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War, Rape and Patriarchy: The Japanese experience

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Abstract

By analysing how all wars affect women and examining the approach to sexual violence taken by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, this article attempts to locate issues of the "comfort women" in international perspective, to examine intellectual foundations for the study of war, and the role of rape in Japan's China war in particular. The article further explores the role of the military and the Japanese state in establishing and controlling the comfort women system in the course of the Asia-Pacific War.

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Until the late 1980s in Japan, the term ‘war crimes’ conjured up images of the inhumane treatment or murder of enemy soldiers, especially prisoners of war. By describing and perceiving women in wartime as civilians who held the ‘home front’ during the war, commentators seem to have perpetuated the belief that women were not the direct victims of war. However, the eruption of the socalled ‘comfort women’ issue in the late 1980s created awareness throughout Japan that such an idea is both discriminatory and unrealistic. Despite the existence of many books and articles documenting the ordeal of the comfort women, only in the 1990s did the matter become a subject of nationwide debate. It istherefore necessary for the Japanese people as a whole to question not only why and how these crimes were committed but also why it took so long for knowledge of the crimes to become public.

Incidentally, the term ‘comfort women,’ the official phrase used by the Japanese Imperial forces, was nothing but a euphemism as the women were in reality ‘sex slaves’ of the Japanese military. The expression ‘comfort women’ itself has long been and still is a significant factor hindering many Japanese people from comprehending the true nature of this military violence against women. Yet, the term ‘comfort women’ is now widely used even by progressive historians, feminist scholars and activists who fervently call for justice for the victims of Japanese military sex slave system. Albeit reluctantly, in this chapter I therefore use this old-fashioned phrase instead of the term ‘Japan’s military sex slaves.’

Two important ideological structures that are fundamental to the Japanese nationalist mentality underlie the comfort women issue. The first of these is xenophobia, which is closely related to the Japanese emperor ideology. The second is the contempt with which women are held in Japanese society and the exploitation of their sexuality by Japanese men. The comfort women issue did not initially gain the attention of the Japanese public, because the Japanese tend to avoid confronting these two nationwide discriminatory attitudes. The recent change in awareness may be related to the fact that not only is the women’s movement in Japan gaining strength, but also that the whole society, through its increased internationalisation, is becoming less insular and more aware of the impact of Japanese

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actions on other cultures. Yet a phenomenon that can be called 'comfort women bashing,' that is, the backlash from nationalistic right-wing organisations against such civil movements calling for justice for the war victims, has also been increasing, especially over the last several years.[1]

However, to see the comfort women affair as a crime committed uniquely by the Japanese is to risk dismissing such acts as aberrations and not recognising their full significance as part of a larger pattern of how war makes women victims. By analysing how all wars affect women, the Japanese people can provide some scholarly and intellectual foundations for the study of war and thereby contribute to the establishment and maintenance of peace.

Rape and The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal

The necessary materials for such an exercise can be found among the large number of testimonies and other evidence presented at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal held immediately after the Asia- Pacific War. The most significant case among these was the rape and massacre of Chinese women by the Japanese 10th Army and 16th Division in Nanjing (known in English as Nanking) in December 1937. Although in Japan this incident is known as the 'Nanjing Massacre,' it is often referred to by non-Japanese as the 'Rape of Nanjing,' a more accurate description of the rape and massacre of numerous Chinese women. The event was described by American missionary James McCallum in his diary, which was presented in evidence at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal:

> Never have I heard or read of such brutality. Rape! Rape! Rape! We estimate at least 1000 cases a night, and many by day. In case of resistance […] there is a bayonet stab or bullet. We could write up hundreds of cases a day.
>
> – International Military Tribunal for the Far East
>
> (hereafter IMTFE) 1946: 4467

Other evidence presented to the tribunal was a report prepared by a British resident in Nanjing, Iver Mackay, which contains the following information:

> On the night of December 15 a number of Japanese soldiers entered the University of Nanking buildings at Tao Yuen and raped 30 women on the spot, some by six men […]. At 4 p.m. on December 16 Japanese soldiers entered the residence at 11 Mokan Road and raped the women there. On December 17 Japanese soldiers went into Lo Kia Lu No. 5, raped four women and took one bicycle, bedding and other things […]. On December 17 near Judicial Yuan a young girl after being raped was stabbed by a bayonet in her abdomen. On December 17 at Sian Fu Wua a woman of 40 was taken away and raped. On December 17 in the neighbourhood of Kyih San Yuin Lu two girls were raped by a number of soldiers. From a primary school at Wu Tai Shan many women were taken away and raped for the whole night and released the next morning, December 17. (ibid.: 4526f)

Numerous concrete examples of horrific rape and massacre in Nanjing were recorded in the proceedings of the tribunal. Evidence that Filipinas and Dutch women presented at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal is also valuable documentation (ibid.: 3904– 43, 4459, 4464–6, 4476, 4479, 4526–36, 13638–52; Blackman 1989: 20f).

Overall, the incidents of rape and massacre of civilian women by Japanese soldiers, especially in the Nanjing case, have been substantially investigated in numerous books and articles, and a clear general picture of the event has emerged.[2] Also, Japanese soldiers raped and

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murdered British nurses in Hong Kong and massacred Australian nurses on Banka Island (ibid.: 13454–76).

To gain a picture of activities of the Japanese military brothels in the Pacific region is still difficult because most of the relevant documents were burned soon after the war. However, it can be presumed that a large number of Asian women were sent far away from their homes and into forced prostitution.

The Establishment of 'Comfort Stations'

The comfort houses were first established in Shanghai before World War II, possibly as early as 1932. During the Shanghai incident in January 1932, Japanese soldiers raped many Chinese women, and the deputy chief of staff in Shanghai, Okamura Yasuji, set up a comfort station in order to prevent further rape (Utsumi et al. 1992: 37; Yoshimi 1992: 26). In 1938, after the Nanjing massacre, the Japanese forces adopted the general policy of setting up comfort stations in various places in occupied China and 'recruiting' comfort women to staff them, not because of their concern for the Chinese victims of rape by Japanese soldiers but because of their fear of creating antagonism among the Chinese civilians. Thus, many so-called military leisure houses were established where Japanese forces were stationed (Yoshimi 1992:28f). The word 'recruit' is, of course, an official euphemism; in reality many women were forcibly pressed into prostitution. It is now widely known from various testimonies that the Japanese military forces were directly involved in procuring large numbers of women for sexual slavery. Many Korean women were also exploited in this way and later spoke of their ordeals. It is also clear from the autobiography of Nogi Harumichi, the captain of the Ambon naval police force, that military police, who were supposed to prevent such military crimes, collaborated to procure women for enforced military prostitution (Yamada 1982: 160–72; Nogi 1975: 137–54).

There were three different types of comfort stations: those run directly by the Japanese Army; those ostensibly privately owned and run but in reality under tight control of the Army and only for the use of military personnel; and those privately owned and frequented by civilians but operating under an agreement with the Army to provide 'special services' for military personnel. The second type was the most common, and these stations were usually located next to military supply bases or in the centre of towns in which soldiers were stationed. Units located in more remote places usually had comfort stations directly attached to the barracks. If the unit moved, its comfort station would move with it. Smaller units, which did not have comfort stations, would often have comfort women sent to them for short periods from the larger comfort stations in the towns. However, in the regions where anti-Japanese guerrilla movements were strong and widespread such as northern China and the Philippines, the Japanese troops directly secured comfort women. Furthermore, their methods were wanton: abduction, rape and continuous confinement for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In these cases, 'sexual slavery hostages' rather than 'comfort women' is a more appropriate term to describe the circumstances endured by the victims (Tanaka 2002: 44–50, 2016).

The buildings for the comfort stations were provided by the Army, which also took charge of such matters as hygienic measures, hourly rates for 'services' and designation of days on which members of particular units were permitted to visit (Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility 1994: 9).

There seem to be four major reasons the Japanese military decided that comfort stations were necessary. As I have mentioned previously, Japanese military leaders were very

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concerned about the rape of civilians by members of the Japanese armed forces. But they were not motivated by concern for those civilians. For good strategic reasons, they believed that the antagonism of civilians in occupied territories toward their conquerors was exacerbated by such behaviour. They also believed that a ready supply of women for the armed forces would help to reduce the incidence of rape of civilians.[3] What the military leaders apparently did not consider was the possibility that the highly oppressive culture of their armed forces might be contributing to the problem and that at least part of the solution would thus be to reform the military structure.

The military leaders also believed that the provision of comfort women was a good means of providing their men with some kind of leisure. Unlike Allied soldiers, the rank and file of the Japanese armed forces did not have designated leave periods or limited tours of duty. The military leaders had been advised by senior staff that they should make greater provision for both the health and well-being of their men, including such measures as extended leave back home. However most of those suggested measures were never implemented. The notable exception was the provision of comfort women (Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility 1994: 9f).

The leaders were also concerned about the incidence of venereal disease among the armed forces. They believed that venereal disease threatened to undermine the strength of their men (and hence their fighting ability) and that it could also potentially create massive public health problems back in Japan once the war was over.[4] The leaders believed that a regulated system, such as the comfort houses, would enable them to take effective preventive health measures. It must be said that the measures they employed were thorough even if not completely effective. Those 'recruited' were mostly young, unmarried women because it was believed they were the least likely to be carrying venereal diseases. Army doctors regularly checked the health of the comfort women to ensure that they had not contracted a venereal disease and also provided condoms for the men to use. According to the Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility, during the war the Army Accounts Department and the Supply Headquarters were responsible for sending condoms to forces stationed overseas, and officials ensured a ready supply. In 1942, for example, 32.1 million condoms were sent to units stationed outside Japan (Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility 1994: 17). Records suggest a similar thoroughness with medical examinations of comfort women; most of them were examined for venereal disease every ten days. However, such measures could not prevent venereal disease, even if they went some way toward reducing its incidence. For instance, according to a report by medical officers of the 15th Division in northern China in 1942 and 1943, each month 15 to 20 percent of comfort women were found to be suffering from venereal disease. Evidence from former comfort women suggests the figure could have been much higher (ibid.: 37f).[5]

The fourth concern the leaders had was security. They believed that private brothels could be infiltrated by spies easily. Alternatively, it was thought that the prostitutes working in them could easily be recruited as spies by the Allies. Kempeitai (military police of the Imperial Japanese Army) members were frequent visitors to comfort stations and kept close tabs on the women to ensure that no spies were among them (Yoshimi 1992: 354).

Why were comfort women almost invariably from Korea, Taiwan, China or various places in Southeast Asia? This might seem odd at first, given that the Japanese were notoriously racially prejudiced against the peoples of these

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countries. However, racial prejudice provides part of the answer to the question because that very racism helped make these women suitable for the role of comfort women.[6]

The Japanese military forces did not believe Japanese women should be in that role because they were supposed to be bearing good Japanese children who would grow up to be loyal subjects of the emperor. While there were Japanese prostitutes during the war, most of these were in a different position from the comfort women. They mainly worked in comfort stations that served highranking officers, and they experienced much better conditions.

Another reason non-Japanese were used as comfort women can be found in international law. In 1910, following an agreement by a number of European nations, the law suppressing trade in women for the purposes of prostitution was proclaimed in Paris. Japan later became a signatory. In 1921 a similar international law banned trade in women and children. Once again, Japan became a signatory. In February 1938 the Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs issued orders to the governors of each prefecture to ensure that only prostitutes over age 21 were issued with authorisations to ply their trade. However, officials believed these laws were not applicable to Japan's colonies and this, combined with the belief in the superiority of Japanese women and the suitability of women of other races for prostitution, cemented the decision to use women from colonies and occupied territories as comfort women. Young unmarried women in the colonies and occupied territories were thus treated by the Japanese as a resource for that purpose (Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility 1994: 12).[7]

It is impossible to deny that the Japanese military was directly involved in organising comfort stations and recruiting women to work in them. Relevant documents discovered since the late 1980s and the recent testimonies of former comfort women, who only now feel able to speak freely about their ordeals, have added details about what happened. The Japanese government, however, is still withholding pertinent documents that could give a clearer picture, especially about who in the lines of command should bear individual responsibility.

However, it appears from the available evidence that orders to recruit women for comfort stations directly controlled by the military army came from the headquarters of each dispatched army—that is, from the chiefs of staff of each army. Those orders would then have been conveyed to staff officers in various divisions and carried out by the Kempeitai. The Kempeitai usually operated by forcing the elders of villages in the occupied territories to round up all of the young women (Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility 1994: 13–5).

As for the putatively private brothels, the owners were assisted by the Kempeitai in the task of recruiting local women. Most of these women were forcibly taken to the brothels from their villages. Some women, however, were led to believe that they were going to do some other kind of job, such as working in a factory, only to find out too late that they had been deceived (ibid.: 22–4).

In January 1942 the minister for foreign affairs, Tōgō Shigenori, instructed his staff that comfort women should be issued with military travel documents. After that time, comfort women did not require a passport for overseas travel.[8] This indicates that involvement in decision-making about comfort women went all the way to the top levels of government. Other documents reveal a similar picture about high-level involvement. In March 1942 the headquarters of the South Area Army made plans to set up comfort stations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. One recovered document shows that orders were issued to Taiwan

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headquarters to recruit 70 comfort women and send them to Borneo. The commander in Taiwan, Lieutenant General Andō Rikichi and the chief of staff, Major General Higuchi Keishichirō, instructed the Kempeitai to select three brothel owners to assist them in the task of gathering the comfort women. Seventy women were in fact sent to Borneo from Taiwan; all carried military travel documents with the seal of the head of general affairs of the Ministry for the Army, Tanaka Ryūkichi and his junior, Kawara Naoichi. Because the minister of the army at this time was Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki, he bore final responsibility for the ordeals of the comfort women (ibid.: 146).[9]

Comfort women were transported to the front lines in Army ships or on Army railways or trucks. On a few occasions comfort women were even flown by Army planes to the front lines. The head of Army supplies was responsible for controlling transport and must have been ultimately responsible for decisions made about the transport of the women (ibid.: 17).

Less evidence is available about the role of the Navy than about that of the Army in the exploitation of comfort women. However, according to documents written by Rear Admiral Nagaoka Takasumi, head of general affairs of the Ministry for the Navy, on 30 May 1942, the Navy was to dispatch comfort women to various naval bases throughout Southeast Asia. For instance, 45 women were to be dispatched to the Celebes, 40 to Balikpapan in Borneo, 50 to Penan and 30 to Surabaya. This was the second dispatch of comfort women to these bases. These documents were sent to Rear Admiral Nakamura Toshihisa, chief of staff of the Southwest Area Fleet. As with the Army, Navy involvement went to the very top ranks. Admiral Shimada Shigetarō, the minister for the Navy, can therefore also be held responsible for the ordeals of the comfort women (Yoshimi 1992: 365–75; Shigemura 1955: 224f).

The available evidence thus gives a clear picture that the very top ranks of both the Army and the Navy were directly involved in decision making concerning the comfort women and that other arms of government, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, collaborated with them, also with high-level involvement. The comfort women case could well be historically unprecedented as an instance of state-controlled criminal activity involving the sexual exploitation of women. The history of 'camp followers' (military prostitutes) in European wars provides a strong contrast because evidence suggests that the relevant decisions were made by those on the ground and not back in the metropolitan corridors of power. We Japanese thus have a special responsibility to acknowledge the crimes of our forebears in subjecting the comfort women to their ordeals and, especially, a responsibility to demand that our government gives adequate compensation to the survivors.

The comfort women were treated as 'military supplies,' but relevant documents were either hidden or destroyed at the end of the war. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many women were exploited; the best estimates range from 80,000 to 100,000. According to the Japanese military plan devised in July 1941, 20,000 comfort women were required for every 700,000 Japanese soldiers (Yoshimi 1992: 83f), or one woman for every 35 soldiers. There were 3.5 million Japanese soldiers sent to China and Southeast Asia, and therefore an estimated 100,000 women were mobilised. Eighty per cent of these women are believed to have been Koreans but newly available evidence shows that many from Taiwan, China, the Philippines and Indonesia were also used. Recent testimony by Malaysians indicates that the Japanese forces set up comfort stations in which local Malaysian women were housed (Hayashi 1993). Thus, it is clear that, under the excuse of preventing rape, the Japanese forces

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exploited large numbers of Asian women as well as women from Allied nations. Although this was the official justification for the programme, it should not be forgotten that these estimated 100,000 women were themselves victims of rape. The following testimony by a former Korean comfort woman drives home the point:

> I was nearly killed several times during my time as a 'comfort woman.' There were some military men who were drunk and were brandishing swords at me while making demands for perverted sex. They drove their swords into the tatami, then demanded sex from me […]. Afterwards the tatami was full of holes from them driving their swords into it […]. The threat they were making was obvious–if I didn't co-operate they would stab me.
>
> (Kankoku Teishin-tai Mondai Taisaku Kyōgikai 1993:125)

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the comfort women system—that the Japanese Imperial forces established originally in China in the early 1930s ostensibly for the purpose of preventing rape—quickly expanded to almost every corner of the Asia-Pacific region. It became hitherto the largest and most elaborate system of trafficking women in the history of mankind, and one of the most brutal. The scale of operation was unprecedented in several ways, as follows: 1) The number of women involved—estimated to be between 80,000 and 100,000; 2) the international scope of the operation—Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian, Dutch, Melanesian women were exploited; 3) the scale of the military-organised system required for procuring women—Ministry of Army, Ministry of Navy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other official agencies were involved; 4) the length of time over which the system operated—thirteen years between 1932 and 1945–and the degree of violence inflicted upon women; 5) the geographical breadth of Japan's wartime empire where the system was administered—the entire Asia-Pacific region.[10]

Was the exploitation of women in military brothels effective in preventing widespread random sexual violence by Japanese soldiers? In June 1939, Hayao Takeo, then a lieutenant in the Japanese military as well as a professor at the Kanazawa medical college, submitted to the authorities a secret report about particular battlefield problems and control measures. In one chapter he analysed the cases of rape by Japanese soldiers and found that it was impossible to prevent rape by setting up military brothels and that many Chinese civilians, whenever they saw Japanese soldiers, feared being raped by them (Yoshimi 1992: 232). He also stated that the Japanese soldiers who did not rape women in Japan suddenly became very violent and considered themselves free to rape Chinese women. In addition, he said that commanding officers often turned a blind eye to rape, believing that rape was necessary to enhance soldiers' fighting spirits (ibid.: 229). Thus Dr. Hayao clearly recognised the two essential issues regarding rape in war. First, on the battlefield in a foreign country, where soldiers are outside the jurisdiction of their own laws of rape, it is extremely difficult to prevent rape, regardless of the availability of prostitutes at military brothels. Second, many officers deem it necessary for their soldiers to rape women in order to stimulate aggression. This was also clear from the testimonies of former Japanese soldiers who said they were given condoms before embarkation, despite officers' instructions not to rape women.[11] But was this behaviour peculiar to soldiers of the Japanese forces?

Sexual Violence by Allied Soldiers in Japan

There is no documentary evidence of mass rape by the Allied soldiers during the Pacific War.

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However, there are many anecdotal testimonies by Okinawans about rape committed by U.S. soldiers during the Okinawa battle between March and August 1945. For example, according to Ōshiro Masayasu, an eminent Okinawan historian who recorded much information on this battle, almost all the women of a village on Motobu Peninsula on Okinawa were raped by a troop of U.S. marines (Masayasu 1988: 171–3).[12]

This was also the case in the occupation of Japan in 1945. From the day they landed, U.S. soldiers engaged in the mass rape of Japanese women. The first reported case was at 1:00 p.m. on 30 August 1945. Two marines went into a civilian house in Yokosuka and raped a mother and daughter at gunpoint. The marines had landed three and a half hours earlier. There were four reported cases that day in Yokosuka alone (Yamada 1982: 34–6). On 1 September there were 11 rapes reported in Yokosuka and Yokohama. In one of these cases a woman nearly died after she was gang-raped by 27 US soldiers. After that the incidence of rape spiralled upward throughout the period of the occupation and the standard atrocities began to occur: young girls raped infront of their parents, pregnant women raped in maternity wards and so on. Over a period of 10 days (30 August–10 September 1945) there were 1,336 reported cases of rape of Japanese women by U.S. soldiers in Kanagawa prefecture (where Yokosuka and Yokohama are situated) alone. If these figures are extrapolated to cover the whole of Japan–and if it is assumed that many rapes went unreported–then it is clear that the scale of rape by U.S. forces was comparable to that by any other force including the Japanese Imperial forces during the war. Yet according to an official U.S. report, only 247 U.S. soldiers were prosecuted for rape in the latter half of 1945, and these figures include prosecutions for rape in occupied Europe (Brownmiller 1975: 77). Clearly there were many soldier-rapists at large in the occupied areas who were not prosecuted.

U.S. forces occupied the bulk of Japan, but some areas such as Hiroshima were occupied by British Commonwealth occupation forces (BCOF) composed of Australian, New Zealand and Indian soldiers under the command of British officers. These forces also participated in the rape of civilians. A Japanese prostitute made the following comment about Australian soldiers who landed at Kure (the port of Hiroshima) in November 1945:

> Most of the people in Kure stayed inside their houses, and pretended they knew nothing about the rape by occupation forces. The Australian soldiers were the worst. They dragged young women into their jeeps, took them to the mountain, and then raped them. I heard them screaming for help nearly everynight. A policeman from the Hiroshima police station came to me, and asked me to work as a prostitute for the Australians—he wanted me and other prostitutes to act as a sort of 'firebreak,' so that young women wouldn't get raped. We agreed to do this and contributed greatly. (Yamada 1982: 90f)

The Japanese government had discussed ways of dealing with the anticipated problem of mass rape by occupation forces in the week following surrender and before their arrival. On 21 August 1945, Prime Minister Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko called a meeting of several of his ministers to discuss the issue; attendees included the health, internal affairs and foreign ministers and the attorney-general. This was dubbed the 'comfort women meeting.' They decided to set up a Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) for the occupation forces. A special government fund of 30 million yen was allocated to the project, and the head of the Japanese police force was ordered to take all measures necessary to assist such an organisation (Harada 1989: 136). In fact, the government had already taken the first steps toward establishing this organisation

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four days earlier. Governors and police chiefs of all prefectures had been instructed to procure women from geisha houses, brothels and nightclubs in sufficient numbers to staff a nationwide organisation of brothels. In Tokyo the chief of police summoned all owners of brothels and nightclubs and requested their cooperation in such a project (Ōshima 1986: 166; Yamada 1982: 25–7). The Japanese politicians who had procured tens of thousands of non-Japanese comfort women during the war now turned to the procurement of their own women for the benefit of soldiers who had recently been their enemies.

According to an internal report, more than 20,000 Japanese women were mobilised into the RAA by the end of 1945. At its peak more than 70, 000 women worked for the organisation. As the demand for women to staff the organisation outstripped the supply of professional prostitutes, geishas and the like, other groups of women were drafted, including high school students (who had been put to work in munitions factories toward the end of the war) from Saitama, Hiroshima and Kawasaki. These young women were not allowed to return home after the surrender and were forced to work in the brothels of the RAA (Yamada 1982: 7, 42f). The case of the girls from Hiroshima was particularly sad: They had been put to work in Kure and had thus survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, in which their families had perished and their homes had been destroyed. They had nowhere to return to and were offered no alternative to service in the RAA. These young women were also victims of rape.

The first brothel the RAA established, named Komachien (which loosely translates as 'The Babe Garden'), was in Ōmori, a suburb of Tokyo, and it opened on 27 August 1945. Hundreds were established soon after all over Japan. One of these brothels was managed by the mistress of General Ishii Shirō, who headed the notorious Unit 731, a Manchukuo unit that had developed biological weapons and tested them on more than 3,000 Chinese prisoners. The establishment of comfort women brothels did little to minimise the incidence of mass rape by Japanese forces during the war; the same could be said of the RAA project during the occupation.

It is a harsh irony that while the accounts of mass rape and rape in the form of enforced prostitution committed by Japanese forces during the war were heard in the Tokyo trials—and judgment and sentence being passed on the perpetrators—the same practice was continuing throughout occupied Japan with the active participation of Allied forces and the approval of the high command of the occupying forces.[13]

War, Rape and Patriarchy

Why do soldiers rape?

It is perfectly understandable that soldiers should want to have sex, if only as a temporary escape from the horrors they encounter daily. That such a respite is positive is reflected in the following comment by a Vietnam veteran:

> A man and a woman holding each other tight for one moment, finding in sex some escape from the terrible reality of the war. The intensity that war brings to sex, the 'let us love now because there may be no tomorrow,' is based on death. No matter what our weapons on the battlefield, love is finally our only weapon against death. Sex is the weapon of life, the shooting sperms sent like an army of guerrillas to penetrate the egg's defences—the only victory that really matters. Sex is a grappling hook that pulls you out, ends your isolation, makes you one with life again. (Broyles 1991: 79)

However, it must be remembered that

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consensual sex and rape are dramatically different undertakings (even if the boundary is blurred in some people's accounts of their actions), and it would be very wide off the mark to account for an act of rape as a distorted outlet for an individual's sex drive. Wartime rape is a collective act on a number of levels. As another returned soldier from Vietnam put it: "They only do it when there are a lot of guys around. You know, it makes them feel good. They show each other what they can do–'I can do it,' you know. They won't do it by themselves" (Brownmiller 1975: 107).

Indeed, rape in war is typically gang rape. They serve as a sharing of the 'spoils' of war and a strengthening of the exclusively male bonds among soldiers. Fierce combat forms strong and intimate links among soldiers, and gang rape is both a by-product of this and a means by which such bonds are maintained in noncombat situations. There is also strong psychological pressure on soldiers to be brave and to be prepared for immediate physicalcombat, and this is especially so in the presence of other soldiers. The need to dominate the 'other,' the enemy, is imperative in battle with other men. In a non-combat situation, women readily become the 'other' and the target of the desire for domination by groups of tightly bonded men. The violation of the bodies of women becomes the means by which such a sense of domination is affirmed and reaffirmed. In an extreme situation such as war, in which the killing of the enemy is regarded as an act worthy of praise, the moral basis for the condemnation of crimes such as rape falls away, and the moral codes adhered to by soldiers in peacetime lose their validity (ibid.: 32).

The internal power relations of armies work on a strict class system, and enlisted soldiers are always subject to the orders of officers. This creates a contradiction whereby soldiers whose principal task is to dominate and subjugate the enemy must subordinate themselves to the unquestionable authority of their officers. This contradiction is intensified in the battlefield where, for the individual soldier, the imperative to dominate the enemy is literally a matter of life or death, and the need for the officer class to dominate and have unquestioned authority over groups of soldiers becomes strategically imperative. Such a contradiction creates both a high degree of tension and a context in which violence is the standard mode for the release of tension. Consequently, the rape of women perceived as the 'enemy' or 'belonging to the enemy' becomes a frequently used form of release–a reprehensible behaviour, escaping the disciplinary matrix, that is really the underbelly of the disciplinary system. Incidents in which women are raped in front of their families— especially in front of their fathers, husbands or brothers—are common because the violence enacted on the women also serves to humiliate enemy men and to reinforce their subjection to the occupying force. The more absolute the relation of domination between officers and enlisted men within an army, the more heightened is the contradiction between their relations to the subjugated enemy and their situation within their own force. Consequently, their behaviour toward the enemy—soldiers, male civilians and women—becomes more violent.

Rape in war has a number of different effects. During periods of heavy fighting, it serves to perpetuate and intensify the aggressiveness of soldiers. After victory or in noncombat periods, it serves to maintain the sense of dominance and victory and is oftenviewed by soldiers as the legitimate spoils of war. The Japanese army is not the only force to have used or condoned rape as a device for maintaining the group aggressiveness of soldiers. In the Falklands War of 1982, British soldiers being transported to the war zone by ship were shown violent pornographic films as a way of stimulating their aggressiveness prior to battle. As seen in the Bosnian conflict, rape can be employed on the front line as one of a range of strategies. War

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and rape are fundamentally related. It is foolish to imagine that the provision of large numbers of involuntary prostitutes (which is itself a form of rape) could prevent the mass or gang rape that is a general feature of modern war.

Moreover, soldiers in battle cannot avoid a further—and irresolvable—contradiction. War is usually presented as an exclusively male activity, a masculine bonding ritual, an activity in which women have no place (Enloe 1983: 15). Yet this is a fantasy of war. The reality is that war and battles frequently occur in areas occupied by civilians and that women are usually present as civilians near the front line. War is presented as an activity that demands physical strength and toughness and is seen as an occasion for the exclusive celebration of these attributes as singular masculine virtues. Therefore, the very existence of military forces is regarded as a living symbol of masculine dominance over the allegedly 'weaker' sex. In such a patriarchalideology, it is strongly believed that a woman's place is on the home front and not in battle. This ideology demands that women be absent from battle, but its maintenance also requires that such dominance be repeatedly reinforced, especially when women are in fact present in the male domain of the battlefield, either as implicated civilians or as military nurses. Thus, women must be both present and absent at the same time. War as a masculine activity is a continuing attempt to resolve such a contradiction,and yet its very existence is founded on this contradiction. The final recourse in the face of such a contradiction is to eliminate women altogether—hence the frequency with which women are massacred after rape.

Strongly in evidence is a backlash from many military men against what they perceive as an invasion of their domain by women. Many men want to maintain all-male workplaces, and they often respond to the 'threat' of women being present by sexual harassment of those women. This seems to be a particularly common phenomenon in the military, and the kinds of sexual harassment that occur seem to be more extreme than in other workplaces. There have been many rape cases reported in the armed forces of a number of countries in recent times.[14]

War is an inherently patriarchal activity, and rape is the most extreme expression of the patriarchal drive toward dominance of the 'other'. In peacetime, such tendencies are held in check by the rule of law and internalised moral codes. In war the rule of law is often absent, internalised moral codes disintegrate and these normal checks on such activities are largely replaced by incentives. Rape is unique to human beings; it does not form part of animal behaviour. Despite the fact that it is often characterised as 'animal activity', rape is profoundly cultural and patriarchal. As Virginia Woolf indicated in Three Guineas (1938), war is not just a military problem but is a problem created by a male-dominated society, and therefore war is closely related to other traditionally male activities such as law and organised religion (Woolf 1992: 151–414). To prevent war requires first destroying the male-dominated culture that creates war and then creating a new culture that ensures real equality between men and women. The same could be said of rape in war.

The eleven (male) judges at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal who heard the cases of mass rapes by Japanese soldiers probably never thought that the crimes they were investigating were closely related to their own status in the pre-eminently patriarchal world of the law. Just as Freud failed to see male sexuality as a weapon against women (Brownmiller 1975: 11), the judges of the tribunal failed to see these crimes committed by Japanese forces as a general characteristic of patriarchy.

This article is based on parts of the new edition of my book Hidden Horrors: Japanese War

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Notes

[1] For details of Japanese nationalist 'comfort women bashing,' see Tanaka 2017; 2016.
[2] For example, see Dō 1973; Katsuichi 1972; Nankin Jiken Chōsa Kenkyū Kai 1992.
[3] This idea is clear from the instructions for dealing with Chinese civilians, which were issued on 27 June 1938, by Okabe Naozaburō, chief of staff of the North China Area Army, to all subordinate units. For details, see Yoshimi 1992: 209f.
[4] A report prepared by the medical section of the North China Area Army in February 1940 warned that a soldier suffering from venereal disease required an average of 86 days' hospitalisation; thus the spread of such a disease would weaken the strength of the Army considerably. For details of this report, see Yoshimi 1992: 237. On the concern of the military about the potential effect on Japanese public health of venereal disease brought home by soldiers, see a report prepared by a senior officer of the Ministry of the Army on 18 June 1942, reproduced in ibid.: 171f.
[5] The fact that seven of 19 comfort women interviewed by the Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility had suffered from venereal disease also indicates a high rate of venereal disease among the comfort women.
[6] Concerning the reasons for the exploitation of non-Japanese women, in particular Koreans, as military sex slaves, see Chapter 2 'Procurement of comfort women and their lives as sexual slaves' in Tanaka 2002.
[7] For evidence that some minors from colonies and occupied territories were forced to become comfort women, see Yoshimi 1992: 102f, 135–7, 304.
[8] This instruction appears in the telegram sent by Tōgō to the head of foreign affairs in the government-general of Taiwan on 14 January 1942. It is reproduced in Yoshimi 1992: 143.
[9] An open question is whether Emperor Hirohito also bore responsibility because of his position as grand marshal, the highest position in the Japanese Imperial Forces, even if he was not informed about this matter.
[10] For more details of special characteristics of the comfort women system and its historical background, see Epilogue of Tanaka 2002.

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[11] Unpublished private memoirs written by a former soldier of the Kantō Army, which I obtained a few years ago, clearly testify to such action. However, the author's name is not disclosed here for the sake of privacy.

[12] The Japanese forces brought many Korean comfort women to Okinawa well before the battle started, but accurate numbers of these women are unknown. Research indicates that some of these Korean women were forced to serve Americans after the Japanese forces were defeated. For details, see Yamatani 1992: 169.

[13] For more details of sexual violence committed by the Allied occupation soldiers against Japanese women immediately after the war and the RAA's activities, see Yuki Tanaka, Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation.

[14] Recently a number of cases of rape and sexual harassment within the military have been reported in Australia. In the United States, too, there have been reports of this phenomenon, which increased noticeably during and after the Gulf War. For example, at a U.S. Navy convention held at the Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas, in September 1991, which celebrated the Gulf War victory, 90 sexual assaults were reported. The victims in 83 cases were women, either female officers or wives who accompanied their husbands to the convention. About five percent of 4,000 participants were female naval officers. Some male officers were wearing T-shirts that had 'Women Are Property' written on the back and 'He-Man Women Haters' Club' printed on the front. For details of sexual harassment at this convention, see United States. Department of Defense. Office of the Inspector General 1993.

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