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# My Response to Ramseyer's Effort to Deny the History of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery

By Pyong Gap Min<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to critically evaluate as many of Ramseyer's arguments as possible included in his 2022 paper. It consists of three sections in addition to the introduction and concluding remarks. The first section summarizes the expanded literature that interpreted the "comfort women" system as sexual slavery, judgments, and recommendations to the Japanese government given by scholars, international human rights organizations and the legislative branches of four Western countries. Since Ramseyer published his article denying the "comfort women" system as sexual slavery without introducing this literature, we cannot consider his article as an academic work. The second section critically evaluates Ramseyer's unacceptable and untenable arguments that Japanese and Korean "comfort women" were commercial sex workers with labor contracts rather than sexual slaves. The third section critically evaluates Ramseyer's severe criticisms of the Korean council and its redress activities.

*Keywords:* the "comfort women" issue; Japanese military sexual slavery; human rights organizations; international law; wartime sexual violence; "comfort women."

## Introduction

At the end of December 2020, I heard the news that a paper by J. Mark Ramseyer, a Harvard Law School professor, interpreting Japanese and Korean "comfort women" as voluntary sex workers with labor contracts, was accepted for publication in *International Journal of Law and Economics*. It shocked me. Many international human rights organizations, including the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, interpreted the "comfort women" system (CWS) as a perfect form of sexual slavery. Even the Japanese government accepted "comfort women" as sexual slaves by recognizing the forced mobilization of most Korean "comfort women." Thus, Ramseyer's denial of the CWS as sexual slavery is

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analogous to Donald Trump's rejection of Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election, in its denial and manipulation of truth. I knew that dozens of Japanese revisionist scholars published many Japanese-language at least magazine/journal articles and books which treated Asian "comfort women" as sex workers who had made a lot of money. But I had never imagined the possibility of publication of an article claiming "comfort women" as voluntary sex workers with labor contracts in an English-language international journal in the United States.

In order to reject the CWS as sexual slavery, Ramseyer needed to write at least a long article including a review of the literature, and data that indisputably contested "comfort women" as sexual slaves. But he wrote only a 5.5-page article, excluding the introduction and the conclusion. I did not see any new data source in his short article, with the exception of Japanese and Korean historical revisionist scholars' works, to support his claim of Japanese and Korean "comfort women" as voluntary sex workers under labor contracts. In his effort to rebut his critics' arguments, he wrote a long 65-page paper in response to his critics, to reject the CWS as sexual slavery and to criticize the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (referred to the Korean Council although the name was changed to the Korean Council for the Justice and Remembrance for the Comfort Women Issues in 2017). In his responses to his critics, he emphasized his academic interest in writing his 2021 article to explain how "comfort women" and brothel owners agreed on labor contracts using game theory. By emphasizing the theoretical component of his study (Ramseyer, 2022, 3), he tried to hide his motivation to deny sexual slavery. However, his criticisms of his critics and his attacks on the Korean Council reveal his strong motivation to spread Japanese history denialists' propaganda to the U.S. academia, using an academic theory as a camouflage. He did not need to explain how the two parties agreed on labor contracts until he demonstrated that the CWS was not sexual slavery. Thus, explaining the processes of reaching contracts is not a research issue pertaining to the "comfort women" issue (hereafter referred to as CWI).

This paper consists of three major substantive sections in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. The first substantive section will provide a review of the extensive literature on the CWS as sexual slavery, which was strongly accepted and judged by many international human rights organizations, several countries' governments, and many scholars. The second substantive section will critically evaluate Ramseyer's arguments to deny the CWS as sexual slavery. As Yoshimi (2013) aptly pointed out, Japanese historical documents did not include much information about the forced mobilization of "comfort women" and their brutal treatments at Japanese military brothels (hereafter referred to as JMB), as criminals do not write down whom they plan to kill. Accordingly, it is important to use "comfort women's" testimonies as credible evidence for their forced mobilization to JMB, and their sufferings of brutal treatment at the hands of Japanese soldiers. I plan to use KCW's testimonies extensively in critically evaluating Ramseyer's arguments for rejecting KCW as sexual slaves. Showing KCW's brutal treatment at the hands of JMB is also partly my response to the request by the Crimson Editorial Board of Harvard University that "scholars should focus their 'collective attention on the issues most urgently at stake" and "a clear view of the horror these women faced..." (Crimson Editorial Board, 2022: 2).

The third substantive section will critically examine Ramseyer's unjustifiable attacks on the Korean Council and its redress activities. Like other Japanese historical revisionists, he has attacked the Korean Council, progressive "comfort women" scholars, and redress activists in Korea and the United States as "anti-Japan," "communists," and "Stalinists." I will show that a large number of Japanese citizens supported the redress movement led by the Korean Council and that therefore it is not a pro-Japan or anti-Japan issue.

I plan to provide detailed literature on the CWI and the redress movement and extended discussions on the various issues related to both, not only for Ramseyer, but also for other scholars,

faculty members, journal editors, and college students. I hope it will be helpful to the editorial committee members of *International Journal of Laws and Economics*, which accepted Ramseyer's paper for publication in their journal and have not made a decision to detract his unacceptable article. I also hope that a comprehensive literature review and extended discussion will be helpful to faculty members and students at Harvard University, where Ramseyer has maintained his academic position without much difficulty despite his controversial article and paper.

## **Scholars' and Human Rights Organizations' Interpretation of the "Comfort Women" System as Sexual Slavery and their Recommendations to the Japanese Government**

It has been more than thirty years since the redress movement for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery started in South Korea. There were two impetuses for the redress movement for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery in Korea. One was the Korean women leaders' acquisition of the Japanese Diet's minutes in June 1990, which included exchanges between Motooka Shoji, a member of the Japan Socialist Party, and Director-General Shimizu Tsutao of the Employment Security Bureau of the Japanese government. In a Diet Budget Committee meeting on June 6, 1990, Shoji pointed out that the Japanese government had forcibly drafted 1.5 million people from the Korean peninsula for military and labor services, and that it had hunted young Korean women to serve as sexual slaves (the Korean Council, 2014, 45). This information led Korean women's leaders to establish the *Chungshindae Daechaek Hyopeuhe* (the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Savery by Japan) to formally start the redress movement. The Korean Council made six demands to the Japanese government through the Japanese Consulate General in Seoul (H. C. Lee, 1997, 314).

The other impetus was the press conference of Kim Hak-sun, the first KCW who broke silence, on August 14, 1991. The acquisition of the Diet minutes by Korean women's leaders strengthened their determination to organize the Korean Council for the redress movement. On the other hand, the emergence and public testimony of Kim Hak-sun expanded the scope of the redress movement in Korea to a global redress movement. The battlefield of the redress movement was no longer Korea and Japan, but the United States, Europe, UN and other international human rights organizations.

In January 1992, Yoshiaki Yoshimi, a renowned Japanese historian, discovered a set of Japanese military government documents that demonstrated the Japanese military government's establishment and management of JMB and the forced mobilization of Asian women to these brothels. His discovery of key historical documents forced the Japanese government to interview over 20 Korean "comfort women" (KCW). Based on historical and testimonial data in 1993, the Japanese government issued the Kōno Statement, which acknowledged the forcible mobilization of Asian "comfort women." However, the emergence of historical revisionism in Japan from 1995 on has led the Japanese government to deny that the "comfort women" system (CWS) was a well-coordinated and institutionalized system of sexual slavery. In response, many scholars have conducted research and found other documents and evidence that support Yoshimi's findings (Chung, 2017; Hayashi, 2015; Nishino, Kim and Akane, 2018; Oiu et al., 2014; Yoshimi, 2000).

Moreover, renowned legal scholars representing international human rights organizations have investigated the CWS and concluded that it was indeed a quintessential form of sexual slavery. Based on their investigations, international human rights organizations and legislative branches of four countries have sent over 20 resolutions to the Japanese government. Included in these resolutions are recommendations that the Japanese government investigate the CWS and reveal the details of the CWS, acknowledge it as sexual slavery, make a sincere apology and compensation to the victims, punish those responsible for the sexual slavery system, and take

educational measures for Japan not to repeat it by including information in history textbooks and building “comfort women” memorials. The international organizations include the UN Commission on Human Rights (which has sent several resolutions), Amnesty International, the International Labor Organization, and the International Committee of Jurists (Coomaraswamy, 1996; Dolgopal and Paranjape, 1994; McDougall, 1997).

In addition, Japanese, Korean, and other Asian women’s redress organizations organized the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, a global citizens’ court, in Tokyo in December 2000 to locate the perpetrators of the crime of sexual slavery and file criminal charges against them. The six judges selected from internationally-known legal scholars, several prosecutors from seven victim countries, and about 70 “comfort women” survivors participated in the three-day court to render legal judgments. They asked the Japanese government to send lawyers to defend its position. However, it did not send representatives, most likely because they knew that their position was indefensible. Christine Chinkin, one of the judges, wrote:

The judges had found Emperor Hirohito guilty of the charges on the basis of compound responsibility, which means he knew or should have known of the offenses. The evidence showed that the comfort stations had been systematically instituted and operated as a matter of military policy, and that they committed crimes against humanity under the law then applicable. The judges also indicated that they had determined Japan to be responsible under international law applicable at the time of the events for violations of its treaty obligations and principles of customary international laws relating to slavery, trafficking, forced labor, and rape, amounting to crimes against humanity. The judges also convicted nine other Japanese civilian and military leaders of having institutionalized rape and sexual slavery (Chinkin, 2002, 338).

Four major Western countries’ (the United States, Canada, the European Union, and the Netherlands) legislative branches also sent strong resolutions to the Japanese government, pressing it to take responsible measures quickly to resolve the CWI in 2007. I here introduce the U.S. House Resolution 121’s passage on July 30, 2007. To get the resolution passed, the U.S. House of Representatives conducted research using historical documents to make sure the CWS was sexual slavery. It also held a hearing in which three “comfort women” survivors gave testimonies to Congressional members. Despite the Japanese government’s active lobbying effort, the resolution was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives (U.S House of Representatives, 2007). It includes four strongly-worded recommendations to the Japanese government. The first recommendation was that “the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces’ coercion of young women into sexual slavery.” The third recommendation said, “The Japanese government should clearly and publicly refute the claim that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the comfort women for the Imperial Armed Forces never occurred” (quoted in Korean Council 2015, 362).

Ramseyer pretended to have used game theory to explain how “comfort women” as free individuals reached agreements on labor contracts with the owners of “comfort stations” based on the false assumption that all “comfort women” could make independent rational decisions. However, previous studies have shown that almost all of them were forcibly mobilized to JMB and forced to sexually serve Japanese soldiers under tight surveillance there. Thus, we need to use intersectional theory combining the imperial war, colonization (occupation), gender hierarchy, and

social class to explain their brutal experiences (Min 2003 & 2021, 19-29). As a law professor at Harvard University, Ramseyer should have known that four powerful structural factors, including gender hierarchy especially in Japan, the imperial war, Japan's colonization and occupation of Asian countries, and the low-class background of ACW were the major contributing factors (Min, 2003, 2021) to their forced mobilization to JMB and their suffering of the most brutal form of sexual slavery. But instead, he pretended to have examined using game theory how the ACW made voluntary decisions on labor contracts with the owners of JMB to maximize their interest. He naively claimed several times in his 2022 rebuttal to his critics that he focused on empirical findings and did not assert his own value judgement. But we all know that Ramseyer tried to save Japanese historical denialists by replacing the sexual slavery narrative with his untenable labor contract story. I will show in the next section how much his labor contract story conflicts with facts.

## **Section 2: Critical Evaluations of Ramseyer's Arguments about "Comfort Women" as Voluntary Sex workers with Labor Contracts**

In the spring of 2021, I tried to evaluate Ramseyer's 2021 article in which he claimed that Japanese and Korean "comfort women" were sex workers with labor contracts rather than sexual slaves. In making such a bold claim, as noted above, he should have written at least a long serious article. However, he devoted only 5.5 pages to the main body of his article. He made assertions without using data as evidence to prove his arguments. This is a typical revisionist scholars' method of writing articles and books. Ramseyer's sources for his article are very one-sided. He referenced four books by Takeshi Fujinaga—a major Japanese historical revisionist—as well as a very controversial book by Yu-ha Park, a well-known Korean history denialist (see Y. H. Park 2013). In addition, an overwhelming majority of other cited works were the products of Japanese or Korean historical revisionists. It is noteworthy that he completely failed to cite or mention two key Japanese historians, Hayashi Hirofumi (2015) and Yoshiaki Yoshimi (2000), who discovered hundreds of Japanese historical documents that demonstrated the Japanese military government's establishment and management of "comfort stations" and the forced mobilization of Asian "comfort women." Like other historical revisionists, he selectively used a few or several KCW's testimonies and generalized the findings to all other KCW.

Ramseyer provided two major arguments to support his claim that KCW were not forcibly mobilized to JMB and were therefore not sexual slaves. First, he argued that "there were no historical documents such as newspaper articles, police reports, and personal diaries that demonstrated the forced mobilization of KCW (Ramseyer 2022, 19). Second, he claimed that he could not accept the major findings based on testimonies of a small number of KCW who he claims were under the control of Korean redress activists. I will show in this section that neither of Ramseyer's two major arguments is justifiable. In addition, I will also show based on KCW's testimonies that KCW were sexual slaves because they were brutally treated under custody at JMB by the Japanese military.

### *1. The Evidence of Forced Mobilization based on Korean Daily Articles*

Ramseyer's first major argument against the forced mobilization of KCW to JMB is that Korean redress activists and scholars emphasized the forced mobilization of KCW mainly based on Seiji Yoshida's discredited book (Ramseyer, 2022, 16-18, 19, 24, 26, 31). As well documented by Yamaguchi in her book chapter (Yamaguchi, 2020) and her article in this special issue (Yamaguchi, 2022), Japanese historical revisionists attacked Yoshida's book (Yoshida, 1983) and *Asahi Shimbun* that reported his articles for mainly contributing to disseminating the view of the

forced mobilization of KCW to the United States and Korea. Read the following paragraph by Ramseyer:

I am forced to analyze these oral testimonies, however, because as far as I can tell, they constitute virtually the only evidence that the Japanese army dragooned Korean women. This strikes me as deeply surprising. Had the Japanese military kidnapped non-trivial numbers of young women at gunpoint, one would expect to find contemporaneous corroboration. One would expect to read stories in newspapers, police reports, and personal diaries. Instead, the accounts mostly appear only in the wake of Yoshida's (later proven to be) 1983 book (Ramseyer, 2022, 18-19).

He emphasized that "the post-war Korean newspapers did not discuss bayonet-point dragooning under the Japanese occupation" (Ramseyer, 2022, 20).

However, as I clarified in my book in detail (2021, 36-37), major Korean newspaper articles published in the post-war years indicated that the *chongshindae* (*teishintai* in Japanese, meaning voluntary labor corps) or *cheonyeogongchul* (each Korean family devoting a young daughter to Japan) was used as the mechanism of forcibly mobilizing young Korean girls and women to JMB. These articles were published well before the Korean translation of Yoshida's book was available in 1989 (Yoshida, 1989). They were based on interviews with Korean drafted soldiers and laborers who had met KCW at JMB or encountered them on their way home after the end of the war. Through an online search of four major Korean newspapers, Veki Yoshikata (2015) collected all articles published between 1945 and 1994 referring to the *chongshindae* used in the context of sexual services to Japanese soldiers. She found that 2,815 articles were published during the fifty-year period, with 2,652 articles published between 1945 and 1979 (before the beginning of the redress movement). They clearly indicated that KCW were forcibly mobilized to JMB, and that Koreans learned about it well before the redress movement started in the late 1980s.

I quote here three paragraphs from three separate newspaper or magazine articles because Ramseyer devoted many pages to his claim that no newspaper article mentioned the forced mobilization of KCW. In March 1964, Okamura Akihiko, a Japanese Southeastern Asian correspondent of *Pan-Asia News*, contributed a three-part report on Japanese fisherman's illegal fishing activities in the South Korean maritime area to *Dong-a Ilbo*, a major Korean daily. He quoted the Korean captain as making the following meaningful statement to him: "This is a historical event all Japanese politicians know well now. You, young Japanese, would be better to know how much Koreans suffered during the Japanese colonization period. Many Korean women, 18-20 years old, were dragged to Japanese military brothels in the name of the '*chongshingdae*' and to serve Japanese soldiers as sex workers." Okamura wrote: "I felt so ashamed to hear the story that I could not look at him" (Okamura, 1964). The Korean captain's statement about many young Korean women having been dragged away for sexual servitude to Japanese soldiers indicates that many young Korean women's forced draft to JMB was very much common knowledge among people in Korea in the 1960s.

On the eve of Korean Independence Day in 1963, Geon-ho Song, the chief editor of *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, published an article about Korean victims of Japan's colonization of Korea. He identified Koreans mobilized to the Japanese military as laborers, soldiers, and the *chongshindae* as the three major groups of victims. He elaborated on the *chongshindae*:

The Japanese military forcibly mobilized young unmarried Korean girls in the name of the *chongshindae* or *cheanyeogongchul* [devoting a daughter to the state] to

devote them to Japanese soldiers as “comfort women.” The forced mobilization of Korean girls and young women by the Japanese military government led to the early marriage trend in Korea, as parents wanted to get their daughters married quickly before they would lose them for *cheonyeogongchul* [devoting one daughter to the state]. No one knows how many unmarried Korean girls were dragged to Japanese military brothels and what happened to them (Song, 1963, 5).<sup>2</sup>

In the 1982 August issue of *Lady KyeongHyang*, a women's magazine in Korea, Lee Nam-Lim, a 55-year-old former KCW, wrote a four-page memoir in which she disclosed her identity as a victim of the *chongshindae* for Japanese soldiers (N. Lee, 1982). In her memoir, entitled “Japanese Soldiers Destroyed My Youth like This,” she accused Japanese soldiers of having treated her brutally at a “comfort station” in Yanggun, Myanmar. She reported that the only reason she did not commit suicide at the “comfort station” was that she could take revenge on the soldiers after the war by telling the world about the Japanese military's crime.

The above clarifications with three quotations from Korean newspaper and magazine articles indicate that almost all Koreans knew in the post-war years that the Japanese military forcibly mobilized many Korean girls and young women to JMB in the name of *chongshindae* or *cheonyeogongchul*. The Japanese military government formally used the term *chongshindae* to refer to a large number of Korean laborers mobilized in the 1944-1945 period, while they called Asian women mobilized to JMB “comfort women.” However, when recruiting Korean women to mobilize them to JMB, it did not use the term “comfort women,” but used the *chongshindae* or *cheonyogongchul* probably to hide their mobilization to JMB. Thus, the Japanese military used the term *chongshindae* or *cheonyogongchul* to forcibly mobilize both Korean women laborers and Korean “comfort women.” In fact, when the Korean government made a hotline to ask Korean *chongshindae* survivors to report to the Korean government in the early 1990s, both KCW survivors and Korean forced women laborers came forward to report them (Chung 2016, 23).

Ramseyer seems to have learned that several newspaper articles referring to the *chongshindae* were published in Korea in the 1980s (Ramseyer 202, 20). However, following the lead of C. Sarah Soh (2008, 162, 165), he mistakenly interpreted the use of the term *chongshindae* as only referring to Korean labor corps that “the Japanese government mobilized for industrial jobs under the emergency mobilization program in the late 1944 and 1945.” However, as clarified in the above paragraph, the Japanese military used the *chongshindae* to refer to Korean girls and young women forcibly mobilized to JMB too. It seems to have used *chongshindae* to refer to forcibly mobilized Korean girls and young women to JMB, instead of referring to “comfort women,” mainly to hide the CWS. For this reason, Korean women's leaders originally named its organization the *Chongshindae Daecheak Hyopeuihe* (*The Association for the Solution to the Chongshindae Issue*). Because of the association between the terms *chongshindae* and KCW, Korean women's leaders included the *chongshindae* in the name of their organization.

## 2. *The Evidence of Forced Mobilization based on KCW's Testimonies*

In addition to Korean newspaper articles, my analysis of 103 KCW survivors' testimonies indicates that 25% of them mentioned the *chongshindae* or *cheonyeogongchul* to refer to their forced mobilization to JMB (Min and Lee 2018). Twenty-five percent seems to be an undercount because the interviewers did not ask this specific question. Due to space limitations, I quote only one testimony here. After completing the fourth grade, her mother advised Kim Bok-dong to stay at home to avoid being taken to a JMB. Two of her sisters got married at early ages to avoid being

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<sup>2</sup> I also used this quotation in my book (Min, 2021, 37).



dragged away by Japanese officials. Since she was only 14 years old, she thought she would be safe from being forcibly mobilized to JMB. However, one day something terrible happened to her. Below is the excerpt from her narrative:

One day, our village head came to my house with a Japanese man in yellow uniform.... He spoke Korean well. They said to my mother: “You have to devote your daughter to *teishintai*. So, bring her here now. Don’t you think you have to devote a daughter to the nation [Japan] as you do not have a son? If you don’t do it, you are a traitor and you cannot live here.” When my mother asked them “What is *teishintai*,” they replied. “They work in factories that make soldiers’ uniforms and they can make money.” .... In this way, I was forced to follow them (B. D. Kim 1997, 85).<sup>3</sup>

“*Teishintai*” is the Japanese word for *chongshindae*. The above analyses convincingly show that both the Koreans who lived during the Asian-Pacific War and those who lived in the post-war years were well aware that the Japanese military forcibly mobilized Korean girls and young women to JMB for sexual services to Japanese soldiers in the name of the *chongshindae*. Accordingly, Ramseyer’s and other Japanese historical revisionists’ claim that Koreans learned of Korean women’s forced mobilization to JMB only through Seiji Yoshida’s discredited book available in Korea in 1989 is never justified. The main reason why the redress movement for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery started in the late 1980s was the elimination of South Korea’s military dictatorship and the maturity of feminist organizations in Korea in the 1980s. It had nothing to do with Yoshida’s discredited book.

Ramseyer, like other Japanese historical revisionists, has not accepted “comfort women’s” testimonies as credible evidence for sexual slavery (Hata, 2018; Ramseyer, 2022, 2, 3 & 17). But the criminal justice system has considered victims’ testimonies as the central factor to determining criminal judgements. In determining whether the CWS was sexual slavery or commercial prostitution, the following two are key issues: (1) whether they were forcibly mobilized to “comfort stations” or not; and (2) whether they were forced to sexually serve Japanese soldiers under detention in JMB. As Yoshimi (2013, 41) aptly pointed out, the Japanese military is unlikely to have left behind documents indicating that it mobilized Asian women by force to JMB, just as criminals who kidnap innocent people do not keep records of their illegal action. In fact, the Japanese military made every effort to eliminate historical records about the CWS by communicating verbally as much as possible (Hayashi 2015, 51). It also tried to destroy as many historical documents related to the CWS as possible. For these reasons, “comfort women’s” testimonies are very important for determining whether the CWS was sexual slavery or not.

Another important reason why Ramseyer should accept “comfort women’s” testimonies as credible evidence for Japanese military sexual slavery is that all governments, including the Japanese government, and all international human rights organizations, have used the victims’ testimonies as the most important pieces of evidence. The Kono Statement, which acknowledged the forced mobilization of “comfort women,” was based mainly on Japanese officials’ personal interviews with KCW (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1993), although it also used historical documents. Moreover, the Shimonoseki Branch of the Yamaguchi District Court accepted the forced mobilization of KCW based on three KCW plaintiffs’ testimonies (C. Kim, 1998).

Unlike Japanese historical revisionist politicians, human rights organizations accepted KCW’s testimonies as credible evidence and determined that the CWS was indeed sexual slavery.

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<sup>3</sup> I also used this quotation in my book (Min, 2021, 40-41).

In addition, the two most important resolutions to the Japanese government by major international human rights organizations were made mainly based on their interviews with South Korean, North Korean, or/and Filipino “comfort women’s” testimonies (Coomaraswamy, 1996; Dolgopal and Paranjape, 1994). These human rights organizations concluded that the CWS was a perfect form of sexual slavery, the term commonly used to refer to the CWS today. McDougall, another Special Rapporteur of UN Human Rights Commission, used the terms “rape centers” to refer to JMB (McDougall, 2015 [1997], 103). Although she did not include KCW’s testimonies in her report, she visited Seoul a few times to communicate with KCW.

International human rights organizations, politicians, and college students not only accepted comfort “women” survivors’ testimonies as credible evidence for sexual slavery, but also enthusiastically accepted them because they had a human face. Before comfort women survivors gave testimonies, no sexual victims had given open testimonies to the public. It is one of the reasons why KOC’s testimonies were enthusiastically accepted by participants in their testimonies.

A very important issue is not whether we can use “comfort women’s” testimonies as credible evidence or not, but whether the sample size of their testimonies is large enough to generalize the findings to all “comfort women.” Fortunately, the Korean Council and the Korean Research Institute on the *Chongshindae* (Korean Research Institute) conducted personal interviews with 103 KCW and published them in eight volumes between 1993 and 2004. They recruited several female volunteer professors, adjunct professors, and doctoral students who were qualified to conduct audio-recorded personal interviews with each chosen KCW. They interviewed those KCW who volunteered to participate in the project at their own homes. Each interviewer contacted the same KCW four to six times at different time periods for the sake of accuracy and consistency of information. As will be shown later, each personal interview group made an effort not to hide any finding, even inconvenient findings, such as voluntary participation in “comfort stations.” Given these facts, Ramseyer’s unfounded attack on the Korean Council for controlling “who scholars and reporters will see and what the women will say” (Ramseyer, 2022, 21) is not justified.

Moreover, 103 testimonies given by KCW constitute a sample large enough for statistical analyses, as well as the largest sample among several sets of Asian “comfort women’s” testimonies. Since every social group has a few or several deviant cases, we need to use the rule of the “majority” or the “vast majority” as the important criteria for determining whether KCW were sexual slaves or commercial sex workers. Eight volumes of the edited collections cover approximately 2,600 pages. Even if someone had read all eight volumes in their entirety, it would have been difficult to understand the overall picture of KCW’s forced mobilization to “comfort stations” and their brutal treatments without quantitative data included in tables.

Ramseyer rejected “comfort women’s” testimonies as credible evidence on the ground that “these scholars rely too heavily on the statements from a small group of “comfort women” who demanded compensation from Japan...” (Ramseyer, 2022, 23). He also said that “the hyper-nationalist version of what happened during this era on the Korean peninsula depends almost entirely on a small set of autobiographies” (Ramseyer, 2022, 17). I would like to respond that Ramseyer and other Japanese historical revisionists, rather than Korean redress activists, used a few or several cases of KCW to deny the CWS as sexual slavery. I hope that he will accept the major findings from my analyses of 103 KCW, a sample of KCW which is large enough, in this article.

Another major problem of Ramseyer’s 2021 article and 2022 paper is that he failed to differentiate between Japanese and Korean “comfort women,” as if they had been mobilized via the same mechanism and treated at JMB in the same ways. According to my own and other scholars’ research, there were significant differences between Japanese and Korean “comfort women” in

how they were mobilized, their ages at mobilization, fees that they were paid, and treatment that they received at JMB. By lumping the two very different groups together, he greatly distorted and misrepresented KCW's mobilization to JMB and the brutal treatment they endured at the hands of Japanese soldiers.

First of all, whereas most JCW originated from commercial prostitution houses in Japan (Hayashi, 2015, 110), the vast majority of KCW were mobilized through forcible methods from their homes, workplaces or outside, including employment fraud, helped by Japanese policemen, soldiers, and military police officers who were stationed in Korea. Thus, his arguments emphasizing commercial prostitution in the home country as the main source of "comfort women" is not applicable to KCW, though his argument may be more applicable to JCW than to KCW. But I also need to clearly point out that, as indicated by other scholars, both the recruitment of Japanese girls and women to Japanese licensed prostitution houses (Onozawa, 2022; Yoshimi, 2022, 1-3) and their subsequent mobilization to JMB (Hayashi, 2015, 115) were completely involuntary, never involving mutually-agreed labor contracts as indicated by Ramseyer.

There are several indicators of brutality that KCW experienced in the mode of their mobilization and their experiences in JMB. One important indicator is that most of them were taken there at unbelievably young ages. The age difference between JCW and KCW is as important as the mode of mobilization. As shown in Table 1 below, the vast majority of KCW were mobilized at extremely young ages: 93% of the 103 KCW were mobilized between the ages of 11 and 20 (Min, 2021, 84), which was under the legal age of 21 for prostitution at that time, according to Japanese law and three anti-trafficking international conventions Japan had joined (Yoshimi, 2000, 156). On the other hand, a vast majority of JCW were mobilized to "comfort stations" at age 21 or older (Hayashi, 2015, 110). Ramseyer indicated that recruits would have been between 16 and 30 (Ramseyer, 2022, 13). KCW were recruited at much younger ages than JCW to which Ramseyer seemed to have referred.

**Table 1<sup>4</sup>: Ages at which KCW were Mobilized to JMB**

Ages	Number	%
11-12	8	8
13-15	29	28
16-20	59	57
21-27	7	7
Total	103	100

**Sources:** testimonies of 103 KCW in Korean Council 2001 & 2004; Korean Council and Korean Research Institute 1993, 1997; Korean Council and Korean Research Institute, 1993, 2001a & 2001b; Korean Research Institute 2003; Korean Research Institute and Korean Council 1995 & 1999

Since 93% of KCW were under the legal age for becoming sex workers, almost all of them should be considered as having been forcefully mobilized, regardless of their modes of mobilization. According to three anti-traffic international treaties Japan joined respectively in 1904, 1910 and 1921 (Yoshimi 2000, 84), it was illegal to take underage girls 20 or younger for prostitution, regardless of whether they agreed or not. Moreover, the finding that nearly all KCW were mobilized before the legal age for commercial prostitution also proves the inadequacy of Ramseyer's and other Japanese scholars' (Norma 2016) claim that KCW were mobilized mainly from commercial prostitution houses, which was the case for most JCW.

<sup>4</sup> I also used this table in my book (Min, 2021, 84).

The Japanese military could not forcibly mobilize unmarried Japanese virgins to serve Japanese soldiers because there would have been a strong negative reaction in Japanese society. According to a historical document cited by Yoshimi, the Home Ministry's Chief of the Police Bureau stipulated that "the travel of women intending to engage in the shameful calling should be limited to the women currently working as sex workers, at least 21 years of age, and free from sexually transmitted and other infectious diseases" (Yoshimi, 2000, 100). Ramseyer indicated that "the recruits would be between 16 and 30 years old," but "most KCW were mobilized to JMB in their twenties" (Ramseyer, 2022, 13). Ramseyer's statement may be applicable to JCW, but not to KCW.

Yoshimi cited another meaningful sentence from the same historical document: "If the recruitment of these women and the regulation of [recruiting] agents is improper, it will not only compromise the authority of the empire and damage the honor of the Imperial Army; it will exert a baleful influence on citizens on the home front, especially on the families of soldiers who are stationed overseas" (Yoshimi, 2000, 154). This indicates the Japanese military government's concern about losing the trust not only of the international world, but also of Japanese citizens—especially Japanese soldiers—if it had mobilized Japanese virgins to JMB. These excerpts from Yoshimi's research also show that the Japanese military controlled the recruitment of "comfort women."

Moreover, these clarifications indicate that Ramseyer was negligent in his efforts to prove that Korean and Japanese "comfort women" were sex workers with labor contracts, without knowing the significant differences between the two groups. How could Korean girls and young women between the ages of 11 and 20 have voluntarily participated in "comfort stations" to make money? Since the *chongshindae* was associated with "comfort women" in Korea for many years, Korean women leaders' called their organization *Chongshindae Munje Daechaik Hyeopuihe* (The Association for the Resolution of the Chongshindae Issue) in November 1990.

Ramseyer has consistently denied the fact that most KCW were forcibly mobilized to JMB (Ramseyer, 2022, 3, 16), although he did not provide any evidence for his denial. He suggested that many women in war zones (China and other Asian occupied territories) are likely to have been dragged to JMB forcibly. But he strongly refused to accept the fact that most KCW were taken to JMB by coercive methods (Ramseyer, 2022, 3). He strongly believes that the claim about the forced mobilization of KCW largely started with Seiji Yoshida's book which Hata (1999) proved was fabricated. However, as already documented, Korean newspaper articles reported many stories of Korean girls' and young women's forced mobilization to JMB in the post-war years. Since social science knowledge is based on the rule of the majority or the vast majority, we need to examine KCW's testimonies in detail to determine whether most KCW or only a few or several KCW were forcibly mobilized to JMB. I provide results of a data analysis of 106 cases of KCW's mobilization (three women mobilized twice) to JMB in Table 2 below.

**Table 2<sup>5</sup>: Methods of KCW's Mobilization to JMB**

Methods of Mobilization	Number	%
mobilization by coercion at home, work or someone else's home	13	12
abducted or kidnapped outside of home	18	17
mobilized by a combination of employment fraud and coercion	16	15
employment fraud	39	37
sold by their parents and other relatives	14	13
voluntary or semi-voluntary participation	6	6
All	106	100

Testimonies of 103 KCW in Korean Council 2000a, 2000b & 2004; Korean Council and Korean Research Institute, 1993 & 1997; Korean Research Institute, 1995 & 2003; Korean Research Institute & Korean Council, 1999.

One hundred and six cases of mobilization (including three women who were mobilized twice) indicate that a vast majority (81%) were mobilized through coercive methods (44%), including kidnapping, abduction, being physically taken, or verbal threats or employment fraud (37%), with 13% mobilized through parents' sales of their daughters to others (mostly not directly to "comfort stations"). Only four women volunteered in their first mobilization, with two of them having volunteered in their second mobilization. Ramseyer indicated that many Koreans engaged in recruiting KCW using employment fraud. However, the testimonies indicate that the Japanese colonial government's officials in Korea used Japanese soldiers, police officers, teachers, Korean village heads, and other Korean recruiters in Korea. The forced mobilization of a huge number of KCW was part of the manpower exploitation of the Korean colony by Japan. Hundreds of thousands of other Korean women and men were forcibly mobilized as civilian workers while another hundreds of thousands of Korean men forced into battle as soldiers (Kang and Suh, 1997).

It seems that Ramseyer's definition of forced mobilization only applies to girls and young women who were physically taken at gunpoint (Ramseyer, 2022, 4). He agreed that many KCW were mobilized through employment fraud (Ramseyer, 2022, 3). However, like other Japanese historical revisionists, he does not consider employment fraud to be a forcible technique. He considers only the mobilization involving physical force and threats, but not deception, as forced mobilization conflicts with both the social science use of the term and legal decisions. Hayashi (2008) distinguished between a narrow and a broad definition of forced mobilization. First of all, taking young women using deception to a "comfort station" was a violation of criminal law in Japan at that time (Hayashi, 2015, 53). According to a historical document found by Etsuro Totsuka, the Nagasaki local court gave an illegal verdict to a Japanese recruiter who took a Japanese woman using deception to a "comfort station" in Shanghai in 1932 (Chung, 2016, 67). Moreover, Shinzo Abe and other Japanese politicians consider many Japanese citizens sent to North Korea through deception in the 1960s and 1970s as having been forcibly taken there against their will (Hayashi, 2015,70).

<sup>5</sup> I also used this table in my book (Min, 2021, 90).

I introduce a few examples of a KCW coercively mobilized to a JMB. Kim Yong-Ja was taken from her home to Manchuria by a Japanese police officer at the age of 16. She said that a recruiter often came to her village with a police officer and checked every home to take unmarried girls somewhere. One day, a police officer came to her home to take her:

At that time, I was very young and pretty, I was hiding at home so as not to get caught, but the police officer kept beating my father to find me. He poured water from a kettle into my father's nose to make him release me. So, I told my father I would go... Japanese police officers and soldiers visited all the houses in my village to find unmarried girls and then took them. They said that they would give me money, but they never gave money.... I heard my father was hospitalized and died a few days after I left home (Young-Ja Kim, 2001,103).<sup>6</sup>

Most KCW encountered physical violence, rape, and other forms of brutality on their way to JMB, regardless of their method of mobilization. Since Ramseyer may have never imagined the brutality that KCW encountered en route to JMB, I provide two examples here. Kim Ui-gyeong and about thirty other Korean women, mostly kidnapped, were put on a China-bound train and encountered brutal treatments by Japanese soldiers. They put the women in a freight car of a train reserved for transporting horses. Kim described what happened to them on their way to China:

The train suddenly stopped somewhere and many Japanese soldiers quickly moved to the train and wildly opened the door of the freight car. There were about thirty Korean women in the train. Japanese soldiers took all of us out of the train and tried to rape us. When we resisted as much as possible, they threatened us with swords and beat us with bayonets. My entire body was injured and blood-stained. A few women tried to run away to escape from this unbearable atrocity and were shot to death by Japanese soldiers. I only thought that I had been deceived to go there and that I might not be able to stay alive there (Kim, EK, 2003, 319-320).<sup>7</sup>

The majority of KCW were taken to train stations in Japan, China, and the Pacific Islands by ship from Busan to Shimonoseki or Hiroshima, and then to destinations elsewhere. When Yun Soon-man, at the age of thirteen, was kidnapped by Japanese soldiers at her home with her aunt and put in a military truck, she cried loudly, lying down inside the truck. The soldiers forcibly put strong sleeping pills into her mouth and sealed it with a mask (Yun, S. M, 2004, 173-174). When other Korean women found her in Osaka, she was almost unconscious and her tongue was paralyzed. They poured water into her mouth to save her life.

### 3. *Un-Owed Debts and No Payment of Fees for Sexual Services*

Ramseyer's assertions that all JCW and KCW received large advances with labor contracts before their mobilization to JMB have three major problems. First, my analyses of the 103 testimonies reveal that only some of 19 KCW who were sold or voluntarily participated seem to have received advance payments, with the vast majority of them having received no advance payments. Moreover, none of them reported having received a labor contract. The fact that he did not provide evidence for labor contracts, and that none of the 103 KCW reported having received any labor contract before their mobilization indicate that his labor-contract claim was his own

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<sup>6</sup> I also used this block quotation in my book (Min, 2021, 92).

<sup>7</sup> I also used this block quotation in my book (Min, 2021, 103).

design to deny the sexual slavery thesis. He tried to deflect criticisms that there was no physical evidence of labor contracts by saying that “the contracts seem not to have survived the war” (Ramseyer 2022, 34). This excuse is not logically sound because the Japanese military would have kept the document to show that the CWS was not sexual slavery, since the brothel owners ran “comfort stations” under the control of the Japanese military. Moreover, Ramseyer’s claim that “only the brothels and the women” had the contracts (Ramseyer, 2022, 12) has a serious empirical problem. It is almost impossible that all KCW have lost the documents for their labor contracts at JMB or on their return trips. Moreover, how is it possible that none of the 103 KCW mentioned labor contracts in testimonies? It is impossible that all of them lost their memories of labor contracts.

All KCW having received large advances before their mobilization means that they owned debts amounting to the same advance payments to pay back to the owners of JMB. However, my analyses of 103 KCW’s testimonies indicate that the owners of JMB charged **un-owed debts** to most KCW illegally by charging them with expenses for their recruitment, transportation, and even new clothing.

I introduce the following two KCW’s testimonies to show their illegal practice. Han Gun-Ja recounted:

A Korean man in military uniform took me to a Korean couple in Seoul. The couple took me to a “comfort station” in Manchuria by train. When they arrived at the “comfort station,” the female owner told me how much money she gave the two Korean men for taking me to her and also how much money they spent for train fares and the purchase of my clothes. They said that I should sell my body to pay back my debts. They told me to work for three years at the “comfort station” to pay back my debt (Ha Gun-Ja, 1995, 65).

Park Yeon-i’s following testimony also indicates that the owner included not only her recruitment and transportation fees, but also cosmetic expenses in her debts. Moreover, she could not disagree to the owner about her debts because she would beat her:

Although I worked very hard not to make the owner dislike me, I was paid nothing for three years. Her calculation of my debts included all expenses for my recruitment and transportation from my home village, and all expenses for my living costs at the “comfort station,” including cosmetics. We were expected to accept our debts that the owner calculated. Otherwise, she would have beaten us (Park Yeon-I, 1997, 128-129).

If KCW had volunteered to participate in “comfort stations,” the owners could have charged them expenses for their recruitment and transportation. But it was illegal for the owners to have charged these forcibly mobilized women. The owners seem to have designed the **un-owed** debt system to tie the women to “comfort stations” for a long period of time. The Japanese military should have known of the owners’ illegal practice of charging un-owed debts to “comfort women.” But the Japanese military may have approved of it because it gave the impression that “comfort women” were charged with debts because they had been mobilized voluntarily or through sales by their parents with major advances from the owners of “comfort stations.” This finding from KCW’s testimonies is important because no scholar seems to have indicated the problem of the **un-owed debts** issue, which is why I have put the term **un-owed debts** in bold. It also indirectly

shows the inadequacy of Ramseyer's claim that all KCW participated in "comfort stations" with advance payments based on contracts.

My analyses of KCW's testimonies also show the inadequacy of Ramseyer's argument that KCW made a lot of money at "comfort stations." At JMB, only eight of 103 KCW were found to have received 40% or more of fees paid by Japanese soldiers to the front desk only in the last stage of their sexual servitude, mainly because they had been assigned to officers' clubs (five) or houses of prostitution (three) (Min, 2021, 110). However, the Japanese military established officers' clubs mainly to prevent high-ranking Japanese officers from using private prostitution houses (Hayashi, 2015, 117). The military seems to have arranged for JCW to work at officers' clubs. A predominant majority of "comfort women" working for officers' clubs are likely to have been JCW (Kurahashi and Keyser, 1994; Ueno, 2004, 101; Yoshimi, 2000, 101). Thus, more JCW were paid significant portions of fees than KCW, which is another difference between the two groups. My statistical analysis reveals that 64% of KCW reported that they were not paid any amount of money by the owners of "comfort stations," with 11% giving no information (Min 2021, 110). All KCW reported that almost all Japanese officers paid them some tips, with many enlisted soldiers having paid small amounts of tips. However, receiving tips has nothing to do with labor contracts.

Ramseyer misrepresented Mun Ok-ju's testimony. He characterized Mun as a happy woman who enjoyed her life at a "comfort station" and made a lot of money (Ramseyer, 2021, 6). I believe that Ramseyer exaggerated Mun's earnings and misrepresented her experiences as a "comfort woman" by ignoring some of the brutality that she was subjected to. For example, she narrowly escaped getting killed by a drunken Japanese officer by taking his sword and injuring him. Moreover, she also attempted suicide by jumping from the second floor at her "comfort station," sustaining serious shoulder injuries (Mun, 1993, 160-161); these incidents are major life-threatening events. She did not work at an officers' club, but she was physically close to one. The Japanese military seems to have treated high-ranking officers very well, giving them high salaries and frequent parties to make them fight loyally for the Japanese empire. In testimonies, some KCW disclosed that officers' clubs organized frequent drinking parties. Mun was fluent in Japanese and had musical talents. Thus, she was made to work as an entertainer at parties at night at an officer's club (Mun, 1993, 162). Drunken officers seem to have paid very generous tips to "comfort women." But, as pointed out above, these tips had no connection with labor contracts.

Ramseyer argued that we do not need to make a distinction between tips and fees that "comfort women" received (Ramseyer, 2022, 37). It is an unacceptable argument to deflect the main issue under consideration. Japanese soldiers paid tips whereas "comfort station" owners paid fees to "comfort women" for their services to Japanese soldiers. To answer the question of whether KCW were paid for their forced sexual services or not, we can only include formal fees they received from "comfort station" owners. As already pointed out, only a very small proportion of KCW (8%) received regular fees, but all Japanese officers and a small proportion of regular Japanese soldiers paid tips to KCW. Ramseyer emphasized the labor contracts between "comfort station" owners and "comfort women." How then could he include tips in the fees?

Ramseyer emphasized that Ok-ju Mun had made a great amount of money at her "comfort station." However, because of the astronomically high inflation in Burma and other war-torn Asian countries, what was over 25,000 yen in Rangoon, Burma in the 1943 was valued at 1,800 yen in Japan in the December 1943 (Hayashi, 2015, 57; see also Yoshimi 2021, 16). Moreover, the Japanese government did not allow KCW to withdraw money deposited in Japanese post office accounts or banks during the war. When Mun visited Shimonoseki to testify in 1993, a Japanese group tried to assist her in getting her deposit money back (H. Kim, 2007, 138). The group identified Mun's Japanese post office account and found that the balance had increased to 50,108 yen in the early 1990s (H. Kim, 2007,139).



However, the post office refused to give the money to her on the grounds that she was no longer a Japanese citizen after the 1952 Treaty of San Francisco, and that the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations covered all of the damages inflicted by Japan's colonization of Korea. Japanese post offices and banks refused to give back money to many other Korean civilian workers and soldiers mobilized by the Japanese military government, but the Japanese government has refused to disclose forcibly mobilized Koreans' savings (Dong-A Ilbo, 1992). Deflecting to answer this important question, Ramseyer said that "Mun seems to have had no trouble in getting the money back if she had deposited in yen" (Ramseyer 2022, 51). Of course, all Korean forcibly mobilized soldiers, workers and comfort women deposited savings in Japanese banks and post offices in yen.

#### 4. *Forced Sexual Services and Brutal Treatments under Tight Surveillance at JMB*

While the above-mentioned points address a number of fallacies in Ramseyer's argument that the CWS was a contract-based prostitution system and not sexual slavery, I would like to mention two final problems that make his position indefensible. In order to reject the sexual slavery thesis, it is necessary to demonstrate that KCW provided sexual services for Japanese soldiers voluntarily and could leave JMB when they wanted. However, testimonial data show that KCW suffered brutal sexual violence under tight surveillance at JMB and were not allowed to freely move.

First of all, I want to show that KCW encountered brutal sexual violence. As noted above, the vast majority of KCW were mobilized to JMB as teenagers, most of whom had had no previous sexual experience. Most of them may not have even started their menstrual cycles yet. Thus, most of them suffered vaginal ruptures, severe pain, and/or excessive bleeding especially after their first nights at JMB. According to my analysis of 103 testimonies, 61% of KCW suffered vaginal ruptures, severe pain, or excessive bleeding, with 39% having become infertile (Min 2021, 129). This is an undercount because several KCW women did not comment specifically on their sexual activities. The sexual attacks on KCW during their first nights must have been a shocking experience because the vast majority of them never expected to sexually serve Japanese soldiers.

Kang Mu-ja was forcibly taken to the Japanese military police warehouse in Masan, Korea by a Japanese policeman and three Japanese military policemen. She was shipped to a Japanese "comfort station." She described being brutally gang-raped in her first encounter with Japanese soldiers:

First, they stripped me naked, and then a few Japanese military officers with two or three stars quickly rushed to me one by one for serial rapes. I became almost unconscious. But they did not care whether I was dying or not. Their serial sexual attacks burst my vagina, which led to heavy bleeding and pain. When I tried to resist their sexual attacks, they tied my legs with my cotton belt so that I could not run away. When the third guy could not start sex quickly, he put his finger into my vagina. So, I kicked him a few times and he fell and hit his head on the floor. I screamed, cursing them in Korean and saying, "I am a human being too!" Later, five more soldiers raped me, and my nose and mouth started bleeding as well. My entire body was almost paralyzed (Mu-ja Kang, 1997, 55).<sup>8</sup>

Ramseyer argued that "comfort women" could quit when they paid their advances (Ramseyer, 2022, 49). As already pointed out, most KCW did not receive advances, but they were charged with **un-owed debts** based on their recruitment and transportation fees. Moreover, only

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<sup>8</sup> I also included this block quotation in my book (Min 2021, 129).

eight KCW were allowed to leave after paying off their debts, with four of them paid by themselves and the other four paid by others (Min,2021,117). Byong-jik Ahn, a Korean professor, published a book based on a Korean "comfort station" manager's diaries (Ahn, 2013). In his book, he suggested that not all "comfort women" were allowed to leave their JMB when they paid off debts, and that "their ability to leave depended upon the demand for and supply of comfort women" (Ahn, 2013, 117). Tessa Morris-Suzuki supports Ahn's suggestion based on a third-party interview about a group of KCW in Burma: "But in fact, 'owing to the war conditions, none of the women brought by Kitamura was actually allowed to return home; 'the one girl who fulfilled these conditions and wished to return was easily persuaded to remain'" (Morris Suzuki, 2015, 9).

The small number of KCW who were allowed to leave JMB after payment of debts were very lucky. Most KCW had been detained within "comfort stations" under tight supervision until the end of the war. The Japanese military and the owners/managers of "comfort stations" kept a close eye on the women and did not allow them to communicate with one another to prevent their running away. They also warned the women that they would be severely punished if they were caught trying to escape. Helped by an elderly Chinese laborer at the same "comfort station," Jeong Hak-su, a KCW, tried to escape. After changing her clothing in a private Chinese home during dark night hours, she was escaping toward a mountain as directed by the Chinese elderly man (Jeong, H. S.,1995, 162). She found two other Korean women who were escaping from another "comfort station." As the three women were running away together, Japanese soldiers chased after them and threw a grenade toward them. Jeong said that she was injured on her left leg by a piece of the grenade, while the other two women were killed. This is a brutal story that is radically different from Ramseyer's story of KCW voluntarily participating with labor contracts and being able to leave "comfort stations" whenever they wanted.

The other strategy used to prevent escape was to show the women horrible scenes of violence, such as Japanese soldiers gang-raping Chinese women and then killing them. Jeong Hak-su's testimony illustrates the atrocity of Japanese soldiers:

One day, the owner summoned all of us and took us to a garden in a factory in Harbin. A little later, Japanese soldiers brought many Chinese women with their hands tied. They stripped off the Chinese women's clothing and tied each woman's legs and hands to a wooden panel. These cruel Japanese soldiers then raped the Chinese women in different ways and interrogated them. Many soldiers lined up, waiting for their turns to rape them. Spraying chili powder on their pubic areas and stabbing their bodies with swords or knives, Japanese soldiers were enjoying watching the women suffering from their brutal actions. Some soldiers spread gasoline on their bodies to burn them (H. Jeong, 1995, 160).<sup>9</sup>

Jeong said that after witnessing these scenes, KCW no longer dared resist the Japanese soldiers' brutal treatment and had no choice but to remain at "comfort stations." She did not say in the testimony quoted above what crimes these Chinese women had committed. But another testimony also indicates that Japanese soldiers showed KCW a similar scene of cruelly killing Chinese soldiers for alleged espionage (J. Bae, 1997, 78-79). Thus, the Chinese women in Jeong's account seem to have played the role of spies to help Chinese soldiers secretly. The foregoing analyses demonstrate that all KCW, regardless of how they were mobilized to JMB, were brutally treated as sexual slaves with no freedom to leave as they wished. I wonder how Ramseyer can

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<sup>9</sup> I also included this block quotation in my book (Min 2021, 139).

reconcile his argument for the freedom of KCW to leave JMB with Japanese soldiers' brutal treatments of KCW at JMB, used as a means of threatening them not to run away.

With no data or estimation provided, Ramseyer claimed that "There is no evidence that there were 200,000 Korean comfort women. The number is somewhere around 5,000" (Ramseyer, 2020, 23). I agree that 200,000, a number that is frequently mentioned by scholars of "comfort women" and redress activists, is likely exaggerated. But the Japanese government's refusal to release data related to the CWI is mainly responsible for scholars' and redress activists' use of possibly inaccurate or exaggerated numbers.

I also would like to point out that Ramseyer's suggested number of KCW (5,000) is much smaller than the actual number. I estimate the total number of KCW was much larger than his suggested number for the following reasons. First, a historical document analyzed by Yoshimi (2000,108) indicates that the Kwangtung Army in Shanghai asked the governor-general of Korea to round up 20,000 KCW in 1941 alone, but that only 8,000 Korean women were actually rounded up and sent to Shanghai. The fact that the Japanese Army tried to round up such a large number of Korean women in one year suggests that the number of total KCW mobilized to JMB between 1932 and 1945 was much larger than 5,000. Moreover, the historical document Yoshimi used also suggests that the Japanese Army targeted women from Korea, its main colony, for the mobilization of "comfort women." Also, the 1937-1940 report shows that 51% of 14,755 Japanese soldiers in China with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) had a Korean sexual partner, with 37% having a Chinese partner, and 12% having a Japanese partner (Ibid., 94-95). These findings suggest that KCW may have comprised the largest national group.

Ramseyer and other Japanese historical revisionists may have claimed that the number of all KCW was small because all KCW survivors who came forward for testimonies in the 1990s was relatively small (239 survivors in South Korea and approximately 150 survivors in North Korea = 489). However, the number reflects a tiny fraction of total KCW mobilized. Almost all KCW were assigned to JMB consisting predominantly of other Korean women. But all 103 KCW survivors who responded to the personal narrative project were found to have stayed at different "comfort stations." This finding suggests (1) that a significant proportion of KCW may have died, been killed, or committed suicide at JMB, (2) that the predominant majority of KCW survivors seem to have had died before the early 1990s (remember that they were in their late sixties or early seventies in the early 1990s), and that (3) some KCW survivors did not emerge to society intentionally in the 1990s because of stigma attached to the victims of sexual violence.

My suggestions above are also partly based on the following facts. Many KCW survivors stayed at "comfort stations" with large numbers of KCW, but their testimonies indicate that they were the only KCW survivor from each "comfort station" in the early 1990s when they reported to the Korean government. For example, Yun Duri in Busan, South Korea was sent to a "comfort station" located in the same city (Yun, Du-ri, 1993, 288-289). She reported that the "comfort station" had 45 "comfort women," all Korean women. But no other KCW survivor who reported to the Korean government in the 1990s was found to have stayed at the same "comfort station." My suggestions above are also partly based on historical data and fieldwork showing that many KCW were stationed in Okinawa and its adjacent islands (H.S. Lee, 1992, 393), but no KCW who stayed there reported to the Korean government.<sup>10</sup> Also, a research team from Seoul National University Human Rights Center reported based on U.S. military documents in December 2017 that it discovered the names and photos of 26 KCW who suffered sexual servitude at "comfort stations" in the Chuuk Islands in Micronesia (D. Park, 2017). The 26 KCW were on the list of people who took a repatriation ship to Japan and Korea, but only one of those women reported to

<sup>10</sup> Pong-gi Pae was the only KCW survivor who was forcibly mobilized to a JMB in Okinawa and trapped there after the end of the war. See Fumaki Kawad, 1992.

the Korean government in the 1990s. The other women are believed to have died before the early 1990s.

## **Critiques of Ramseyer in Connection with the Redress Movement**

This section is divided into four subsections. The first subsection focuses on Ramseyer's unjustified attacks on the Korean Council & its redress activities. The second section looks at the Japanese government and historical revisionists' engagement in "history wars" in the 2010s and its influence on Ramseyer. The third section focuses on the increase in right-wing history denialists' organizations in South Korea during recent years.

### *1. Ramseyer's Unjustified attacks on the Korean Council and Its Redress Activities.*

Ramseyer made severe attacks on the Korean Council and its redress activities. Read his following paragraph:

One organization lies in the heart of the current dispute with Japan; unfortunately, it is an organization that manipulates the dispute in relentless opposition to reconciliation with Japan. The organization was long known as the Chong Dae Hyup (CDH), the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery.... It pressured the former comfort women to reject compensation offered by Japan.... It brutally attacks scholars who would question the "sex slave" narrative so passionately embraced by scholars in the West... And it has long been headed by Yoon Mi-hyang ... CDH controls most of the public testimony by the comfort women. It maintains its ability to do so by collaborating in the operation of a nursing home—the House of Nanumu—for the women who recount the stories it wants told (Soh, 2008, 96). As political scientists Joseph Yi (2018) put it, the prevailing narratives of abductions is based on the oral testimonies of a small number of women (16 of 238 registered survivors), associated with activist organizations (e.g. House of Sharing [e.g. nursing home]; Korean Council [i.e., CDH] (Yi, 2018). By helping to control Nanumu, CDH who scholars and reporters will see and what the women will say (Ramseyer, 2022, 21).

In order to criticize the Korean Council and its redress activities adequately, Ramseyer needs to conduct research on them. The above paragraph shows his ignorance of the Korean Council's major redress activities and the women leaders who have led the organization. He mischaracterizes both the organization and its redress activities. I make a critical comment on the second paragraph first. The Korean Council and the House of Sharing are two separate redress organizations. While the Korean Council focuses on redress activities, the House of Sharing is the place of residence for several (8-12) KCW. But both organizations separately took one or two KCW to give public testimonies in Japan, the United States, and international human rights organizations in the 1990s and the 2000s. There are three other redress organizations located outside of Seoul, and one located in Daegu also separately sent a KCW, usually Lee Yong-su, to Japan and the United States for public testimonies. Accordingly, there is no way that the Korean Council controlled KCW's public testimonies. Scholars and reporters contacted each organization for personal interviews or to make documentary films. Ramseyer cited Joseph Yi, a Korean historical revisionist, to support his argument. But Yi is one of most active Korean historical revisionists who maintains a close relationship with him (Yi 2019).

As already pointed out in the previous section, the Korean Council and Korean Research Institute, its sister research organization, published **eight edited volumes of 103 personal**

**narratives between 1993 and 2004.** But neither organization controlled the oral testimonies. Both organizations depended upon more than a dozen voluntary women faculty members to complete each volume of their oral testimonies. Each volunteer researcher visited only one KCW's home and conducted a personal-narrative interview four to six times for each woman. There is no way the Korean Council controlled the contents of "comfort women's" personal narratives. To reiterate, the eight volumes include **103** KCW's personal narratives. This is the largest collection of "comfort women's" personal narratives collected in Asian countries. Given the fact of 103 KCW's personal narratives, Joseph Yi's claim that the Korean Council collected only 16 KCW's personal narratives is false.

Ramseyer seems to know only Mee-hyang Yoon associated with the Korean Council. But thirty-seven major women's organizations in South Korea collectively established the organization in November 1990 to formally start the redress movement. Its key leaders in the 1990s and 2000s included four professors (Chung-ok Yun, Hyo-chae Lee, Chin-sung Chung, and Hei-soo Shin) who had received Ph.D. degrees from U.S. universities and who were fluent in English and Japanese. Chung-ok Yun, its founder, felt guilty about KCW because she had been able to avoid forced mobilization to a JMB by virtue of her parents' much higher class-background. As a result, she began to conduct fieldwork in Japan at her own expense at the age of 55. By virtue of their fluency in English, the aforementioned professors were effectively able to spread awareness of the CWI and persuade people in the United States and several international human rights organizations to put pressure on the Japanese government. The Korean Council has had a dozen board members consisting of Korean women's movement leaders who focused on getting donations from Korean citizens. Moreover, it had a sister organization, the Korean Research Institute for the *Chongshindae* (Research Institute), consisting of professors and adjunct professors of history and social sciences until the mid-2010s. The members focused on conducting research on the CWI, locating KCW trapped in China and the Pacific Islands, and helping them return to Korea. They also provided services to KCW by visiting each regularly.

Ramseyer criticized the Korean Council for having rejected the Asian Women's Fund, in the following paragraph: "CDH made its threats against the women credible when Japan first offered compensation in 1995. Determined to sabotage the coming reproachment, it ordered the women to refuse the payments. Some took the money anyway" (Ramseyer, 2022. 22). This criticism mischaracterizes what happened in connection with the Korean Council's effort to reject the Asian Women's Fund. To rectify his mischaracterization, I provide a clarification below.

First of all, Ramseyer's consideration of the Japanese government's plan to use the \$20,000 compensation based on Japanese citizens' donations (the AWF) to resolve the CWI as its sincere effort to achieve "reconciliation" between Japan and other Asian victim countries is dead wrong. All Asian redress organizations and major international human rights organizations rejected the AWF as a solution to resolve the CWI. For reconciliation between Japan and other Asian victim countries, the Japanese government needs to acknowledge the CWS as sexual slavery and make a sincere apology and compensation using the government's fund. As a professor at a prominent law school, Ramseyer should have known these requirements for the formal solution to the CWI. International human rights organizations gave the Japanese government the following six requirements to resolve the CWI: (1) reveal details about the "comfort women" system through an investigation, (2) acknowledge the "comfort women" system as sexual slavery, (3) make a sincere apology to the victims, (4) compensate the victims (using its state fund), (5) include information about sexual slavery in Japanese history textbooks and install "comfort women" memorials in Japan, and (6) punish Japanese soldiers and officials responsible for the establishment of "comfort stations." The Japanese government could have resolved the CWI honorably in the latter half of

the 1990s if it had met three of the requirements (2,3, and 4). But the AWF did not meet any of these requirements.

In the paragraph cited above, Ramseyer criticized members of the Korean Council for having used threats to KCW to prevent them from receiving money from the AWF. Again, this accusation has no basis. Staff members of the Korean Council tried to teach KCW about the importance of the Japanese government's acknowledgment of the CWS as sexual slavery, a sincere apology and compensation to resolve the issue. But it was difficult to teach them partly because of their lack of formal education (only 7% completed elementary school) and partly because of their long years of poverty. Thus, it was quite natural that the compensation money of \$20,000 was very attractive to most of them. Moreover, despite the adamant opposition of staff members of the Korean Council and many international human rights organizations, Japanese leaders of the AWF<sup>11</sup> sent officials in January 1997 to KCW's homes to persuade them to accept the compensation money. On January 11, 1997, staff members of the AWF in Korea announced that seven KCW had received \$20,000 from the AWF secretly (C. Chung, 2016: 206). By announcing the news about the reception of the AWF by these women but not disclosing their names, Japanese officials further encouraged other KCW to accept the AWF. Naturally, the staff members of the Korean Council were angry about Japanese officials who had designed this inadequate solution and tried to drive a wedge between the redress organization and KCW. The Korean Council contacted KCW and tried to persuade them not to accept it, but never threatened any of them, as Ramseyer claimed. Thus, it was the AWF, rather than the Korean Council, that was responsible for the tension and conflict created between the Korean Council and some KCW.

In 1997, the Korean Council persuaded Kim Dae-jung, a presidential candidate of South Korea, to pay each surviving KCW about \$20,000 using the government fund when he would be elected president so that they did not have to accept the "charity money" from the AWF. As expected, Kim was elected president in early 1998. His administration paid about \$20,000 to each KCW survivor, with the exception of those seven women who had already received the amount from the AWF secretary. When KCW received \$20,000 from the Korean government, they signed to make sure they would not receive another \$20,000 from the AWF. However, the AWF released data, indicating that the 61 KCW had received \$20,000 from the AWF as of 2007 (Wada, 2015, 221). This means that altogether, 68 (42%) of the 163 KCW eligible for the compensation in 1997 received it from the AWF. The Korean Council never investigated who had received the AWF after receiving the same amount from the Korean government. The AWF officials made great efforts to ensure that nearly all KCW accepted the compensation money for ten years (1997-2007) so that they could make the claim that they formally resolved the issue with compensation to the victims, but the majority of KCW refused the compensation money.

In the process of rejecting the AWF, many KCW were transformed from victims into activists. The foregoing clarification indicates the inadequacy of Ramseyer's claim that members of the Korean Council controlled KCW with threats to prevent them from accepting AWF. It also shows the inadequacy of Ramseyer's claim that the Korean Council neglected the welfare of KCW by preventing them from receiving the AWF. In addition, the foregoing analysis also indicates that Moto's (2018) claim cited by Ramseyer (2022: 21) that "several comfort women sued CDH to try to retake control over their movement" is nonsense.

Despite Ramseyer's emphasis on their conflicts over the AWF, staff members of the Korean Council helped many KCW transform from the victims of sexual slavery into activists. The frequent interactions of key staff members of the Korean Council and several key KCW activists with influential women's human rights activists at international meetings, conferences,

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<sup>11</sup> The AWF indicates both the \$20,000 fund and the Japanese organization that created and managed the fund.

and hearings helped them recognize that sexual violence during wartime is an important women's human rights issue (Min, 2021, 180). They came to learn the tragic stories of huge numbers of women who were victims of rape, torture, and murder during wars in Bosnia, Rwanda, Congo, and other countries (M. Yoon, 2016, 237-24). On March 8, 2012, Kim Bok-dong and Gil Won-ok, two key KCW activists, held a press conference to announce their proposal to start the Butterfly Fund. Yoon quoted the following comments by Gil at the press conference:

It is unimaginably difficult for children to understand it. I was taken to a battlefield at the age of 13 and I am now 85 years old. I lived for 72 years with pain. But we have learned that many women in other countries are still suffering from sexual violence in war zones as we did. If we receive reparations from the Japanese government, we will use the money to establish the Butterfly Fund to help the victims of sexual violence (quoted from M. Yoon 2016, 266).

They called it the Butterfly Fund to emphasize their wish for all women to fly like a butterfly, free from discrimination, oppression, and violence. Although Gil did not complete elementary school, she offered her comment like a well-educated activist.

The news about the Butterfly Fund moved the hearts of many Koreans. Many Koreans, including a famous singer, immediately donated money for the fund (Ibid., 268). The Korean Council began to send money in the name of the Butterfly Fund to an advocacy organization for the victims of sexual violence in Congo in March 2012. Many women in Congo were subjected to rape and other forms of violence by enemy soldiers in the twenty-year war that ended in 2013 (Caste and Kippenberg, 2002). The Korean Council has regularly sent money to support the child victims of sexual violence in Congo. It also sent a team to Congo in 2014 to visit organizations that support the victims and their children with a fund and a message of peace (M.H. Yoon, 2016, 237-245). Kim Bok-dong donated \$50,000 to the fund in 2015. I have added the Butterfly Fund story here to let Ramseyer understand that the main goal of the Korean Council is not to help KCW get the compensation money from Japan, but to make the Japanese government acknowledge the crime of sexual slavery and sincerely apologize to the victims to bring justice and dignity to them,

In the above and other paragraphs (Ramseyer, 2022, 28), Ramseyer depicted the Korean Council as the most anti-Japanese organization. Of course, as the most important redress organization in Asian countries, it has pushed the Japanese government very hard to acknowledge the CWS as sexual slavery and to accept other responsibilities recommended by international human rights organizations. However, criticizing the Japanese government and putting pressure on it, which is the main role of the organization, does not mean that it has engaged in anti-Japanese activities. The organization has closely coordinated with many Japanese citizens and Japanese civic groups over a thirty-year period of redress activities. Since Ramseyer considered the CWI mainly as a political conflict between Japan and Korea rather than as an important women's human rights issue, he has labelled any redress activities, including those in the United States, as anti-Japanese.

I would like to remind Ramseyer that many Japanese citizens and civic organizations have strongly supported the redress movement. In fact, there was more support in Japan than in Korea in the early days of the redress movement. I introduce here some prominent cases of individual and organizational support for the redress movement in Japan that moved my and other Korean citizens' hearts (Min, 2020). For example, many Japanese women and women's organizations donated large amounts of money or collected donations from others for the construction of the War and Women's Human Rights Museum established in 2012 by the Korean Council. They include an elderly Japanese woman who donated half of her property she had inherited from her parents

and entered a nursing home, and a retired Japanese school teacher who donated half of her pension money (Korean Council, 2014, 256). Also, a group of approximately 500 Japanese citizens collected nearly six million yen to help the House of Sharing construct the Historical Museum of Japanese Military Comfort Women in the 1990s (Min, 2021, 75). Hirofumi Hayashi, a professor of politics and peace studies at Kanto Gakuin University in Yokohama, helped the Korean Council with data and the House of Sharing with a donation for the construction of the historical museum. He also organized field trips for his students to the House of Sharing almost every year before 2017 (Min 2021, 211). Many Japanese lawyers helped the Council in international matters in the 1990s. In particular, Etsuro Totsuka spent almost ten years (most of the 1990s) in explaining to the UN Commission on Human Rights the “comfort women” system’s violations of many UN human rights regulations and international treaties (Totsuka, 1999). Also, many Japanese lawyers individually helped Asian redress organizations and “comfort women” make lawsuits against the Japanese government. Finally, whenever I participated in the weekly Wednesday demonstration held in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul, I witnessed a few or several Japanese citizens participating in it to support the redress movement.

There are many Japanese organizations that have led the redress movement independently and/or helped the Korean Council in Japan. I introduce here only major organizations. The Center for Research and Documentation on Japan’s War Responsibility (JWRC) has been the most important Japanese redress organization for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery. It has been led by two major Japanese “comfort women” scholars, Yoshiaki Yoshimi and Hirofumi Hayashi. But the members include many other lawyers, writers, and scholars. As the name of the organization indicates, its main goal has been to disclose historical facts related not only to Japanese military sexual slavery, but also to the Japanese military’s use of chemical weapons against civilians in China. JWRC often published responses to the Japanese government’s denials of responsibility for sexual slavery. Another important Japanese organization that supported the Korean Council’s international activities was the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA). The Korean Council wanted to take the sexual slavery issue to the CPA (the Court of Permanent Arbitration) at the end of 1994 to find out whether the Japanese government was legally responsible for the “comfort women” issue or not. JFBA tried to persuade the Japanese government to accept international arbitration from this court. More than 70 Japanese lawyers and 55 Korean lawyers made a team and were preparing to defend the Korean Council’s position (Min 2021, 212). But the Japanese government rejected the idea of international arbitration apparently because it was likely to lose in the arbitration. Violence Against Women in War Network (VAWW-NET Japan) was a major Japanese women’s organization established in 1998 by Yayori Matsui, a late prominent Japanese women’s activist. Its major achievement for the redress movement was a proposal for the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery (JMSS) and a successful completion of it, along with the Korean Council, in December 2000.

As summarized in the above paragraphs, many Japanese citizens and redress organizations actively participated in the redress movement and took actions to put pressure on the Japanese government mainly because, like members of the Korean Council, they considered JMSS as a major women’s human rights issue and partly because they may have felt guilty as citizens of the perpetrating country. They made Japan internationally honorable by acknowledging the Japanese military’s historical crimes and tried to take actions to bring justice and dignity to other Asian victims. I wonder if Ramseyer would consider these Japanese redress activists, like members of the Korean Council, as anti-Japanese activists.

Ramseyer’s paper showed his tendency to label Mi-hyang Yoon, the Korean Council, and its other members as communists, leftists, or North Korean connections (Ramseyer 2022, 17, 21, 22, & 28). In his online address given to enthusiastic members of a young Japanese neo-nationalist



internet organization in April 2021, “he referred to his critics as Stalinists and accused humanities in the United States of harboring anti-Japanese bias” (Curtis,2021, 4). His tendency to label progressive “comfort women” scholars and activists as political leftists makes his article and papers unacademic. Moreover, it seems to unconsciously reflect his strong linkages to Japanese neo-nationalist organizations. His tendency to label “comfort women” scholars and redress activists as nationalists, communists, or leftists is unlikely to promote tolerance, which he accused Koreans of lacking

##### 5. *Emergence and Acceleration of the History Denialist Movement in Japan*

The mid-1990s (1993-1995) was the best period in Japan during which the Japanese coalition government was willing to resolve the CWI honorably by acknowledging the forced mobilization of Asian “comfort women.” But the emergence of strong historical revisionist organizations and the Liberal Democratic Party’s consolidation of power since the latter half of the 1990s has contributed to the rejection of the Japanese government and right-wing Japanese historical revisionists to acknowledge Japanese military sexual slavery. The first strong Japanese historical revisionist organization was the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform established in January 1997. Its leaders were Nobukatsu Fujioka, Kobayashi Yoshinori, Kanji Nishino and Ikihuko Hata. They established the central principles of the right-wing Japanese historical denialism through their influential books and activities.

Since Ramseyer’s arguments for “comfort women” as commercial sex workers with labor contracts are very similar to Japanese historical revisionist’s arguments, I introduce here key arguments included in a very popular book written by Nobutkasu Fugioka and his associates (key Japanese historical revisionists). They gave the following arguments about the CWI in their two-volume book:

- (1) There was no evidence that the Japanese military forcibly mobilized “comfort women,” as JMBs were privately run;
- (2) it was unfair to single out the Japanese military prostitution system when other countries and Japanese society used essentially the same system during World War II;
- (3) taxpayers’ money was being used to lead Japanese students to feel ashamed of their ancestors and their being Japanese; and
- (4) history textbooks included information about the CWI mainly because of “media pressure” (Fujioka, et. al.,1996, 25-29).

With no data provided, they claimed that a woman’s income at a “comfort station” was on average three times as much as she could earn at a house of prostitution, and that she earned a hundred times more than a regular soldier could make at the time (ibid, p.39). But the main fallacy of their claims is that they have to write their history in such a way that students feel proud of it and being Japanese. It means that Japanese revisionist historians can distort facts to write their view of history. Nevertheless, Hein and Seldon (2000) indicated that the above two volumes of the book became two of the top ten best sellers in Japan at the time of publication.

Japanese diplomats and historical revisionist leaders were irritated by an increasing number of Korean “comfort women” memorials installed in public places and the sexual slavery story included in history textbooks in the United States in the early 2010s. They made all efforts to block constructing “comfort women” memorials and including the “comfort women” slavery story in media, history textbooks and school curricula. Nevertheless, their historical revisionist interventions in the United States suffered legal and academic defeats (Phyllis Kim, 2020;

Mirkinson, 2020; Yamaguchi 2020, 243-258). *Sankei Shimbun*, the most conservative Japanese daily, called the United States the main battlefield of "history wars."

In her article in this special issue, Yamaguchi indicates that the Japanese government increased the budget for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 70 billion yen in 2015 to strengthen "strategic communications." "Strategic communications" mean Japanese diplomats correcting wrong information about Japan and Japanese history in foreign media and books. The main problem of "strategic communications" is that Japanese diplomats have tried to impose their views of Japanese historical or territorial issues, such as the CWI and Nanjing Massacre without checking facts. When Shinjo Abe or Japanese diplomats complained about the installment of a Korean "comfort women" memorial in the United States, they usually started their complaints with the statement, "Japanese military sexual slavery conflicts with 'our stance.'" "Our "stance" means our view or position, which conflicts with a widely accepted view of the CWS as sexual slavery.

Yamaguchi points out that "strategic communications" also include "expanding the circle of people with a great ability toward or knowledge of Japan, especially scholars, journalists and politicians outside of Japan, and that Ramseyer was considered an ideal person in this category. In particular, Japanese right-wingers were concerned about the lack of academic books and peer-reviewed articles in English published through prestigious publishers or journals that reflect their positions. These considerations seem to have helped Ramseyer win the "Order of the Rising Sun Award" for his "extensive contributions to the development of Japanese studies in the U.S." from the Consul-General of Japan in Boston in 2018. In addition, Yamaguchi informs us that for the purpose of "strategic communications" the Japanese government wants Japan-friendly scholars to promote its view of history, denying that the CWS was a system of sexual slavery.

The background information summarized above indicates that Ramseyer tried to defend the position of the Japanese historical denialist through a 2021 journal article and papers posted at the Harvard Law School website since 2020. In fact, he seems to have reproduced crude historical revisionist arguments with no supporting data, by mischaracterizing progressive scholars' arguments and citing Japanese and Korean historical revisionist works to support his arguments. He seems to have tried to camouflage his crude historical revisionist arguments with the game theory of "economic rationality". He has been trying to play a leading role in propagating Japanese historical-revisionist stories since 2020 through the academic venue in the U.S. East Coast in order to recover the continuous defeats of Japanese history denialists in the "history wars" in other parts of the United States in previous years.

Finally, I would like to make critical comments on Ramseyer's repeated criticisms of the defamation law in Korea in the name of "academic freedom," "free speech," "tolerance," and "diversity" (Ramseyer 2022: 1, 6, 23, 28). He has misused the concepts of academic freedom or academic intolerance. Yong-Sik Lee (Y. Lee 2022, 8) clarified the difference between exercising academic freedom and defaming "comfort women" victims succinctly in the following sentences:

Academic freedom may protect differences in opinion, but not in a fraudulent manner in which the author omits or distorts material evidence just to make his point to readers who may not possess a comparable level of knowledge of the matter and consequently may be misled into accepting his arguments. This goes to the question of his academic integrity.

To maintain his academic integrity, Ramseyer should have started his article with a comprehensive review of the literature that interpreted the CWS as sexual slavery. He should then have tried to write an article showing his data that did not fully support the sexual slavery interpretation. He pretended that the main objective of his article was to explain the processes in

which “comfort station” owners and “comfort women” agreed on labor contracts using game theory. However, by titling his article “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,” he intended mainly to propagate the historical revisionists’ thesis of “comfort women” as commercial sex workers without providing relevant data. He has no right to defame KCW by treating them as commercial sex workers, especially because several international human rights organizations had already made the judgement that the CWS was sexual slavery.

## 2. *The Increase in History Denialist Groups in Korea during Recent Years*

In the final section of his article, Sung Hyun Kang pointed out that Young-hoon Lee, a long-time right-wing Korean professor, and his associates published a book (Y. Lee, 2019) which gained a great popularity. The book, translated into English, *Anti-Japanese Tribalism*, represent historical denialists’ views similar to Ramseyer’s. According to Kang, the book ignited the right-wing movement in Korea. He reported that about 100,000 copies of the book were sold in Korea, with 400,000 copies sold in Japan. The main theme of the book is that “Koreans express tribal hostility toward neighboring Japan.” Younghoon Lee, the main author of the book, and several other Korean scholars, such as Seok-choon Lew and Yu-ha Park, have rejected the Japanese colonial exploitation thesis and the sexual slavery narrative since the early 2000s. But the number of Korean scholars who accept the history denialism has increased during recent years. Moreover, Anti-Japanese Statue Truth Investigation Committee tried to block the Korean Council’s Wednesday demonstrations with the poster “Comfort Women Statue! Stop Wednesday Demonstrations.”

Their right-wing pro-Japanese stance in Korea seems to have been strengthened in their collective activities, with the number of its members having increased, during recent years by the following three factors. First, a gradual disappearance of KCW’s redress activities due to their old ages has weakened the redress movement in Korea and other countries.<sup>12</sup> Both Japanese and Korean right-wing historical denialists seem to have anxiously waited for the disappearance of KCW’s demonstrations in front of the Embassy of Japan and their other public testimonial activities. Second, as indicated by Kang in his paper, new media technology and the influence of online platforms have also immensely contributed to the emergence and strengthening of the anti-redress movement in South Korea. In addition, as Judith Mirkinson aptly pointed out in another article in this special issue, the emergence of right-wing nationalist governments and organizations in many countries is a global trend in the 2020s.

Despite the great popularity of Lee’s book in Korea and Japan, I believe its main theme never accurately locates the major contributing factors to the strong redress movement for the victims of JMSS in Korea. The Korean Council started the redress movement in 1990 and has waged a strong information war against the Japanese government for over 30 years between the 1990s and 2010s. However, the redress movement in other Asian victim countries, such as China and the Philippines, the other two major Asian victim countries with large numbers of “comfort women,” have been relatively weak in the redress movement.<sup>13</sup> Given this, we can understand why

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<sup>12</sup> As of August 2022, there are only 12 KCW survivors. Since all of them are in their nineties, none of them can participate in the Wednesday demonstration.

<sup>13</sup> As a measure, more than 120 “comfort girl” statues and “comfort women” memorials have been installed in Korea. They include two Korean girl statues installed in front of Japanese diplomatic buildings (one installed in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul and the other installed in front of the Japanese Consulate General in Busan). In contrast, there is only a “comfort girl” statue installed in China (in Shanghai) in 2016. Only one “comfort

the right-wing Japanese government and history denialists felt stressed by the Korean Council's relentless redress activities in their effort to conceal the crime of sexual slavery. The majority of Koreans had supported the redress movement led by the Korean Council in terms of their participation in donation campaigns and Wednesday demonstrations until the late 2010s. They supported it partly because of their consideration of the CWI as an important women's human rights issue and partly because of their nationalist sentiment connected with Japan's colonization of Korea. We can detect some form of the nationalist motivation in their support of the redress movement. But it is not the **right-wing aggressive nationalism associated with Japanese history denialists, but defensive nationalism**. Since the forced mobilization of a large number of Korean girls and young women was part of their suffering during the colonization period (Min, 2003), it is quite natural that both staff members of the Korean Council and Korean citizens have strongly supported the redress movement partly from their nationalistic motivation. Defensive nationalists pay special attention to unresolved historical issues, but they are not antagonistic to neighboring countries. Given my clarification of "defensive nationalism," Lee's interpretation of Koreans' redress activities to bring justice and dignity to the victims of JMSS as Koreans' expression of "tribal hostility toward neighboring Japan" does not make any sense. Neither Korean Council members' redress activities nor Korean citizens' support of the movement reflects their "tribal hostility toward neighboring Japan." We can detect from their activities only their concern with gender justice and defensive nationalism.

The emergence of pro-Japanese right-wing historical denialist scholars and organizations in Korea have strengthened the power of Japanese neo-nationalist history denialists, especially Ramseyer in the United States. Ramseyer and Korean right-wing history denialists have helped each other academically through what Kang called "circular citations." Moreover, Kang's paper indicates that the Anti-Japanese Statue Committee and authors of Anti-Japanese Tribalism announced a co-statement in support of Ramseyer on February 9, 2021. The statement argued that "Ramseyer's paper has been recognized for its originality and approved for publication through peer-review at an international journal," but [that] "a non-academic external force has disrupted academic discussion..." (Kang 2022). Yamaguchi's article indicates that most Japanese citizens consider Ramseyer's unacceptable IRLE article to include groundbreaking findings that reject the CWS as sexual slavery. However, as I have tried to show throughout this paper, and as other critics have pointed out, his article is no better than crude Japanese history denialists' works in the 1990s.

The strengthening of the historical denialist movement and the transfer of power from the progressive to a more right-wing government in Korea in 2022 may lead Japanese history denialists and Ramseyer to feel very optimistic about the possibility of resolving the CWI without the Japanese government's acknowledgement of "comfort women" as sexual slaves. However, Korean people and international human rights organizations will not allow the two governments to make another political deal to quickly resolve the issue. The redress movement for over thirty years with "comfort women's" public testimonies has enhanced people's imagery and memory of "comfort women" as sexual slaves. Moreover, given the heightened consciousness of minority members' and women's human rights in the twenty-first century, not only Koreans, but also global citizens and international human rights organizations will not allow the two governments to treat the victims of JMSS as commercial sex workers.

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woman" statue was installed in Manila, the Philippines in December 2017, but it was taken down in 2018, under the Japanese Foreign Ministry's pressure to the Filipino government.

What happened in the summer of 2022 has supported my positive expectations. In 2021 and 2022, the Japanese government diplomatically put pressure on the German local government in Berlin to remove the Statue of Peace (a Korean “comfort girl” statue) installed in downtown Berlin in September 2020. Ok-soon Joo and three other members of the Comfort Women Fraud Clearing Regiment (another anti- “comfort women” organization in Korea) visited Berlin at the end of June 2022 to demonstrate against the statue (Yonhap News, 2022). They held the placard, chanting, “Stop the comfort women scam,” in front of the Korean girl’s statue between June 26 and 30, 2022. About 100 members of the local Korean Council that installed the “comfort girl” statue and, surprisingly, many other members of local German organizations held a protest against the Korean demonstrating team, such as the Japan Women’s Federation in Berlin. German citizens chanted, “Go home” and “Learn more,” while the members of the Korean redress organization in Berlin performed Korean music/dance performances. Rejecting the Japanese Embassy’s request, the local Berlin government allowed the Korean redress organization to keep the statue there permanently. The fact that not only German citizens, but also members of Japan Women’s Federation in Berlin participated in the demonstration against Korean history denialists indicates that the CWI is an important women’s human rights issue rather than the Japanese-Korean diplomatic issue. Truth prevailed in Berlin this summer. It will continue to prevail everywhere.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Korean Council formally started the redress movement for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery in 1990. It helped many KCW break their long silence and give testimonies in Japan, the United States, and many international human rights organizations. Based on their testimonies and historical documents, the UN Commission on Human Rights and other international human rights organizations interpreted the CWS as sexual slavery and sent tough recommendations to the Japanese government to resolve the CWI honorably. However, the Japanese government, led by the late Shinzō Abe and other conservative Liberal Democratic Party members, continued to ignore these internationally accepted facts. Despite the Japanese government’s consistent refusal to accept recommendations by international human rights organizations, the redress movement has greatly contributed to raising our consciousness of sexual violence against women during the war and in occupied regions as an important women’s human rights issue.

As a professor specializing in Japanese legal studies at a major law school in the United States, Ramseyer surely must have been aware of all these studies, resolutions, testimonies, and judgments. However, like other Japanese neo-nationalist scholars, he not only ignored them but also failed to even mention them in his article and claimed the CWS as a commercial prostitution system based on labor contracts. This shows callousness on his part towards the “comfort women” who were brutalized during the Asia-Pacific War and stigmatized, traumatized, and marginalized after the war ended due to living in patriarchal cultures that shame victims of sexual violence. However, more pertinent to his article, this rebuttal and his actions show a negligent, one-sided, and biased scholarship.

Due to the prevalence of ultra-nationalism and historical revisionism in Japan during the last three decades, there are many Japanese-language magazines and books that have interpreted the CWS as commercial prostitution. However, Ramseyer’s article may be the only one with this type of historical revisionist theme regarding this particular issue to be published in an English-language journal outside of Japan. We scholars improve social science knowledge in a particular field of study by adding greater information to accumulated knowledge. Ramseyer’s article cannot be considered as an academic paper since he ignored the relevant literature.

Ramseyer used two key arguments to deny the forced mobilization of KCW to JMB. First, he argued that there was no historical document available in Korea in post-war years that indicated the forced mobilization of KCW to JMB, and that Seiji Yoshida's 1983 discredited book first spread the stories of the forced mobilization of KCW. He devoted many pages of his 2022 paper to this argument. He made these untenable arguments due to his ignorance of the literature on the redress movement in South Korea. I cited three of the many Korean newspaper/magazine articles published in the post-war years in Korea that reported the forced mobilization of many Korean girls and women to JMB.

His other major argument is that he cannot accept KCW's testimonies as credible evidence for determining whether the CWS was sexual slavery or not. This is the typical Japanese history denialists' dogmatic position. But his rejection of KCW's testimonies as credible evidence goes against the long tradition of the criminal justice system that has accepted victims' testimonies as the key evidence. Moreover, the Kono Statement accepted the forced mobilization of KCW mainly based on Japanese officials' interviews with about twenty KCW. Also, a Japanese court admitted the involuntary mobilization of KCW based on KCW's testimonies (C. Kim, 1998). In addition, the UN Human Right Commission and other international human rights organizations used "comfort women's" testimonies as a major data source for their judgments.

Ramseyer claimed that he could not trust KCW's testimonies mainly because Korean redress activists and scholars emphasized the forced mobilization of KCW based on a small number of testimonies given by the KCW closely attached to the Korean Council. I have provided detailed information about how objectively, eight volumes of 103 KCW's testimonies were collected by volunteer female faculty members and graduate students. Moreover, 103 testimonies comprise a sample large enough for statistical analyses. Since social science knowledge is based on probability rather than certainty, we should determine whether the CWS was sexual slavery or not based on the principle of the majority.

The major findings demonstrate that the vast majority of KCW (81%) were forcibly mobilized to JMB. The fact that 93% of them were mobilized at age 20 or younger indicates that they were illegally taken to JMB, involving the Japanese military government's violations of three international conventions it had signed. Moreover, the mobilization of the vast majority of KCW at 20 or before rejects Ramseyer's claim that most KCW originated from commercial prostitution houses in Korea. He made that claim without providing data that KCW received fees for their sexual services according to their labor contracts. However, only nine KCW, assigned to officers' clubs or prostitution houses, received regular fees, with the majority having not received any payment. Without citing any data, Ramseyer claimed that they could leave JMB when they wished. However, they were detained inside JMB under tight surveillance and encountered brutal sexual and physical violence by Japanese soldiers. The story of throwing grenades to kill running-away KCW is far from the story Ramseyer provided. He claimed that his 2021 article tried to explain how "comfort station" owners and "comfort women" agreed on labor contracts. But he did not provide any new piece of evidence for labor contracts in his 2022 paper. Also, my analysis of 103 KCW's testimonies indicates that no KCW mentioned her labor contract. It is impossible for none of them mentioned her labor contract, if all KCW had received labor contracts.

Ramseyer's severe attacks on the Korean Council, the major redress organization in Korea, indicates his ignorance of the history of the redress organization, its major staff members, its main goals, and contribution. His attacks also indicate his ignorance of international law. In his historical revisionist view, the Korean Council is a highly nationalistic anti-Japanese organization that has strengthened the negative image of Japan by publicizing Japanese military sexual slavery globally. However, the main goal of the Korean Council has been to make the Japanese government acknowledge the CWS as sexual slavery and to make a sincere apology and

reparation to “comfort women” to bring dignity and justice to them. As the major redress organization for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery, the Korean Council has needed to put pressure on the Japanese government. I wonder whether Ramseyer considers many Japanese citizens and organizations, who actively participated in the redress movement, as anti-Japanese or not. Representing the Japanese right-wing neo-nationalists, Ramseyer labelled the Korean Council and its staff members and other redress activists in Korea and the United States as “left-wing communists” and “Stalinists.” His frequent use of these ideological terms has made his paper more like a propaganda book, rather than an academic paper.

Finally, I would like to make a very critical comment on Ramseyer’s repeated complaints about the defamation law enforced in Korea. Japanese government officials complained to the UN Human Rights Commission and other international human rights organizations, indicating that it was unfair for them to make judgements about the past events using contemporary international laws. However, legal teams working for these organizations tried to convince Japanese government representatives that the Japanese military’s establishment and management of the “comfort women” system involved violations of international conventions, the anti-slavery law, and the crime against humanity, all international regulations made before the Japanese military started the “comfort women” system in 1932.

The Japanese “comfort women” system violated a number of international regulations made more than ninety years ago. Fortunately, we have witnessed radical changes in terms of minority racial/ethnic groups and women’s human rights over the past ninety years. Several statues of white American supremacists have been removed in the United States over the last several years.” When Korean, Chinese, and Filipino redress activists installed a “comfort women” statue in San Francisco in 2017, they emphasized the lack of statues of women in public places in the city (only two statues of white women, out of 87 statues), especially statues of non-white women (Mirkinson, 2020,150). These progressive groups in the United States have made great efforts to remove white supremacists’ statues to achieve what they call “retroactive justice” over the past two decades.

When we look at Japanese military sexual slavery from contemporary progressive perspectives, it is the most brutal form of sexual slavery possible. The current Japanese government’s and history denialists’ effort to conceal the past crimes by demolishing “comfort women’s” statues installed in the Philippines, the United States, and Germany is an anachronistic shameful behavior that has tainted the global image of Japan. Ramseyer has defamed KCW by treating these victims of sexual slavery as commercial sex workers. He repeatedly claimed that his academic interpretation of KCW as commercial sex workers with labor contracts did not involve his value judgment. But, by treating the victims of the most rigid form of Japanese military sexual slavery as commercial sex workers with no supporting data, he greatly defamed KCW. He cannot criticize the defamation law enforced in South Korea. Most other countries have similar laws to protect innocent victims.

As I have tried to show throughout this paper, Ramseyer’s 2021 article and 2022 paper cannot be considered as academic works based on relevant data and logical arguments. Neither of the product includes a literature review of the CWS and the redress movement for the victims of JMSS. They include many arguments with no supporting data. Many paragraphs distort or mischaracterize already-discovered facts. Many other paragraphs are based on history denialists’ articles and books. I wonder how the reviewers of his 2021 article and the editorial committee of IRLE accepted his paper for publication. I understand the journal has not yet made a decision on whether or not to retract his article for three years. I urge IRLE to take responsible action quickly and clarify the journal’s procedures of having accepted his unacceptable article.

Ramseyer’s interpretation of Asian victims of JMSS as voluntary sex workers with labor contracts include not only empirical and logical problems in his research activities, but also

ethnic and academic-integrity problems related to the conflict of interest and the defamation of research subjects. We all know that he wrote the 2021 article and 2022 paper to save the Japanese government and Japanese history denialists from their continuous defeats in the “history wars” -- their utmost effort to prevent “comfort girl” statues / “comfort women” memorials installed, and the sexual slavery story included in history textbooks—in the United States in the 2010s. As earlier noted, he won the “Order of the Rising Sun Award” for his “extensive contributions to the development of Japanese studies in the U.S” from the Consul-General of Japan in Boston in 2018. He has been accepted as a savior of the Japanese government and Japanese history denialists after the publication of his “peer-review” article. He has openly accepted his hero role by participating in meetings and conferences organized by Japanese history denialist organizations. Ramseyer has also defamed brutalized and powerless Asian “comfort women” victims by treating them as commercial sex workers with no evidence. In my own university system when CUNY faculty members propose a research project whose findings are likely to either greatly benefit or hurt individuals or organizations based on distortions of the truth, Institutional Review Boards prevent them from conducting their research. I wonder how Harvard University has allowed Ramseyer to conduct research to help the Japanese government and Japanese history denialists conceal the crime of Japanese military sexual slavery, “research” that results in continued harm and trauma to survivors and their families?

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