esin Yurdagul

The comfort women issue commands the greatest attention among the public in South Korea. Although relations between Japan and Korea were formally normalized in 1965 and Japan has apologized several times to the South Koreans, yet the issue remains sensitive. South Koreans view the comfort women problem from an ethno nationalism framework but in reality, the issue is more complex. The comfort women issue is closely linked to contemporary human and sex trafficking. But, the relationship between the comfort women and human trafficking in the sex trade is not being taken seriously by Koreans. The findings suggest that prostitution over the years has tremendous economic impact since Japanese occupation to the present. More concerning, it contributes to human trafficking that plays an even larger role in the South Korean economy. The scope of this article only covers during Japanese occupation of Korea till early 2000s when the South Korean government finally realized the extent of the sex trade involving Korean women in and out of Korea.

Keywords: human trafficking, Korean economy, prostitution, sex trade, comfort women

Introduction

The term comfort women, an English translation of the Japanese euphemism *ianfu*, refers to the tens of thousands of young women and girls of various ethnic and national backgrounds who were forced into sexual servitude during the Asia Pacific War that began with the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. According to Mckellar, ‘countless women had to serve as comfort women in the military brothels found throughout the vast Asia Pacific region occupied by the Japanese forces.’¹ In this study, sexual enslavement/slavery/trafficking is referred to as a kind of slavery for the purpose of sexual exploitation. During the Korean War, not only Japanese people but also Koreans preferred the term comfort women. The background to comfort women is explained as below,

Throughout history, it has been widespread in armed conflict, and referred to as war crimes which cannot avoid consequences of warfare. Throughout the occupied territories, violence on the local populations was inflicted by Japanese troops during the Asian and Pacific War (1937-45), such as the forcing females into sexual slavery as comfort women by the Japanese military. Comfort women were women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II.²

¹ R. McKellar, *Target of Opportunity & Other War Stories*, AuthorHouse, 2011, p.189.

² C.M. Argibay, “Sexual Slavery and the Comfort Women of World War II,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, Vol. 21. Issue 2, 2003.

Korean women were also used by the American army for sexual slavery. After the American troops arrived in Korea, they were used for 'rest and relaxation.'³ Even though the term comfort women is not allowed to be used any longer, the ongoing trafficking and sexual exploitation of Korean and Filipino women by American military troops is viewed as a continuation of the same practice by several Asian women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In fact, a number of sources assume that American troops in turn used some of the original comfort women during Japanese occupation after defeating of Japan.⁴ American troops also use other 'derogatory terms' for these women like 'bar girls,' 'hostesses,' 'entertainers,' and 'juicy girls.' These women faced similar experiences of abuse and violations.⁵ According to the United States Army interrogator in 1944, a comfort girl is referred to as a prostitute or professional camp follower who was attached to the Japanese Army for the pleasure of the soldiers.⁶ Slavery, correctly defined, is the status of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership is exercised. Further, exercising authoritative control over another person's sexuality is, therefore, considered as a form of slavery as opposed to sexual autonomy. These forms of control were a combination of sexual slavery and recreational sex for the military. The reason for this is to prevent soldiers from random sexual violence toward women in occupied territories as it happened during the infamous Nanjing Massacre of 1937. The Japanese wanted to prevent soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases.⁷ The first Japanese military comfort stations were established after Lieutenant-general Okumura received 'a group of Korean women that came from a mining community in Japan.'⁸ The custom of the Army troops being provided prostitutes has existed since the middle ages. In contemporary times, prostitutes existed in the Japanese Army in Hankou, China (1938); during the American Forces occupation of Japan after the second World War at Yasuura House in Yokosuka (1945-46); in the French and American military camps during the Vietnam War at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, (1972) and the U.S. and U.N. camp-towns in South Korea since the Korean war to the present.⁹

The Evolution of Comfort Women and Prostitution in Korea

The phrase comfort women is a controversial Japanese/Korean euphemism, acknowledged as *ianfu* or *juugun ian-fu*. *Fu* meant an adult female who acted voluntarily or involuntarily and *ian* means entertaining. *Juugun* referred as accompanying the troops.¹⁰ *Ianfu* was a term used for women who served the Japanese expeditionary forces outside of Japan.¹¹ The women at the comfort stations came from various backgrounds and social circumstances, originating

³ K. Howard (Ed.), *True stories of the Korean comfort women: Testimonies compiled by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan*. London: Cassell, 1995.

⁴ H.S., Kim, *The Problems Faced by Women and Children in Korean GI Towns* (Presentation at the International Conference, Okinawa), 1997. Retrieved from: <http://maria.peacenet.or.kr/i3.htm>

⁵ H.S., Kim, *The Problems Faced by Women and Children in Korean GI Towns* (Presentation at the International Conference, Okinawa), 1997; A.E., Donato, 'Trafficking of Pinays going on in Mindanao, South Korea: NGO.' *Manila Times*, 2002.

⁶ Soh Chung-hee, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, The University of Chicago Press. London, 2009, p.34.

⁷ R. McKellar, *Target of Opportunity & Other War Stories*, AuthorHouse, 2011.

⁸ B. Ars, Troostmeisjes, *Verkrachting in naam van de Japanse keizer*, Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000, pp. 28-38; T. Van Boetzelaer, *Between Nation and Gender: The representation of former military Comfort Women in the Netherlands and South Korea*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Leiden University, 2016.

⁹ Lee Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

¹⁰ Soh Chung-hee, *The Comfort Women*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, pp. 68-71.

¹¹ N. Fujioka, *Attainder of Modern History* (in Japanese). TokumaShoten. 1996.

from Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, French Indochina and from other Japanese-occupied territories.

Most women were abducted from their homes by the Japanese Imperial Army. A small number of cases also saw women recruited as workers in factories or restaurants. Soh considers Korean comfort women as victims of sexism, classism, racialism, colonialism, militarism, and capitalist imperialism.¹² Some of these Korean women wanting to escape poverty or an arranged marriage found themselves recruited by the Japanese army as comfort women.¹³ Some observers blame the comfort women issue as a result of masculinist sexual culture in colonial Korea and imperial Japan but there are others like the South Korean nationalists who view the issue as a deception action forced on the victims.¹⁴ Interestingly, there is an argument that some comfort women from desperate circumstances were lured by Korean entrepreneurs for the Japanese troops. In fact, they also managed the comfort stations.¹⁵ Some other scholars contend that the Japanese colonial government appointed Koreans like civil servants to recruit young females as comfort women.¹⁶ The Japanese prostitution culture became a norm which gradually led to the trafficking of Korean women to Japanese territories.¹⁷ The recruitment of Korean women is said to have started as early as during the Kwanga Treaty (1876), the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).¹⁸ Pleasure quarters were established in Pusan, Inchon, Wonsan, and Chinnampo. More intriguingly, Japanese women were also working as prostitutes in Korea. Roughly, 3000 Japanese prostitutes existed in Korea during the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910.¹⁹ As prostitution was considered a form of employment, it is not surprising that at a later juncture, Korean women too joined the workforce, especially those from poorer homes and married women got involved in prostitution due to financial difficulties.²⁰ It is said that Japanese men also preferred Korean women who were more closely related to their race.²¹ It can be argued that prostitution whether forced or otherwise together with Korean army's leadership training within the Japanese military is a legacy of Japanese colonialism. In official documents and personal memoirs of both the Korean and Japanese military personnel, comfort women were generally referred to as military supplies.²²

Similarities with contemporary times is uncanny. Today, Asian and Asian-American organized crime networks use women for prostitution not only within South Korea, but also between South Korea and the U.S. For instance, massage parlors across the U.S. are regarded as one of their platforms for transnational activities. Like in the past, Korean women enter the

¹² Soh Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008.

¹³ Soh Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women*.

¹⁴ Soh Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women*.

¹⁵ Soh Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women*.

¹⁶ B. Wurth, *Capturing Asia: An Abc Cameraman's Journey Through Momentous Events And Turbulent History*, Hamilton: HarperCollins, 2010. Accessed December 2, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.bobwurth.com/news4.html>.

¹⁷ Christine Kim, *The Comfort Women System: Sexual Slavery during World War II*, Student research, 2017. Retrieved from

<https://scholarship.depauw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=studentresearch>

¹⁸ Christine Kim, *The Comfort Women System: Sexual Slavery during World War II*, Student research, 2017.

Retrieved from <https://scholarship.depauw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=studentresearch>

¹⁹ Soh Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, p. 8.

²⁰ Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the U.S. Occupation*, Routledge, Asia Transformation, 2002; Song, Youn-ok, *Japanese Colonial Rule and State-Managed Prostitution: Korea's Licensed Prostitutes*, *Positions: Asia Critique* 5.1, pp: 171-219, 2002.

²¹ T. Van Boetzelaer, *Between Nation and Gender: The representation of former military Comfort Women in the Netherlands and South Korea*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Leiden University, 2016.

²² Soh Chung-hee, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, The University of Chicago Press. London, 2009, p.34.

U.S through sham marriages to servicemen or using their status as being abandoned or divorced by their U.S. military personnel husbands. Some of these women have become prime targets for human trafficking.²³ For instance, Korean-American gangs, known as the *Korean Fuk Ching*, the *Green Dragons*, the *Korean Killers* and *Korean Power*, are involved in ‘trafficking of women for prostitution and international drug trafficking. Organized crime groups collaborate with corrupt officials to attain relevant travelling documents for those trafficked.’²⁴

Resolution and the comfort women issue

The 1965 treaty agreement between Japan and South Korea during Park Chung Hee’s reign (1961-1979) normalize relations between the two rivals. The Japanese paid economic compensation, apart from providing foreign aid. Further, Japan apologized several times over the comfort women issue.

However, ethno-nationalism among Korean leaders and the public has urged the Japanese to issue a more stronger and sincere apology and show deeper remorse. Though, in 1998, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo and Korean President Kim Dae-jung agreed to resolve past problems and look towards the future, yet Koreans still project anti-Japan sentiments and have refused to acknowledge Japanese efforts that did not come with more compensations and reparations. Eventually, with the support of U.S President Barack Obama’s administration’s efforts, an agreement over comfort women was signed by Japan and South Korea on 28 December 2015 to conclude the long-standing comfort women issue. The deal failed to satisfy many. Hence the issue of comfort women continues to fester.

Human trafficking

The definition of ‘trafficking’ is basically related to ‘the U.S. Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000.’ Any action of recruitment of individuals below 18 years of age by force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of a commercial sex act is deemed as sex trafficking.²⁵ On the other hand, when sex trafficking is conducted across international borders, it is deemed as transnational trafficking.²⁶ Hence, trafficking is usually associated with global prostitution. As mentioned before, in South Korea, women were trafficked by not only the Japanese but also Koreans to work at military comfort facilities of the Japanese Imperial Army. Furthermore, after World War II, prostitutes in Taiwan were mostly Korean women who originated from coal mines. One of the little-known facts about South Korea is that during the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese camp towns and prostitution districts were exclusively reserved for South Korean soldiers between 1965 and 1973 due to their status as allies to the US military. Interestingly, the subject of compensation for war atrocities has been never raised by Vietnam and South Korean government has not offered any to Vietnamese comfort women.

However, it is evident that human trafficking for sexual exploitation continues to exist in South Korea. The country has become a source for the trafficking of women and girls

²³ D.M Hughes, K.Y. Chon, & D.P. Ellerman, *Modern-Day Comfort Women: The U.S. Military, Transnational Crime, and the Trafficking of Women*, University of Rhode Island Press, 2013.

²⁴ Katherine H. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*, Columbia University Press, 1997.

²⁵ D.M Hughes, K.Y. Chon, & D.P. Ellerman, *Modern-Day Comfort Women: The U.S. Military, Transnational Crime, and the Trafficking of Women*.

²⁶ D.M Hughes, K.Y. Chon, & D.P. Ellerman, *Modern-Day Comfort Women: The U.S. Military, Transnational Crime, and the Trafficking of Women*.

within and outside the country the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Large numbers of South Korean girls and women have been trafficked overseas but it is difficult to get an estimate. However, women from Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian countries are recruited to work in South Korea and a significant number of these women are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Some, upon arrival in South Korea, are subjected to sexual exploitation, debt bondage, and involuntary servitude where employers withhold the passports of their foreign workers. This practice is coerced forced labor. Foreign prostitutes are considered as a necessary evil for the sex industry in Korea. Some believe having foreign prostitutes will keep US military personnel from engaging sexually with Korean women.²⁷ The other dimension is of course South Korean men are the biggest customers of the child sex industry in the region, especially Asia. No action has been taken by the Korean government on those who engage in child sex tourism.²⁸ According to the Women's Human Rights Commission of Korea, Korean teenagers are likely to trade sex for money.²⁹

Prostitution: The Comfort Women in Economic Context

An individual providing service of a sexual nature in return for payment is deemed a prostitute. However, prostitution is not associated with the status of a concubine or one who works individually as a prostitute. In case of South Korea, prostitution had an economic value historically during the Japanese occupation period, Korean War and when the US forces in the country unconsciously helped to promote the trading of Korean women who were coerced into the profession.³⁰ Since 1945, the United States of America had had troops in South Korea. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, 'rest and relaxation centers for U.S. troops' were established to provide entertainment and improve the morale of the troops. US military camp towns were closed to South Koreans.³¹

In the 1990s, the massive commercialization of sex within working-class females, it was estimated that 20,000 women worked in 'the sex industry around the U.S. military bases.'³² Almost all the clubs or bars in the camp towns obtain rooms upstairs for prostitution.³³ Military prostitution in South Korea which was linked to 'U.S. military constituted a kind of 'privatized prostitution.' It was markedly different from the Japanese

²⁷ (Myrna C. Castro, *Transnational Women Trafficking in South Korea and its Relation with the U.S. Military Bases*. Unpublished Master Thesis at Seoul National University, 2003; Lee Na-young, *The Construction of U.S. Camp-town Prostitution in South Korea: Transformation and Resistance*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Women's Studies, University of Maryland, 2006.

²⁸ United States Department of State, *Korea: Trafficking in Persons Report*, 10th edition, Diane Publishing, 2010, p.201.

²⁹ Andy Jackson, 'Commission: One third of Korean Teens are Potential Prostitutes,' *Asian Correspondent*, October 28, 2010. Retrieved from <http://asiancorrespondent.com/41970/commission-a-third-of-korean-youth-are-potential-prostitutes/>

³⁰Choe Sang-hun, 'Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases,' *New York Times*, 7 January 2009; P. Ghosh, 'South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State', *International Business Times*, April 29, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/south-korea-thriving-sex-industry-powerful-wealthy-super-state-1222647>; Lee, Min-a, 'Openly Revealing a Secret Life,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 31 July 2005. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2600608>

³¹ D.M Hughes, K.Y. Chon, & D.P. Ellerman, *Modern-Day Comfort Women: The U.S. Military, Transnational Crime, and the Trafficking of Women*.

³² H.S., Kim, *The Problems Faced by Women and Children in Korean GI Towns* (Presentation at the International Conference, Okinawa), 1997

³³ Katherine H. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*; W.H. McMichael, 'Sex Slaves.' *Navy Times*, 12 August 2002.

imperial system of comfort women during World War II.³⁴ During the 1960s, almost 25 percent of the South Korean GNP was generated by camp town prostitution and related businesses.³⁵ Prostitution was seen as an act of patriotism.³⁶ The prostitutes were sponsored by the Korean government to learn English in order to market themselves better.³⁷ The economic contribution of prostitution from the camp towns was quite significant. The advocacy group *My Sister's Place* reported in 1991 that the American soldiers contributed 1 billion dollars to the South Korean economy which was 1% of the South Korean GNP.³⁸ To this end, the prostitutes were even praised as Dollar-earning Patriots or True Patriots by the South Korean government.³⁹ From a historical point of view, the United States did not view South Korea as an equal ally. One reason why prostitution flourished was because the South Korean government was fearful that the American military which protected the country from North Korean threats would leave. Hence, Korean women became sex commodities in supporting their country's national interests and reviving its economy after the Korean War. The United States military encouraged past South Korean governments to maintain the sex trade between the 1960s and 1980s.

The prostitution of Korean women to U.S. soldiers during the Korean War was regulated and supported by both the Korean and American governments as a means to maintain friendly relations. In contrast to the Vietnam War, American involvement in the Korean War was largely welcomed by South Koreans. At its height, the approval of U.S. presence in South Korea by its natives reached 94 percent.⁴⁰

There was an attempt to regulate the trade in camp towns and American military police as well as South Korean officials tried preventing the spread of diseases. According to Katherine, H.S. Moon, both the Korean governments and the U.S. military maintained the prostitution in camp town. Women had number tags in order to be more easily identified by U.S. soldiers. Prostitutes who were ill were detained by the Korean police. These women were ill were usually locked up under guard in monkey houses and coerced to take medications until they were healthy.

During the early 1990s, the Korean prostitutes became a symbol of Korean anti-American nationalism.⁴¹ In 1992, there were about 18,000 registered and 9,000 unregistered Korean women around the U.S. military bases.⁴² However the demography changed when in

³⁴ Lee Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*.

³⁵ Park, Soo-mee, 'Former Sex Workers in Fight for Compensation,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 30 October 2008. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2896741>.

³⁶ Kim, Jeong-ja, *The Hidden Truth of the U.S. Military Comfort Women*, Hanul Academy, 2013.

³⁷ Choe Sang-hun, 'Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases,' *New York Times*, 7 January 2009.

³⁸ Katherine H. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*.

³⁹ Choe Sang-hun, 'Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases,' *New York Times*, 7 January 2009 ; P. Ghosh, 'South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State'.

International Business Times, April 29, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/south-korea-thriving-sex-industry-powerful-wealthy-super-state-1222647>; Lee, Min-a, 'Openly Revealing a Secret Life,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 31 July 2005. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2600608>.

⁴⁰ S. Akhtar, *Freud and the Far East: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the People and Culture of China, Japan, and Korea*, Jason Aronson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.

⁴¹ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

⁴² Jean Enriquez, 'Filipinas in Prostitution around U.S. Military Bases in Korea: A Recurring Nightmare', *Coalition against Trafficking in Women Asia Pacific*, 1996. Retrieved from

the 1990s, when other nationalities were brought in. They were Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh and Filipina women who worked as prostitutes in U.S. military camp towns in South Korea.⁴³ Reportedly many were forced into prostitution.⁴⁴ Since the 2000s, the majority of prostitutes have been Filipinas or Russian women, and the number of South Koreans have declined.⁴⁵ All in all, since mid-1990s, foreigners made up 80-85 percent of the women working at clubs near military bases.⁴⁶ According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, in 2002, South Korean prostitutes numbered about 330,000.⁴⁷ In 2002, the investigation on the prostitution industry was first conducted and reported by the South Korean government. Furthermore, it is also considered as the first nation-wide field survey that did include private sector. According to the survey,

The size of prostitute business industry in South Korea is approximately 26 trillion Won (US\$ 21 Billion) per annum, and about 260,000 women are engaged in the prostitution business. The industry size of 26 Trillion Won is equivalent to 5% of GDP, which marked 545 Trillion Won (US\$450 Billion) in 2002. The number of women engaged in the prostitution business 260,000 is 4% of the population of the Korean women from 20 to 34 years old.⁴⁸

According to the CIA's 2009 World Factbook, for an advanced nation that is still involved in sex and human trafficking, South Korea may be regarded as a really interesting case. The Korean case demonstrates despite increasing prosperity, higher educational levels, expanded social programs and protections, these factors failed to curb, let alone eliminate prostitution. In contrast, prostitution has played a large role in moving the economy. It is evident that it played an even larger role in the South Korean economy.⁴⁹ Illegal and/or organized prostitution and sex trade accounted for as much as 4.1 percent of South Korean annual GDP in 2009-about the same as fishing, agriculture industries, and mining combined, which is 4.3%. Prostitution is available all over South Korea-in coffee shops, shopping malls, the barber shop, hotels, motels, business clubs and the red-light districts, which operate openly in every part of Seoul and in every city in Korea. According to the Korean Feminist Association, the actual number may exceed 1 million. According to the *Al Jazeera* news more than 1.2 million women involved in the sex trade in South Korea, usually between the ages of 15-29. While it is hard to support this estimation with official data, the numbers are a cause of concern.⁵⁰ The Korean government is also worried about Korean women plying their sex

https://childhub.org/fr/system/tdf/library/attachments/enriquez_catw_1996_filipin.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=16713.

⁴³ P. Ghosh, 'South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State'. *International Business Times*, April 29, 2013. Retrieved from

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-korea-thriving-sex-industry-powerful-wealthy-super-state-1222647>.

⁴⁴ Lee Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*.

⁴⁵ P. Ghosh, 'South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State'. *International Business Times*, April 29, 2013. Retrieved from

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-korea-thriving-sex-industry-powerful-wealthy-super-state-1222647>.

⁴⁶ Lee Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*.

⁴⁷ Moon Kyung-ran, 'New Figures on Sex Trade Anger Seoul,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 2 September, 2004. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2463698>

⁴⁸ 'Prostitute Market Earns 26 Trillion Won in a Year,' *JoongAngIlbo*, 6 February 2003. Retrieved from http://cooljapan1.blogspot.com/2013_11_01_archive.html?view=classic.

⁴⁹ M. Hurt, Pimping "Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics", *Scribblings of the Metropolitica*, 24 January 2010. Retrieved from <https://metropolitician.blogspot.com/2010/01/pimping-lies-damned-lies-and-statistics.html>

⁵⁰J. Chang, 'South Korea's Runaway Teen Prostitution,' *Al Jazeera News*, 12. November, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/11/2012111263348392255.html>

trade abroad. For example in Australia, since the 2000s, Korean women have been quite dominant in the sex trade. A 2005 Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs found Korean women formed the largest number of sex workers in Australia.⁵¹

Conclusion

From 2006, the South Korean government has been concerned enough to stamp out prostitution. The Ministry for Gender Equality offered cash incentive to companies to encourage male employees from buying sex at office parties and business trips. Modern day prostitutes are not different from comfort women in that they seek compensation and view themselves as victims of governmental policies. The discourse and concern about the sex trade has seen women working in brothels near American bases coming out to share their experiences with the public. This is a similarity that these women share with victims of comfort stations.

In 2014, a number of Korean women who served as prostitutes in U.S. military camps filed a lawsuit demanding that the Korean government admit it was responsible in managing a network of prostitution in military camp towns around South Korea. The *New York Times* (2017) reported that,

*In the ruling by a three-judge panel of the Central District Court in Seoul, the women did not win that admission or the apology they sought. Yet the ruling was still a victory. For the first time, the court said the government had illegally detained gijichon prostitutes for forced treatment for sexually transmitted disease, and ordered it to pay 57 plaintiffs the equivalent of \$4,240 each in compensation for physical and psychological damage.*⁵²

It cannot be denied that Koreans themselves have been a factor in establishing the market for prostitution be it for the U.S. military or the public. Moreover, the government has turned a blind eye to mechanism of sham/contract marriages between Korean women and American soldiers, which continues till today. Vast majority of South Korean women who are involved in the commercial American sex industry cannot be classified as victims of prostitution. They are more likely to be classified as trafficked individuals or as voluntary sex workers. However, Koreans still are considered as the primary agents of prostitution. South Korea is still referred to as the intermediate dealing point and the terminal of human trafficking for commercial sex industry, even though Korea has committed itself to the minimum standards of the elimination of trafficking.

Besides understanding that Koreans were part of promoting prostitution, the illegal Japanese occupation of Korea 1910-45, contributed to the expansion of the sex trade. Yet the Japanese are not in favor of admitting that the occupation was illegal, and the issue of comfort women resulted in rapes and human trafficking as a consequences of colonialism. While Korea's comfort women during the Japanese occupation of Korea were a consequence of many factors like poverty and social exclusion, the majority of Korean women in the sex trade in U.S. military camps can only be classified as trafficked individuals or as voluntary sex

⁵¹ Australian Institute of Criminology, 'The Australian Sex Industry', 3 November 2017. Retrieved from <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/rpp131/australian-sex-industry>.

⁵² Choe, Sung Han, 'South Korea Illegally Held Prostitutes Who Catered to G.I.s Decades Ago,' *Court Says, New York Times*, 20 January 2017.

workers. Moreover, this point is further reinforced when during the Korean War and after state-run prostitution became a national business which generated income for the country.

If comfort women related to Japan were regarded as a symbol of South Korean ethno-nationalism, prostitutes working in U.S. bases were deemed to be suffering as a result of American colonialism. The issue of comfort women and human trafficking became more complicated when foreign prostitutes began to work in the South Korean sex trade industry. These women were welcomed as they deflected the attention from Korean prostitutes. More significantly, the Korean sex trade was also operated abroad. During the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1973, Vietnamese camp towns were reserved for the South Korean soldiers. Till this day, the Korean government has not compensated Vietnamese sex victims. All in all, it is important to emphasize that the Japanese comfort women stations, the United Nations/the United States of America/South Korean camp-towns as well as the Vietnamese comfort women camp towns and prostitution districts operated in a similar fashion. While the American camp towns can be regarded as a symbol of geo-political hegemony in Asia-Pacific region, the Vietnamese camp towns were a symbol of sub-hegemony of Korea under the influence of the U.S.

As discussed above, South Korea has the distinction of being one of the biggest agents of female trafficking for sexual exploitation not only in Asia, but worldwide. Even though relationship between the comfort women and human trafficking has only been given lip service by the Korean government, South Korean women's organizations have created awareness of a strong postcolonial ethno-nationalism and are fighting against Japan for its immoral and illegal acts during its colonial rule. Of human trafficking in the sex trade, the South Koreans have either denied or minimized the issue. In other words, South Korea is not owning up to its past and is not acknowledging its own negative social manners and customs relating to human trafficking. In fact the issue of comfort women with the Japanese government has overshadowed the larger problem of human trafficking. It is evident that any deal on the comfort women issue, will satisfy everyone, since the comfort women issue is related to Korean's ethno-nationalism. Having said that, the Koreans can still prevent harmful practices of trafficking of women who are forced to work in the sex trade industry. South Koreans should question themselves why as a developed nation, Korea's prostitution industry is active and the extent to which the government is choosing to be ignorant of being one of the chief source human trafficking for the global commercial sex industry.

References

- Akhtar, S., *Freud and the Far East: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the People and Culture of China, Japan, and Korea*, Jason Aronson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.
- Argibay, C.M., "Sexual Slavery and the Comfort Women of World War II," *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, Vol. 21. Issue 2, 2003.
- Ars, B., Troostmeisjes. Verkrachting in naam van de Japanse keizer. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000.
- Australian Institute of Criminology, 'The Australian Sex Industry', 3 November 2017. Retrieved from <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/rpp131/australian-sex-industry>.
- Barry, K., *The Prostitution of Sexuality: The Global Exploitation of Women*, New York University Press: New York and London, 1995.
- Castro, Myrna C., *Transnational Women Trafficking in South Korea and its Relation with the U.S. Military Bases*. Unpublished Master Thesis, Seoul National University, 2003.
- Cheng, S., *On the Move for Love: Migrant Entertainers and the U.S. Military in South Korea*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

- Cho, Grace, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Choe, Sang-hun, 'Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases'. *New York Times*, 7 January 2009.
- Choe, Sung Han, 'South Korea Illegally Held Prostitutes Who Catered to G.I.s Decades Ago, Court Says,' *New York Times*, 20 January 2017
- Clough, P., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Duke University Press, 2007.
- Demick, B., 'Off-base behavior in Korea: By allowing GIs to patronize certain clubs, the U.S. military is seen as condoning the trafficking of foreign women for prostitution,' *Los Angeles Times*, 26 September, 2002.
- 'Disputes over Japan's Wartime Comfort Women Continue,' *Reuters*, 5 March 2007. Retrieved from <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-japan-sex-slaves-history/factbox-disputes-over-japans-wartime-comfort-women-continue-idUKSP21646220070305>.
- Enriquez, Jean, 'Filipinas in Prostitution around U.S. Military Bases in Korea: A Recurring Nightmare', *Coalition against Trafficking in Women Asia Pacific*, 1996. Retrieved from https://childhub.org/fr/system/tdf/library/attachments/enriquez_catw_1996_filipin.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=16713.
- Fackler, M., 'No Apology for Sex Slavery, Japan's Prime Minister Says', *New York Times*, 6 March 2007. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/06/world/asia/06japan.html>.
- Fujioka, N., *Attainder of Modern History* (in Japanese), TokumaShoten. 1996.
- Ghosh, P., 'South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State'. *International Business Times*, April 29, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/south-korea-thriving-sex-industry-powerful-wealthy-super-state-1222647>.
- Hicks, G., *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.
- Höhn, M., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, Duke University Press, 2010.
- Howard, K. (Ed.) *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women: Testimonies*, Compiled by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, London: Cassell, 1995.
- Hughes, D.M., Chon, K.Y., & Ellerman, D.P., *Modern-Day Comfort Women: The U.S. Military, Transnational Crime, and the Trafficking of Women*, University of Rhode Island Press, 2013.
- Human trafficking in S. Korea' *Hankyoreh*, 28 February 2009. Retrieved from http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_editorial/341437.html.
- Hurt, M., Pimping "Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics", *Scribblings of the Metropolitica*, 24 January 2010. Retrieved from https://metropolitician.blogs.com/scribblings_of_the_metrop/2010/01/pimping-lies-damned-lies-and-statistics.html.
- Jackson, Andy, 'Commission: One third of Korean Teens are Potential Prostitutes,' *Asian Correspondent*, October 28, 2010. Retrieved from: <http://asiancorrespondent.com/41970/commission-a-third-of-korean-youth-are-potential-prostitutes/>
- Kennedy, T., & Nagakawa, M., 'Public divided over 'comfort women' agreement,' *East Asia Forum*, 22 January 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/01/22/public-divided-over-comfort-women-agreement/>.
- Kim, Christine, 'The Comfort Women System: Sexual Slavery during World War II,' 2017. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.depauw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=studentresearch>

- Kim, H.S., 'The Problems Faced by Women and Children in Korean GI Towns' (Presentation at the International Conference, Okinawa), 1997. Retrieved from: <http://maria.peacenet.or.kr/i3.htm>
- Kim, Jeong-ja, *The Hidden Truth of the U.S. Military Comfort Women*, Hanul Academy, 2013.
- Kim Nam-joong, 'Around the world, money follows sex,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 20 August 20, 2011. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2940443>.
- Lee, Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010
- Lee, Min-a, 'Openly Revealing a Secret Life,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 31 July 2005. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2600608>
- Lee, Na-young, *The Construction of U.S. Camp-town Prostitution in South Korea: Transformation and Resistance*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Women's Studies University of Maryland, 2006.
- Mckellar, R., *Target of Opportunity & Other War Stories*, Author House, 2011.
- McMichael, W.H. 'Sex Slaves.' *Navy Times*, 12 August 2002.
- Moon, K.H.S, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*, Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Moon, Kyung-ran, 'New Figures on Sex Trade Anger Seoul,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 2 September, 2004. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2463698>
- Kuhl, M., *Modern-Day Slavery and Human Trafficking: An Overlooked Issue* Newport, RI, February, 2011, Salve Regina University.
- Lee, Jin-kyung, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Park, Soo-mee, 'Former Sex Workers in Fight for Compensation,' *Joong Ang Ilbo*, 30 October 2008. Retrieved from <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2896741>.
- 'Prostitute Market Earns 26 Trillion Won in a Year,' *JoongAngIlbo*, 6 February 2003. Retrieved from http://cooljapan1.blogspotJoongAngIlboot.com/2013_11_01_archive.html?view=classic.
- Rabiroff, J., Hostess Shortage Leaves 'Juicy Bars' Pondering Future, *Stars and Stripes*, 17 August, 2010. Retrieved from
- Rose, C., *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* London: Routledge, 2005.
- Soh, Chung-hee, Sarah, 'Women's Sexual Labor and State in Korean History,' *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 75(4), 2004.
- Soh, Chung-hee, Sarah, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, The University of Chicago Press. London, 2009.
- Song, Youn-ok, 'Japanese Colonial Rule and State-Managed Prostitution: Korea's Licensed Prostitutes,' *Positions: Asia Critique*, Vol. 5(1), pp: 171-219, 2002.
- Snyder, S., 'The Japan-Korea Comfort Women Deal: This is only the Beginning,' *Forbes*, 1 February, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/scottasnyder/2016/02/01/the-japan-korea-comfort-women-deal-this-is-only-the-beginning/#7b2088862e0b>
- Tanaka, Yuki, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the U.S. Occupation*, Routledge, Asia Transformation, 2002.
- The World Factbook*, 2009. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2010. Retrieved from

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>

United States Department of State, Korea, Trafficking in Persons Report, Diane Publishing, 2008

United States Department of State, Korea, Trafficking in Persons Report, Diane Publishing, 2010.

Van Boetzelaer, T., *Between Nation and Gender: The Representation of Former Military Comfort Women in the Netherlands and South Korea*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Leiden University, 2016.

Wurth, B., *Capturing Asia: An ABC Cameraman's Journey Through Momentous Events And Turbulent History*, Hamilton: HarperCollins, 2010.

Yamashita, Yeong-ae, 'Nationalism and Gender in the Comfort Women Issue,' *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*. July 2009, pp. 208-219, Retrieved from

http://www.asafas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kias/1st_period/contents/pdf/kb3_1/14yamashita.pdf.