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Dear Colleagues,

I must admit that I was surprised when I read Professor J. Mark Ramseyer's article in your journal. As an academic the first thing that struck me was its lack of rigour. Much of the article is based on assumptions that are not backed by historical evidence. It is curious that in an academic piece no attempt is made to deal with the extensive material that contradicts Professor Ramseyer's arguments which of course is part and parcel of what should be in a journal article of note. Beyond the issue of the Comfort Women there is no serious discussion of the elements of game theory he claims to be utilising.

Before going into specifics I would point out that there is extensive documentation about the manner in which women throughout the Asia-Pacific region were forcibly taken, kidnapped and tricked for the purpose of being put into the Comfort Stations on the website of the Asian Women's Fund (the Fund has ceased to operate but has maintained the website so that researchers may consider the documents it amassed). The Fund was set up by the government of Japan as an act of atonement for the treatment of women put into the Comfort Stations. On the website is the text of a letter of apology that was sent to every woman who received money from the Fund. Those letters were signed by whoever held the position of Prime Minister when money was transferred. Clearly the government of Japan would not be apologising if all the women in the Comfort Stations had been able to freely negotiate advantageous contracts as asserted by Professor Ramseyer.

Although it is true that licensed prostitution existed in Japan and Korea (established by Japanese officials), that institution was criticised both domestically and internationally due to the coercion that often-accompanied women's entry into prostitution, the connection between poverty and the placement of girl children into both licensed and unlicensed prostitution and the power imbalance that existed within Japanese and Korean families. To assume as Prof Ramseyer did that women had significant bargaining power during the 1920s and 1930s goes against the weight of evidence. It is also important to recognise that Japan was criticised in this period by the League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children for its violations of the 1921 Convention on the Prohibition of the Trafficking of Women and Children. Japan was a signatory to that Convention. During the war there is little doubt that Japan's movement of women from both Japan and from the Korean peninsula violated this Convention as many of the women were in fact under the age of 21 and some met the legal definition of being a minor. Professor Ramseyer does not discuss the question of trafficking in his article.

Perhaps more problematically is the sleight of hand by which Prof Ramseyer suggests that the same type of contracts that existed for licensed prostitutes in metropolitan Japan (a system that was overseen by the Japanese Interior Ministry) governed the Comfort Women System. Professor Ramseyer ignores a range of historical facts that undermine his argument. Some of the more important are:

- Women of various nationalities were forced or tricked into being placed in the Comfort Women system. It is not clear why Professor Ramseyer did not mention this. Reports of the different Allied Nations compiled during and immediately after the war list the following nationalities Dutch, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian and Timorese. Evidence about the treatment of the women from various nationalities can be gleaned from the following:
 - The Government of the Netherlands tried several Japanese military officials for taking Dutch POWs from camps in Indonesia and forcing them to act as Comfort Women during the Class B war crimes trials held in what was then Batavia;
 - Allied soldiers reported seeing fake Red Cross armbands on Timorese women who were forced into the Comfort Stations (material held in the Australian War Memorial);
 - Japanese and Korean soldiers interviewed after their capture by the Allies (Professor Ramseyer is incorrect in stating that no Koreans served as soldiers in the Japanese military; documents held the Australian War Memorial contain interviews with captured Korean soldiers as well as references to the behaviour of such soldiers by Allied troops);
 - Resistance fighters in the Philippines recounted after the war and then later what they witnessed about the treatment of women in the Comfort Stations (a number of the Philippine women taken by the Japanese had been in the resistance).
- Allied documents as well as Japanese military records refer to the manner in which the Military exercised extensive control over the Comfort Stations. A range of those documents are discussed in *Comfort Women, The Unfinished*

Ordeal published by the International Commission of Jurists. The report is available online.

- One particularly egregious falsehood is the statement that the main motivation for the creation of the Comfort Stations was the existence of venereal disease. Whilst it is true that a number of military officials discussed this issue in memos to each other and those sent to commanders in the field, the main reason for the establishment of the Comfort Stations was the mass rapes being committed by Japanese troops in all theatres of war. An example of the concern within the Japanese military about the extent of the rapes is contained in a circular issued by the Chief-of-Staff of the North China Expeditionary Army Naosaburo Okabe (Lt. General of that Unit), dated 27 June 1938. It cautioned that security was jeopardized in North China, the main reason being the increase in rapes committed by the Japanese troops. It stated that the Chinese would resent such conduct and take revenge by killing Japanese soldiers. In order to appease Chinese sentiments and to stop the rapes, the setting up of comfort houses at the earliest was under consideration. (ICJ report at 31 – 32)
 - The mass rapes in China and the Philippines were considered during the hearings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

Given the inaccuracies in Professor Ramseyer's article it is to be hoped that you will withdraw the article from publication. Academic freedom does not include the right to publish evident falsehoods and to overlook extensive documentary historical evidence in an attempt to create inaccurate perceptions about history and the place of women in history.

Should you have any questions about the source of my information I am happy to answer your queries. I would appreciate an acknowledgement of your receipt of this letter as well as your response to my concerns.

Sincerely Yours,

(sent via email)

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