

**War and Sex:** As it was in the beginning ... the Bible references virgins as prizes of war. "Moses said to them: 'Have you let all the women live? [...] kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have now known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.'

During the Trojan War women were "given" as war prizes as described by Homer in the Iliad. The most famous is Briseis, the princess of Lyrnessus, who was given to Achilles for having led the assault on Troy.

Mercenary armies during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) were accompanied by civilian noncombatants, mostly women who were, or were treated as, part-time prostitutes. Albeit they worked as cooks, nurses, washerwomen (basically their ascribed work opportunities away from the war zones as well), the sex they provided clearly was considered "part" of the war. Often they were under the surveillance of an officer called Hurenwaibel (overseer of whores).

This practice spread to the United States during the Civil War. Women, not welcome in the workplace, not welcome in the proper professions, not welcome even in the army but needing to work, followed General Joseph Hooker's regiment of the Potomac. There they would find work in the oldest profession, in which they were welcome. They were referred to as General Hooker's Army," "Hooker's Brigade" or 'Hooker's girls.'

Hooker's reputation was that of a hard-drinking ladies' man. His army headquarters, known for parties and gambling, was described as a combination bar-room and brothel. In 1863, when troop morale had plummeted to a new low, Hooker restored the morale of his soldiers thorough a number of camp reforms with an increased "furlough" system of ten days, per one man, per company, by turn, allowed leave to visit the town and its amenities.

During the Great War visits to French brothels by British soldiers were officially sanctioned by the government, which did not sanction women in the government, in the workplace, in the proper professions, or in their armies, but did in the oldest profession. The British High Command insisted brothels be kept off base but 'in bounds' for most of the war, making visits attainable when on "furlough."

Research by Dr. Clare Makepeace into the lunatic world of war, cites a soldier who noted he never forgot his first view of the Red Lamp district at one of the legendary maisons tolérées, or legalised brothels that dotted the towns of northern France: 'There was a great crowd of fellows, four or five deep and about 30 yards in length, waiting just like a crowd waiting for a football cup tie in Blighty before opening time/The minute the door was opened commenced the crush to get in.' She cites a snap-shot study carried out by British medical officers in Le Havre that suggests it was a vast number. They counted 171,000 visitors to the brothels in just one street of a port town in 1915 alone.

The brothel was considered a fitting-fighting experience of war, regardless risks of venereal disease [a health risk of the working-women prostitutes, as well]. While stationed in France, 150,000 British army men were hospitalized with venereal infections. Each army unit had a treatment station to dispense ointment to prevent or treat VD infections. But some soldiers wanted to be infected. Often, the women known to have venereal disease, were chosen for male soldiers' sexual release. An infection meant a hospital stay of 30 days or so, a welcomed respite from the carnage at the front line. Infected women kept working for there was no hospital respite with pay for them or even paid sick days. And albeit the main focus of this WWI seminal sex research of Dr. Makepeace is on men, to the "poor women who were used in this way," she does offer one closing sentence of comfort.

During World War II, some 200,000 young women, now known as "Comfort Women," did not choose to be but by force, became war prostitutes to serve the Imperial Japanese Army. Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian, Filipino and Dutch women in their 20s, many teenagers some as young as 11, were deceived, kidnapped, coerced to be used as sex slaves. They were raped by between 10 to 100 soldiers a day at military rape camps, known as "comfort stations." It is estimated only 25-30% of the young women survived.

This part of Japanese history has been hidden, overlooked, and/or underreported until a group of Korean victims began speaking out in the early 1990s. As public awareness of comfort women began to surface, Japan acknowledged the wartime slavery in a brief statement issued in 1993 and provided a small fund for compensation.



In 2001 photographer Ahn Se-hong visited and photographed former Korean comfort women living in China. When young, they were forced to get on trains to China and

taken to where they were abused and exploited in brothels as sex slaves to the Japanese military. Even after Korea became independent from Japanese rule in 1945, these women were not able to return to their home country. Many of them, scarred mentally and physically, have never married or had children. Their lives were completely ruined.

Ahn produced a photo exhibition “Layer by Layer” which tells their story not as an issue of Japan-Korea relations, but to illustrate how war can infringe on the human rights of women. Ahn’s exhibition was not welcomed with open arms as the Japanese repeatedly disclaimed “comfort women” disclosures. Nikon originally accepted the exhibit but suddenly cancelled following protests from Nikon’s shareholder firms, i.e., Mitsubishi. Ahn sued and Judge Yasushi Itami ruled in his favor.”

About 7,900 people in Japan then visited the exhibition, which Ahn dedicated to the victims living in very poor conditions and noted how shocking it was to see that many still live in these same areas, because they had no idea where they were from. He plans to take photographs of comfort women living in other countries, and to collect the works of other photographers and hold an exhibition at galleries in cities such as London, Paris, Berlin and Tokyo. <http://vimeo.com/63582545>

Ahn is not alone in using art to spread awareness of this still unresolved issue. Korean-American Chang-Jin Lee’s 2013 exhibition “Comfort Women Wanted” showed in Hong Kong—which, incidentally, had its own “comfort stations” under Japanese wartime occupation. View her riveting video here: <http://www.changjinlee.net>



Former history teacher and scholar, now author and film maker, Tamaki Matsuoka first learned about comfort women in 1961 when she attended school in Australia at age 14. Later, as a teacher in Japan she took a professional approach to the Japanese textbooks and discovered blatant omissions. In one text she found one line, in a footnote, on "comfort women."

Twenty-year-old university student Nami Yoshida and her older sister Mai - both undergraduates studying science - say they haven't heard about comfort women. Seventeen-year-old Yuki Tsukamoto too is unaware of the plight of the comfort women. Denial of comfort women atrocities in Japan still exists in the twenty first century.

In 2013, Toru Hashimoto mayor of Osaka told reporters there was no clear evidence the Japanese military had coerced women to become what are euphemistically called "comfort women" before or during World War II. Hashimoto said, "To maintain discipline in the military, it must have been necessary at that time, for soldiers who risked their lives in circumstances where bullets are flying around like rain and wind, if you want them to get some rest, a comfort women system was necessary. That's clear to anyone."

In her quest to understand unexposed, hidden war histories, and why, Dr. Matsuoka poses a question to understand and expose, WHAT drove these young soldiers to rape? To which I pose a greater question, WHY?

To Be Continued.

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