

**Between Nation and Gender:  
The representation of former military Comfort Women  
in the Netherlands and South Korea**



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Figure 1 (front page): A morning ritual where women had to bow to the Japanese imperial flag in "Jappenkamp" Tjideng (Batavia, now Jakarta).

### Acknowledgements

To my dear friend from Vancouver,  
who I sincerely thank for all his support  
in the process of writing this thesis.

“Now, read to me. Verse 7 to verse 14’, she said in her calm voice. ‘And read it out, loud and clear.’ [...] Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast. The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light.”

- An excerpt of the book *50 Years of Silence* (Jan Ruff-O’Herne 1994, 30)

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Figure 2: Visitor at a photo exhibition about former Indonesian military comfort women, by photographer Jan Banning (Semarang 2010).

## I. Introduction

It took five decades for several leading former Comfort Women to muster enough courage to defy their feelings of silence and shame. It was now or never for many of the former Comfort Women to speak out about the hardship that they had endured during World War II under the Japanese military. It was not merely a call for attention, but instead a joint effort to warn future generations about how the problem of rape during conflict is inadequately addressed internationally. Rape, as an inherent problem of war, is often swept under the carpet only to be forgotten as a national tragedy, such as the rape of an estimated 2 million German women and girls during the Russian campaign of 1944/1945 (Thomas 2007, 224-240). However, several pro-active and dedicated former Comfort Women from various social and cultural backgrounds refused to be forgotten histories and called for justice and recognition in the media from the 1990's and onwards. The differentiating cultural representations of the Korean and Dutch former Comfort Women has influenced their portrayals in academia and the media as well as shaped individual challenges politically for the nations involved, pertaining to recognition and compensation.

By comparing historical narratives that coincided in WW II, I intend to examine how the national identities of the Netherlands and South Korea contrasted with one another and illustrate how the former Comfort Women have been represented within their own social constructs thereafter. A crucial reason for partaking in a historical comparison, between the Netherlands and South Korea, is to combine a lesser documented case with a case which has received substantially more coverage in academia and the media. In addition, I will discuss the origins of the Comfort Women system which was founded in Imperial Japanese ideology and influenced the systemic implementation of comfort stations during WW II. Thus I pose the central question: How have the contrasting societies represented the former Comfort Women in national identification and memory? I will also examine historical factors, which contributed to how the Comfort Women system was sustained in Asia, such as the failure of the Geneva Convention (1929) to prevent the Comfort Women system as well as the racially motivated policies of Imperial Japan which enabled the Comfort Women system to be implemented. The Japanese government eventually accepted the Geneva Convention, however, the Japanese army easily circumvented the treaty and exploited the Convention's shortcomings in order to construct an apparatus that enabled forced sexual servitude across Asia (Kinvig 2000, 42). Thus the Geneva Convention, a highly regarded treaty that specified guidelines for the treatment of individuals captured during wartime, was ineffective to enforce adequate constraints which would have prevented the mistreatment of those in Japanese internment camps or under Japanese rule.

By examining historical events, I propose to shift the perspective from gaining formal recognition and compensation from the Japanese government, which is often the point of view in the media and an often discussed topic by academics, to instead: How were the former Comfort Women treated and represented by their own society after WW II? It is important to examine the Comfort Women Issue from a different perspective because the perspective of the society of which the former Comfort Women are a part of, holds as much significance in historical terms of accountability as the issue of the Japanese government's reticence to offer satisfactory recompense. Although the Japanese government did not officially compensate the women in the decades after the tragedy, what help did the former Comfort Women receive from within their own societies after WW II?

Furthermore, what historical events, that occurred post-WW II, also contributed to the representation of the former Comfort Women? Due to the devastation experienced on home soil during WW II, post-war conditions in the Netherlands created an unreceptive social environment regarding to the struggles of a distant Dutch colony. Additionally, the NSB Party members and Nazi sympathizers became the focus of post-war animosity, which sustained a hostile environment towards perceived "traitors". The "Moffenmeiden" (a derogatory term for Dutch women who had relations with German soldiers) were also perceived as traitors and were publicly humiliated and sometimes imprisoned due to consorting with the German military. Conversely, the post-war political turmoil in Korea left the nation divided. During the occupation of South Korea by the USA and allied forces, a semblance of the Comfort Women system endured in the form of licensed brothels. The continuity of sexual servitude, under Allied military occupation, further compounded the issue of addressing the Comfort Women system and sustained the shame and silence which befell the former Comfort Women of South Korea.

I will propose a secondary question in combination with my central question: Does the ambiguous terminology "Comfort Women" play a part in the representation of the Comfort Women in portrayals of historic events and international recognition? In combining these questions, I will demonstrate how terminology and national identity has determined how these women have been portrayed internationally. The aforementioned secondary question points towards the active discussion amongst academics, journalists and the former Comfort Women themselves, pertaining to how to proceed with the notion and terminology of "Comfort Women" as well as how the image of the former Comfort Women has been interpreted. The sources which I have referenced for this research consist mainly of scholarly articles, personal testimonies and newspaper articles. Considering the manner in which "Comfort Women" have been portrayed in the national memory in both South Korea and the Netherlands, these testimonies were an excellent source for a cross-cultural comparison of the Korean "Comfort Women" experience and the Dutch "Comfort Women" experience

Testimonies from leading women who stepped forward, such as the South Korean Ms. Kim Hak Sun and the Dutch-Australian Mrs. Jan Ruff-O'Herne, are invaluable sources for exposing the social construct of the Comfort Women system and the consequences of being labeled as "Comfort Women". Mrs. Ruff-O'Herne found the term "Comfort Women" absolutely repulsive considering the euphemism connected with the terminology. Mrs. Ruff-O'Herne wanted to illustrate to the world that she and her fellow sisters were not passive and pitiful victims whom only sought attention and compensation. However, despite the fact that Mrs. Ruff-O'Herne and her sisters demonstrated that they were not voiceless victims, the usage of the term "Comfort Women" was not readily replaced by an alternative. Journalists such as Brigitte Ars, still found a utilitarian function for the term "Comfort Women". Although the term is inadequate and misleading, she expressed that the terminology holds significance as a point of reference to historical events. For this reason, I will employ the term "Comfort Women" as a point of reference in respect to the utilitarian usage of the term as opposed to the euphemistic connotation connected to the terminology.

The cause and sustainment of the Comfort Women system as well as the 50 years of silence are difficult to fully examine. Due to the sensitive domestic and international political context through which it has been interpreted as well as the lack of official documentation about the Comfort Women system due to the large-scale destruction of the evidence by the Japanese Imperial army during and after the war (Min 2003, 940-941). I intend to diversify the perspective on which varying factors contributed to each nation's experience, in juxtaposition, to offer a unique vantage point by which to examine historical events. The sociologist P.G. Min stated that a one-sided emphasis on factors such as colonization, gender hierarchy or class differences cannot fully account for the extent of suffering which the women endured (Min 2003, 938-957). The Korean-American feminist C.S. Soh heeded the call for diversification of perspective in order to better understand the representation of the Comfort Women in Korean society. She brought forth three conceptualizations in the form of a statist, masculinist and feminist position. "The statist perspective comes from Japan imperialist under patriarchal fascism, and it considered Comfort Women as an emperor's gift to the soldiers. In the masculinist perspective, Comfort Women are sex objects to be purchased for men's sexual enjoyment under patriarchy. In the feminist perspective, Comfort Women are seen as military sexual slaves enforced by state power, in violation of women's human rights (Soh 2001, 69-90; Soh 2004, 170)." Regardless of the strong, yet compelling, feministic implications of the latter quote, I was inspired by the diversification of perspectives and how one could approach the representation of the Comfort Women by a comparison of historic events. Through this comparative historical lens I am able to better understand how, as well as through which mechanisms, the portrayal of Comfort Women has been created and sustained.

## II. A brief history: Japan's imperialist ideology and the Geneva Convention

To ascertain how the Japanese military established the foundation of the 'Comfort Women' system, it is pertinent to understand how imperial ideology developed in pre-WW II Japan which included influential components of a racial hierarchy. Race-related components contributed to the contrasting histories of the Netherlands and South Korea, thus it is imperative to examine the aspects which would lay the foundation of the systemic servitude. In addition, one would reckon that those who fell victim to Japan's system of forced sexual service would have been protected by internationally accepted humanitarian laws such as the Geneva Convention. Although Japan had eventually accepted the terms of the Geneva Convention, how was it then possible for the Japanese military command to circumvent the Geneva Convention and thus establish the 'Comfort Women' system within the constraints of international law?

Japan had built an extensive empire prior to their involvement in WW II, with colonies such as Korea (1910), Taiwan (1895) and Manchukuo (1932). Culminating in their involvement in global warfare in 1941, Japan sought to further expand their influence. These colonies were ruled with a strong racially based belief, founded upon Social Darwinism from 19th century Europe, that the Japanese people were unequivocally the pinnacle of power in Asia. Certainly after Japan's rapid industrial development in the second half of the 19th century and the stunning military victories over the Chinese empire (first Sino-Japanese war, 1894-95) and Russia (Russo-Japanese war, 1904-05) a belief was created in Japan that the Japanese people were indeed the foremost Asian example of an industrialized and modern civilisation. From the common man to the upper echelons of society, Japanese citizens became convinced of the idea that the Yamato race was destined to lead the people of Asia to enlightenment and prosperity and deter Western imperial influence in that region (Tipton 2010, 194-217).

With a modus operandi of regional and racial superiority, Imperial Japan ratified their wartime invasion of the European and American colonies in Asia. This invasion was viewed as a necessity by leading political figures in Imperial Japan, because Japan could then insure control and stability over vital resources (such as oil from Indonesia) in the event of a prolonged war. In addition, Imperial Japan wanted to create a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" in which the Asian nations would form a strong economic and cultural union under the Japanese flag. However, the racial hierarchy prevailed and although many images in newspapers and propaganda on the streets depicted other Asians as equals working side-by-side towards a prosperous future for all, reality would demonstrate otherwise. There was a considerable contradiction in Japanese society. On the one hand there were Japanese that truly believed in elevating regional Asian societies and cooperating with Asian nations equally, but on the other hand there were also ordinary Japanese



citizens and conscripts that were not impressed by their “Asian brothers and sisters”. Due to a rapid modernization of Japanese society since the Meiji Restoration in 1868 the cultural gap increased between Japan and their fellow Asians, which in turn lay the basis of Japanese racial superiority in

Asia. An example of this ideological viewpoint of Japanese supremacy over the Asian region is on display with Sergeant Hamamoto, who was a teacher in civilian life. He concluded, contemptuously, upon arriving in Korea: "...though we belong to the same East Asian race, the only thing in common is our yellow face... (The Koreans) are very mild but they are lazy and have no spirit for progress (Tipton 2010, 202)."

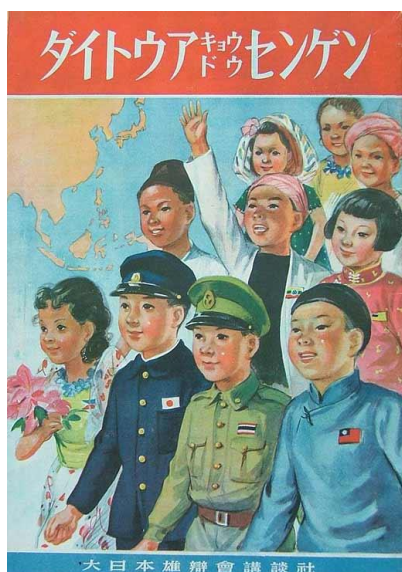


Figure 3: This is the cover of a text of the “Greater East Asian Declaration” issued on the occasion of the “Great East Asia Conference” held in Tokyo in 1943.

Broadly shared statements and opinions that dissociated Japan from its Asian counterparts would factor into the political elite's decision in Imperial Japan to include a Japanese rendition of the “White Man’s Burden” into its colonial policy. In Korea's case, there was a growing tendency to discourage Korean culture and promote Japanese values as well as introduce modern scientific advances and industrialize the colony of Korea. For instance, education was only possible as long as it did not conflict with Japanese colonial interests. Hence, the industrialization of Korea remained limited since Korea functioned primarily as the main producer of agricultural products and supplier of textiles for Japan. While rice yields rose due to improved irrigation and newly claimed fertile land, most of the crop increase was exported to Japan. Rice consumption per capita in Korea was actually in decline (Gordon 2009, 178). This was certainly the case in the late 1920s when Korean landholders and their tenants could not withstand the impact of the steep decline in rice prices. With the onset of the Great Depression, many landlords and their tenants fell hopelessly into high-interest debt, which in turn led to the rise in arable land that fell into Japanese hands (Buzo 2007, 36-41). As was often the case in Korea, many tenants were forced to pay half their crops as rent to the Japanese colonial authority, forcing many to send wives and daughters into factories as workers or into prostitution in order to pay taxes. Therefore the Japanese colonial authorities could readily mobilize women to serve as Comfort Women under these circumstances by luring them with the premise of employment, often under false pretenses (Faison 2009, 39-40).

While Japanese imperial ideologies encompassed and demonstrated a social structure of racially based servitude in the Asian colonies, the question then becomes: How did the Japanese military command make it possible to force Dutch females from internment camps to ‘work’ at

'comfort stations'? The Japanese military command seemed quite cognizant of the humanitarian rights aspects of the Geneva Convention both preceding and during WW II. More specifically, the Japanese military command were acutely aware of the shortcomings that the Geneva Convention of 1929 contained, especially where gender was considered. According to the Geneva Convention women in wartime were to "be treated with all consideration due to their sex" (Murphy and Green 2011, 215-218). The Geneva convention revealed several discrepancies concerning the rights of females. One glaring discrepancy is that only women who were active combatants, which encamped Dutch women for example were not, were protected by the humanitarian laws of the Geneva Convention. In other words, the convention did not specify how women in general should be treated, again, as the convention only stated that women (female combatants) should be treated respectfully due to their sex, which renders the treatment of non-combatant women open to interpretation.

Lastly, the convention focuses primarily on the male gender and its role as combatants in war whereas it displays an interpretation of women as passive, if not helpless, individuals. These policies represent a clear patriarchal stance on how war is the domain of men. As illustrated above, the glaring discrepancies based upon gender would serve to explain why it was almost impossible to condemn alleged Japanese war criminals at the Tokyo trials (post-WW II) on the grounds of the abuse and sexual torture of female civilians, unless these sexual assaults were committed concurrently with other offences. It was only after the adoption of the Geneva Convention of 1949 (after the Tokyo Trials), in international law, that an explicit prohibition of violation of the rights of female civilians was included (Murphy and Green 2011, 215).

### **III. Comfort Women: The origins and racial components of systematic sexual servitude in Japan**

In this section, I will examine the origins of the notion "Comfort Women" as well as the social-historical context in which the term was initially produced. As the "Comfort Women" scheme was implemented by the Japanese Imperial Army, it is important to examine how prostitution was viewed in Japan and how the "Comfort Women" system was founded. Secondly, I will examine how the Japanese Imperial Army viewed and portrayed Comfort Women and consequently, explain how the selection of Comfort Women was affected by racially motivated factors. This aspect of discussion will expand on the topic of Imperial Japanese ideology in order to further illustrate the racial components which influenced how former Comfort Women were subsequently represented in the national identity and memory of South Korea and the Netherlands.

What social-historical background and ideological viewpoints on prostitution influenced the creation of the Comfort Women system in early to mid-20th century Japan? During the Tokugawa era (1603 – 1868), a state regulated public form of licensed prostitution was instituted and encouraged

women to sexually serve men. "The floating world", as it was called by its visitors due to its surreal and hedonistic environment, was a demarcated zone that was mostly found within or in the vicinity of a major city where the elite of Japanese society resided, the samurai. In order to pacify restless samurai and prevent disturbances, landlords gave female servants or prostitutes to the samurai as presents for sexual pleasure and as a means to reduce stress. For women it was deemed an honorable task to serve brave men such as the samurai (Yoshimi 1995). Districts of pleasure, such as the infamous Yoshiwara district near Edo (nowadays Tokyo), housed thousands of women whom originated from impoverished families which sold their daughters as compensation for monetary and other debt. Young women were instilled with the notion that self sacrifice, in order to serve the needs of their family, was an obligation. If such a sacrifice was necessary, the girls would be gathered and housed in circumstances resembling slavery (Ars 2000, 21-22).

In the latter half of the 19th century, a new trend commenced of exporting Japanese prostitutes overseas, which was approved by the Japanese government. The women were given the disparaging moniker "karayuki" (China-goer) although they were also sent to other colonies of the Western powers, such as Singapore and the Netherlands Indies. Eventually criticism of these practices grew in the Japanese Diet and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs succeeded in abolishing the practices of the karayuki system in the 1920's which resulted in discontent from the Japanese military. As a reaction the Japanese military instituted "comfort stations" which were, more or less, a continuation of the former "karayuki" system (Ars 2000, 22-25). The official initiation of the Comfort System began in Manchuria after the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and quickly expanded to Shanghai after the First Shanghai Incident in 1932. As the Sino-Japanese war intensified, the Japanese government extended the network of comfort stations and gradually recruited more Comfort Women. During this stage of the war, women were abducted or recruited from East Asia and (from 1941) Southeast Asia. Subsequently the following question arises: What occasion lead the Japanese military command to legitimize a system of sexual servitude (Hicks 1995, 303)?

In 1931, after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, as many as 223 rape incidents were reported which infuriated the local population and fuelled the Chinese resistance. To satisfy the sexual needs of his soldiers, Lieutenant-general Okumura Yasuji requested prostitutes to be sent from Japan. Women were considered a necessity to "comfort" the soldiers, however, which women were deemed as qualified to undertake this odious task? As the Japanese women were needed at home, on farms or for labour in factories as a replacement workforce for the men fighting overseas, the role of prostitutes was given to "outsiders". Lieutenant-general Okumura eventually received a group of Korean women that came from a mining community in Japan. Thus the first of the Japanese military comfort stations was established (Ars 2000, 28-38).

The term "Comfort Women" was a necessity as the ambiguity of such terminology was needed to conceal the brutality that in actuality transpired in the military brothels. The origin of the term is founded in the Japanese language, or more precisely, the term was founded in the masculine discourse of the Japanese Imperial Army. The term was introduced by the Japanese army command as *ian-fu* or *juugun ian-fu*. The word *fu* refers to an adult female and *ian* refers to 'comfort and entertain'. The *juugun* part expresses the meaning of 'following the troops'. It was a term for women who would (voluntarily or involuntarily) accompany the soldiers in their campaigns (Soh 2008, 68-71).

The latter, however, was not always the case for Comfort Women as many Comfort Women would remain at a comfort station until the war ended (Soh 2008, 68-71). Whether fully matured woman or a very young girl, there was no room for exceptions in terms of how long women had to "work". As female you were expected to serve the Japanese soldier's needs for a definite or indefinite period of time. Women from Japanese colonies between the ages of 14 and 25 were often mobilized as "volunteers" in the National Labour Service corps (Chung 2004, 9-12). According to documentation Brigitte Ars uncovered, half of all Korean and Taiwanese Comfort "Women" were minors (Ars 2000, 39). This example of the euphemism employed in the terminology shows the manner in which the Japanese Imperial army sought to distort the perception of the "Comfort Women" as half of them had yet to reach full physical maturity.

The Japanese Imperial Army also equated Comfort Women to mere military supplies. Once they were recruited into comfort stations, the Comfort Women were stripped of their personal identities (Soh 2008, 74-75). They were, in fact, placed on supply lists under "ammunition" or "amenities" (Ahn, 2003, 18). Furthermore, the Japanese soldiers would refer to the Comfort Women with the term "P" which was an abbreviation for a public toilet (Soh 2008, 75). The tactics employed by the Japanese Imperial Army further degraded the Comfort Women and obscured their actual purpose to the Japanese army. The Japanese military command was also determined to avoid a large-scale raping of civilians by the Japanese soldiers, therefore the comfort stations were a means to boost morale and assuage the soldiers' needs. Notably, the Rape of Nanking in 1937 was an example of these excesses where an estimate of at least 20.000 women were raped, tortured and killed (Yamamoto 2000, 1-2). Another key reason to implement comfort stations was to control and further prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among the Japanese troops.

Although the Comfort Women were equated to disposable military resources in general, there was a difference in how women from different ethnicities were perceived. This topic of discussion will be expanded upon in the South Korean segment of the (chapter IV) comparative historical narrative, however, it is also important to introduce the race-related components from the Japanese perspective as this essentially shaped the different national identities and memories for both South Korea and the Netherlands. South Korean women were considered to be more closely

related to the Yamato race than other Asian races. Evidence of racial preference can be found in various examples of the hierarchical mechanics of the Comfort Women system. An example is that The Japanese exported Korean women to various parts of Asia in vast quantities. The Korean Comfort Women were numerically dominant in comparison to the other ethnicities. Another point of interest in the Japanese racial preference of Korean women was the pricing mechanics for the Asian Comfort Women.

The pricing, involving services rendered by Comfort Women, is a key indication of how various ethnicities were valued within the racial hierarchy of the Japanese military. One example of this is evident at a comfort station in the Chinese city of Changzhou. The price for a Japanese woman was 2 yen, 1.50 yen for a Korean woman, and 1 yen for a Chinese woman. At another comfort station Korean and Japanese girls had a price tag of 5.50 yen. Yet this markedly higher pricing stood in stark contrast to recruited Spanish and American girls since their rendered services were for the amount of 11 yen and 13 yen respectively. Nevertheless, for the women there was little difference in treatment. The race-related (preferential) pricing did not necessarily mean any of the various ethnicities of the Comfort Women and girls were given any monetary compensation since the money went right into the pocket of the pimps of the comfort stations who worked for the Japanese military (Ars 2000, 51).

Western Comfort Women were placed at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy within the Comfort Women system of the Japanese Imperial Army as Western women were considered to be, essentially, on par with the Yamato race. As Brigitte Ars outlined in her book *Troostmeisjes* (2000) Although the Dutch women were considered the enemy from the Japanese perspective, they were also initially admired as they were the daughters of high ranking colonial Caucasians that originated from Western civilization. Western women, with a Caucasian physical appearance, were seen by Japanese men as very mysterious and attractive. Females with blond hair and blue eyes were especially found pleasing to the Japanese, but for the women in question it was more akin to a curse. As former Comfort Women Ellen van der Ploeg stated: "The women in front of the house had it far rougher, as they had more visitors. In that part of the house there were very pretty girls with blond hair and blue eyes [...] only when it became busy then the men would also go to the back of the house (Ars 2000, 103-106)."

Other testimonies, such as those from the Dutch-Australian former Comfort Woman Jan Ruff-O'Herne also confirmed that Dutch Comfort Women had a "favourable" position among the women and girls in the comfort stations of the Dutch Indies. According to Ruff-O'Herne, the Dutch and, to a certain extent, the Eurasians, or "Indos" (Baay 2008, 276-277), were considered 'exotic trophies' to the Japanese military. The Dutch Comfort Women (numbering approximately 400) were exclusively available to high ranking Japanese officers at specific comfort stations (Ars 2000, 103-106). If Dutch Comfort Women did not comply with the wishes of the Japanese officers, they were threatened with

being sent off to the barracks where native Indonesian girls served Japanese soldiers. Native (Indonesian) women had to serve more Japanese soldiers under circumstances that were worse than the comfort stations the Dutch Comfort Women were held captive.

In comparison with the Dutch Comfort Women who primarily were required to serve Japanese officers during the evening, the native Indonesian Comfort Women had to serve the Japanese infantry troops, day and night, until they collapsed from exhaustion (Ruff-O'Herne 1994, 80-93). Eventually the Dutch comfort stations were closed in 1944, long before the end of the war. The Japanese government wanted the comfort stations closed down as those practices, where Dutch women were involved, could further cause to deteriorate political relations with western countries. However, the native Comfort Women (as well as Korean comfort women in other regions of Asia) were forced to work until the war ended. Overall, the Comfort Women system was highly influenced by Japanese racial and hierarchal ideology (NPO 2000).

#### **IV. A comparative history: South Korea in juxtaposition with the Netherlands**

Having introduced, in brief, the Japanese imperial ideology and the origins of the terminology that shaped the foundation of the "Comfort Women" system in the previous sections, I will now examine the key historical differences between South Korea and the Netherlands before, during and after World War II. By examining a comparative narrative of this history, I hope to identify which distinctive events might have contributed to the decades of silence of the former "Comfort Women" for both nations as well as to discern how they have been represented within their own society thereafter.

##### **South Korean Experience**

In South Korea, several historical developments contributed towards shaping the current Comfort Women Issue. Due to the current international tension between South Korea and Japan, the Comfort Women Issue is a complex issue to address. There are various reasons why the present South Korean government has been extremely reticent to address the issue. The latter topic will be discussed in combination with the aforementioned historical developments in this chapter to examine the origins of the issue as well as later chapters, where I will combine these points, in comparison with the Dutch case. I assume that the different social mechanisms between the two nations will provide insight into the sustainment of prolonged silence of the former Comfort Women.

Another point of interest is the cultural background of the Korean society that set a social code by which Korean women had to abide. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Korean society was steeped in a deep-rooted tradition of patriarchy. This patriarchal influence has shaped the

interpretation of the former Comfort Women in national identity and memory as well as profoundly contributed to their decades of silence. Furthermore, the numerical difference of the South Korean Comfort Women (as opposed to the Netherlands) provides further contrast between the two nations in a comparison of histories. Lastly, there is one more area of interest that I will explore, which is the race-related stance of imperial Japan towards the Comfort Women, because this racial ideology further divided the war experience of Comfort Women from South Korea and the Netherlands. Thus, I will pose the question: How did (colonial) occupation, coupled with a racially motivated ideology, factor into shaping the contrasting national memory and identity of South Korea and the Netherlands?

What social-historical developments, which occurred during the Korean colonial period, significantly contributed towards shaping an environment of silence and reluctance to the issue, pertaining to former Korean Comfort Women, for 50 years? The shame that the former Comfort Women endured both during and after WW II was not the sole factor in sustaining the decades of silence, per se. The complexity of the involvement of Korean civil servants (such as teachers and police) in the recruitment of females, for Japanese military brothels, contributed to sustaining the prolonged silence (Ars 2000, 54-61). In addition to the latter group, also Korean pimps were also appointed by the Japanese colonial government to recruit young women, the *chongsindae*, for comfort stations and subsequently deal with the management of comfort stations within and outside of Korea (Wurth 2010).

In post-war South Korea documents concerning the drafting of Comfort Women and girls were open to the public in South Korea yet, inexplicably, they were never researched nor brought to public attention. Naturally the Korean government did not actively support the gathering and publication of these documents as this information would implicitly show the involvement of many Korean civil servants in the issue and display their failure to prevent it altogether (Yang 1998, 124-129).

Prior to the confessions of former Japanese teacher Ikeda Masae, (who formerly worked as an elementary school teacher in occupied Korea and assisted in recruiting girls for the Japanese military brothels) evidence was already accessible for the public after the war pertaining to the recruitment of girls for comfort stations. For example, student records had existed for half a century which clearly showed the drafted girl's name, the label "*chongsindae* recruit" and the teacher's signature of approval. An additional example is an elementary school, now renamed Yonghi, that exhibited various pictures and documents that proudly showed the school's long history. However, in a corner of the exhibition could be found a record of a twelve-year-old female student, with the Japanized name Masako, which was explicitly written in Chinese characters as a "*chongsindae* recruit" (Yang 1998, 124-126).

Evidently, the South Korean government was of the opinion that further inquiry regarding the Comfort Women Issue could be more detrimental than beneficial because of the potential of endless lawsuits concerning former *chongsindae* and their relatives. Another concern to the government was that the information would undermine the furtherance and sustainability of a strong national identity and pride. Certainly the South Korean government was unwilling to face its dark past. In refraining from disclosing documents regarding the "recruitment" of *chongsindae*, the government stated that these documents "might violate the rights of former *chongsindae* women"; however, this statement was more a preventative measure to avoid accountability and further inquiry into the subject (Yang 1998, 124-138).

Thus, the history of widespread Korean collaboration with the Japanese military in creating and sustaining the Comfort Women system made the comfort women Issue in South Korea a sensitive topic that was, and is, hard to discuss. In addition to the latter, what made the discussion about the Comfort Women Issue even more difficult is the quantitative aspect of the Comfort Women system. The number of Korean Comfort Women which were recruited, on home soil and abroad, was substantially larger than the number of Dutch Comfort Women. The majority of the estimated 200.000<sup>1</sup> Comfort Women were of Korean origin. One would consider that by having the numerical majority of victims, South Korea would have had endured the largest impact concerning how the tragedy affected the nation's perception in the national memory of events. For example, between 1938 and 1939 "more than eighty-four comfort stations were built around China and 80% of the Comfort Women were Korean" (Yoshiaki 1995, 53). In contrast, the number of Dutch Comfort Women was substantially less. Roughly 'only' 400<sup>2</sup> Comfort Women were of Dutch origin that inhabited a distant colony (Ars 2000, 103).

There are several factors contributing to why the vast majority of Comfort Women were recruited from Korea. One factor, which was already briefly discussed, is that the Japanese colonial policy from 1910 to 1945 dislocated the economy and policies of Korea. Korea became a major supplier of a labour force and agrarian products for the Japanese market and war effort. Of all Asian nations that were colonized by Imperial Japan, Korea became the poorest colony (Ree 1997, 76-89), thus making impoverished families a susceptible target for Comfort Women recruiters. Another factor was that after the annexation of Korea by Imperial Japan in 1910, Koreans became Japanese subjects. The Japanese colonial authority could use national decrees and rely on civic duties to force Korean women into servitude where it was needed or deemed necessary. Nominally, Koreans

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the documents about the Comfort Women stations were destroyed by the Japanese government right before and after the war (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 32).

<sup>2</sup> In *Het einde van Indië* (1995) historian Bart van Poelgeest, however, estimated that 200 to 300 Dutch Comfort Women were active during the war. Historian Yuki Tanaka also gave an estimate that roughly 300 Dutch Comfort Women existed during WWII (Tanaka 2001, 45).



possessed equal rights to those of Japanese citizens, although in actuality they exercised no meaningful political rights. An example of this is found in the Japanese political representation of Koreans rights. Korean subjects could not elect members to the Japanese Diet. Instead, they were allowed to appoint "native Koreans of ability and reputation" to the Central Advisory Council, which was basically a collaborative apparatus under the Japanese colonial authority (Buzo 2007, 19).

Lastly, Korean women were evidently preferred above women from other countries of Asia. This race-related factor is not only evident in the numerical contrast but also through reports and documentation from Japan. According to an official report created by the Japanese government, the Korean ethnicity was genetically closely related to the "Yamato race". The further the race was genetically and regionally removed from the Japanese race, the lower (in specific Asian ethnicities and 'Westerners' being an exceptional case) it was placed within the Japanese hierarchy in Asia (Martel 2004, 245-247). This so-called Global Policy was commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Population Problems Research Center and was completed on July 1, 1943 (Morris-Suzuki 2000, 499-529). The document was comprised of elements pertaining to the necessitation of expanding the Japanese Empire including social mobilization and management of "other races" to secure a stable empire (Kushner 2006, 32-34).

Coupled with the involvement of Korean collaborators on many levels of society in the Comfort Women system, a major contributing factor of why the former Comfort Women were neglected in the national history of South Korea was the failure of a nation with a prevalent patriarchal foundation to prevent the rape of 'their' women by a foreign invader. Sociologist Hyun Sook Kim expresses that viewpoint in a statement: "The women are living symbols that remind the nation of its patriarchal weakness and paternal failure, namely, the inability of Korean men to protect the lives and bodies of their own wives, daughters and sisters" (Kim 1997, 94). Hyunah Yang adds to this notion that the Japanese soldiers had 'polluted' the chastity of Korean women, and thus the national body, with "a bucket of their seed" (Yang 1998, 131-134). This masculine and conservative element is often prevalent in the depiction of Korean comfort women in the South Korean media as they are often presented in a discourse of *minjokui sunan* (national suffering) or as the objects of 'national sacrifice'. The male nationalistic and historical discourse diverted the focus away from the personal agony of the former Comfort Women and instead, focused on a sense of national masculine pride which had been severely impacted by their perceived failures. This created a mechanism of shame for South Korea and heavily influenced why the issue of the former Comfort Women's own struggles took decades to reach the surface of public acknowledgement and discussion.

Upon which cultural structure was Korean masculine dominance and pride founded? A substantial part of the answer lies in the Confucian tradition in South Korea. Confucian based beliefs have a strong social hierarchal aspect, particularly pertaining to the 'three obediences', which

influenced and shaped the perspective of the male nationalistic viewpoint on society. The 'three obediences' is a hierarchal social system, based upon Confucian values, concerning the power relations between men and women which are stated as follows: the obedience to the father as a daughter, the obedience to the husband as a wife and the obedience to the son as a widow (Soh 2008, 71). The patriarchal influences in Korean society inexorably shaped how the former Comfort Women were perceived in the national memory. A demonstration of the mechanics of a dominant, masculine ideology is apparent in terminology which exemplifies the spirit of male dominion. The euphemism *wianbu* ("Comfort Woman", directly translated from the Japanese term *ian fu*) and the term *chongsindae* ("volunteering body corps, literally translated from a wartime fascist Japanese term *tei-shin-tai*) are prime examples of terms which exude masculine dominance over the opposite sex (Soh 2008, 57). The prolonged usage of these terms beyond wartime, by the government and media, was likely due to that the terminology was aligned with the masculine Confucian tradition, the 'three obediences' (Varga 2009, 287-303).

One extreme example that illustrates the patriarchal ideologies of the "three obediences" can be found in the importance of chastity in traditional Korean society. For a woman of status it was of utmost importance to protect her chastity at all costs. In traditional Korean society of the Joseon Dynasty it was expected of a woman who came from a respected class to wear a silver decorative dagger, or *eunjangdo*. In case she was threatened with sexual assault, she could commit suicide and in turn protect the honor of herself, her husband and her parents. Remaining a virgin before marrying or protecting your dignity as a wife were highly cherished virtues in Korean society. However, if she would fail to meet this social obligation, she would lose her value in society.



Therefore, in traditional Confucianism, she fully had to commit herself to the obedience of her husband and parents in order to survive in Korea's pre-war society (Park 2012, 5-6).

Figure 4: Silver daggers that Korean women of status wore in traditional Korean society. They were expected to guard their chastity at all costs.

As we can see from the previous paragraph the Korean social structure was founded upon masculine values in order to stabilize a dominion or social hierarchy. One may add a fourth obedience as well: the obedience to the masculine leadership of the nation. The veil of silence would endure for decades due to the hegemony that was experienced in a male-dominated societal construct. Due to the shift of historical focus right after the war, the perceived failure of Korea to protect its women from the Comfort Women atrocity would overshadow the personal tragedy experienced by the Comfort Women. Yet, the ideology of gender-

roles slowly changed as South Korean women became more active in various aspects of society. Women became more self-aware and independent due to the democratization and further globalization of South Korea from 1987 onwards; the rising wages of women; and for a large part due to influential feminist groups (i.e. Korean Women's Association and the Federation of Korean Women's Groups) that advocated for women's emancipation in the 1980's and 1990's (Seth 2011, 431-434). Nevertheless, the combination of ideologies and historical events set the precedent of male dominion in South Korea and contributed profoundly to the decades of silence.

A final aspect that influenced the experience and portrayal of former Comfort Women in South Korean national memory is: What post-colonial political developments made venting past rape crimes almost impossible and sustained the 50 years of silence? After Japan capitulated in August 1945, there was hardly time to adequately process and acknowledge the atrocities the Comfort Women had experienced. A difficult period of 'bitter liberty' commenced for the Koreans after the Japanese occupation ended since Korea was yet to be fully independent. When the Allies declared that Korean independence would be restored "in due course" (Cairo Declaration, 1943), this meant, in actuality, that the Soviet forces would occupy everything above the 38th parallel and the US forces would occupy everything below the parallel. An immediate clash of aspirations occurred between the divided Koreans and the two occupational forces. Eventually, the social-political tensions mounted between the Communist side (under Kim Il-Sung, with the backing of the PRC and the USSR) and the Nationalists side (under president Syngman Rhee, with the backing of the USA and its allies) which escalated into full-scale warfare in 1950-53 (Buzo 2007, 46-114).

Following the aftermath in 1953, both North and South Korean parties focused on the consolidation of power within their own region. In South Korea, an anti-communist ideology was focused upon which was beneficial to the new government to preserve their power and legitimacy through nationalism. The front man of the liberal party, Syngman Rhee, assumed dictatorial powers in 1948 as first president of the South Korean Republic, which he used to deter any form of Communist aggression by any means necessary. As a fiercely anti-communist and authoritarian statesman, Rhee saw any criticism directed towards his person or position as an attack on the state and the nationalist ideology. Under the repressive authoritarian regime of Rhee there were many Korean dissidents, Communist or not, that ended up imprisoned, tortured or even killed. One notorious example was the assassination of his political rival Kim Koo in 1949 (Lee 2003, 37), on the ground that he was a suspected Communist spy and thus an enemy of the state (Buzo 2007, 46-114). Authoritarian regimes that succeeded Rhee in the following decades decided the course of South Korean politics and the national discourse of society until the democratization of 1987 (Oh 2001, 14-15). In considering this sensitive political background in post-colonial and divided Korea, the social environment and political forum for discussion of the Comfort Women Issue was not possible. Had

the former Comfort Women spoken out, there was a risk of being branded a traitor or viewed as having undermined the nation's ruling power.

Lastly, there was a final influential component that contributed to the silence of the former Comfort Women in post-occupational South Korea. Due to the relative continuity of the Comfort Women system, under American military occupation, the reticence to inquire about the Comfort Woman issue endured long after WW II ended, as the South Korean government was wary of jeopardizing their alliance with the United States. As the war with Japan concluded, the United States had yet another war to fight with the USSR and its communist allies that politically divided the world in two ideological fronts. At the start of the Cold War Korea was a frontline where the ideological ambitions clashed. The ruling politicians in the United States were of the opinion that communist aggression and influence had to be contained until Korea could become a fully independent country, and therefore deployed its troops in Korea as political tensions were rising within Korea. While occupational troops arrived in Korea, there were already plans to establish military brothels to serve the newly arrived soldiers. An American classified report stated that "a special military requirement is established for provision of individual venereal prophylactic units to individual members of the military service located beyond the limits of the continental United States where no standard prophylactic measures are taken" (Tanaka 2002, 88). It would appear provisional measures were already in place. In order to prevent sexual transmitted diseases, the US military controlled prostitution zones or provided 'clean women' to designated brothels. In this ironic turn of events, the 'liberating forces' of the allies would share similar traits as the previous invaders, which meant a new chapter of shame and servitude to many Comfort Women (Cho 2008, 94). The USA and its allies benefited from a black page in Korea's history as the nationalists complied to the wishes of the allies in order to avoid any friction by kicking the shins of its allies. The nationalists depended heavily upon the United States and Allies resources for their own survival thus the Comfort Women Issue was complicated further and silenced by diplomacy.

### **The Netherlands Experience**

The Netherlands war experience differed greatly from the experience of colonial and postwar Korea. While both nations experienced occupation at various points, there were different historical events that shaped the perception of society on former Comfort Women. The silence that ensued for the Dutch former Comfort Women, or "troostmeisjes", was caused by a mechanism of social shame akin to that of the Korean former Comfort Women. However, there are contrasting factors that contributed to their silence, including the NSB party's impact in the Netherlands as well as the aftermath for "moffenmeiden" (Nazi-sympathizers and women who were in a relationship with a German soldier). Another point of interest to the discussion is how the occupation of the

Netherlands by Nazi Germany overshadowed the loss of a Dutch colony in Asia along with the atrocities the former Comfort Women had endured.

The roots for the decades of silence can be found in WWII, as an aspect of shame was instigated, embedded and deliberately enforced by the Japanese military command during the war. The Japanese employed two tactics that were implemented to convince the local and international community that the Comfort Women were common prostitutes who voluntarily offered their services. These tactics served to reinforce the stigmatized perception of being willing traitors to their own society. The first step in this process was to coax the young women and girls to sign a contract before they were forced to work at a military brothel (Ruff-O'Herne 1994, 78). The contracts were written, in full, in Japanese in order to hinder the discernment or intention of the contracts content. The contract stated that they would willingly volunteer their services to the Japanese army. Many of the young women and girls had uneasy feelings about the contracts and refused to sign. However, those who offered protest or gave their refusal were physically assaulted and threatened until they acquiesced and signed the document.

The second psychological tactic, to make the Comfort Women appear as common prostitutes, was a strategy of segregation. Towards the end of the war, when the comfort stations were closed down, the young women and girls were returned to the Dutch internment camps. However, they were not returned to the side of the camp where the women and children's barracks were. Instead, they were accommodated where (local) prostitutes of profession resided (Ruff-O'Herne 1994, 115). In addition, they were returned better nourished in comparison with the rest of the camp who lived in starvation on a minimal diet. Although the food ration on the prostitutes' side of camp was not significantly more adequate, there were women in the Dutch internment camp who suspected otherwise.

The latter group of internment camp women developed a deep hatred and resentment towards the former Comfort Women. The Japanese psychological tactic proved effective in distorting the truth about the comfort stations and the perception of the former Comfort Women themselves. Eventually, the former Comfort Women became the targets of ridicule and were given derogatory names such as "Jappenhoer" (Japanese whore), "verrader" (traitor) or "konijn" (rabbit, in reference to a rapidly reproducing animal). This misplaced hatred would even, in some cases, follow the former Comfort Women to their grave. A striking example of this was the funeral of a former Comfort Woman in the year 2000, who went by the pseudonym Martha. At Martha's funeral there was a counselor from the PICN (Foundation Project Implementation Committee in the Netherlands), Marguerite Hamer-Monod de Froideville, present. Hamer-Monod de Froideville recalled in her memoirs that she was standing in front of Martha's open coffin when she suddenly heard a woman

next to her say “And there she lies, our Jap whore”. Shocked by this remark at first, she later found out that it was Martha’s stepsister who said this (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 56).

As we can see from the last paragraph the former Comfort Women were often seen as traitors within their (former) Netherlands Indies community, but how was it possible that the abominable story of the former Comfort Women also became overshadowed by other (national) stories of suffering? The Dutch population endured harsh wartime conditions during German occupation. This created an unreceptive atmosphere to the dark stories coming from repatriated Dutch citizens from the Netherlands Indies. Aside from the sad stories of the former Comfort Women, more tragic memories were brought back to the Netherlands. The Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies (1942-1945) saw the imprisonment of 100,000 Dutch inhabitants of the colony (Van den Doel 2011, 320). The able men among them were mostly shipped to other regions of Asia to function as a labour force at infrastructural projects of the Japanese military. One notorious example of such projects was the ambitious Burma Railway, or 'Death Railway', where tens of thousands of Allied POW's as well as Asian civilian labourers were forced into gruelling labour until they died of illness, exhaustion or due to ill-treatment by the Japanese overseers.

The other Dutch inhabitants (mainly women, children and older men) were interned into civilian concentration camps on the various isles of the archipelago. Many Dutch civilians did not survive the inhumane conditions of the 'Jappenkampen' where one was expected to live off of minimal rations and a poor diet. Among the imprisoned civilians there were around 400 young women and girls who were selected to serve the Japanese military officers at the 'comfort stations' (Ars 2000, 103-106). They were forced into sexual servitude in order to please high ranking Japanese officers at these military brothels for, in most cases, a period of several months. These young women, however, had no receptive forum in which to share these horrendous experiences once they were repatriated after the war. In some cases, the young women and girls were able to talk about these experiences with their close intimates after the war, as Hamer-Monod de Froideville’s interviews with several of the Dutch former Comfort Women indicated (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 15-136). However, would anybody else listen? The answer was most often “no”, according to one of the Dutch former Comfort Women who goes by the name of Betsie. She explained this in the following translated fragment:

“Fortunately, she opened her heart to hear my story. To me, my mother was very supportive. Other girls did not have the same privilege: their mothers simply did not want to talk about it, period. [...] We never shared a thing with our family. Besides, they did not want to listen, because they had it rough here as well. It was better to keep quiet. I did not talk to anyone about it. Out of shame. [...] And they just came out of a war in 1947. There was no room for my sorrow (Van der Zee 2007).”

Betsie made the premise apparent in her statement; the people of the Netherlands were still recuperating from their own wartime tribulations. The destruction of the majority of the Jewish community in the Netherlands was an irreparable loss for the Dutch society. An estimated 110,000 Jews never returned from the concentration camps set up by the Nazis (Berkhout 2000, NRC). In addition, the Dutch population north of the Rhine experienced an arduous winter in 1944-45 in which 20,000 civilians lost their lives. In retribution for the Dutch railway strikes of September 1944 and also due to the Allies' failed campaign to liberate the Netherlands (Operation Market Garden), a German policy prevented vital resources from reaching major cities in the occupied territories of the country (NOS/NPO 2015). These examples of the Netherlands WW II experiences were indicative of why the Comfort Women stories were buried amongst the tragedies that occurred much closer to home. The profound suffering created a tendency to avoid discussion of topics rife with sorrow around the dinner table. This post-war atmosphere held consequences for former Comfort Women like Betsy as it became exceedingly difficult to vent their experiences and tragic stories in such a reluctant environment (Blom 2006, 354).

While the wartime events in the Netherlands certainly created a reluctant environment for the former Comfort Women to share their stories, the loss of the Netherlands Indies colony reinforced it with yet another overshadowing chain of events which occurred not too long after the liberation of the Netherlands in May 1945. After the capitulation of imperial Japan (August 15, 1945), a vacuum of power occurred in the Netherlands Indies. Nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta, seized the chance to declare independence from the Dutch government and establish the state of Indonesia on August 17, 1945. This state was not recognised by the Dutch government and a period of chaos and bloodshed ensued, also known as the *Bersiap* (Blom 2006, 356). During this period, there were several Indonesian militant nationalist groups which sought to get rid of the Dutch community and its influence before it could regain full control over the Indonesian Archipelago (Van den Doel 2011, 341-357).

The Dutch government, in Europe, responded by unleashing a full-scale colonial war to 'restore order' in the colony. Two large-scale military campaigns would follow in 1947 and 1948. However, these "Politioenele Acties" never achieved their aims and left a trail of death and destruction in the archipelago. The situation was resolved when increasing international diplomatic pressure pressed the Dutch government to acknowledge the Indonesian state, which was officially recognised in The Hague on December 27, 1949 (Van den Doel 2011, 357). For the Netherlands, to step away from the colony was difficult for several reasons. The public slogan "Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren" (Indies lost, adversity born) became a painful reality. The Netherlands Indies were considered an essential part of the Dutch economic market and treasury. This was especially the case now a war-torn Netherlands needed to rebuild and strengthen itself after five years of

German occupation. In addition, although the Dutch forces in the colony were strong in number and were far from defeated, the Netherlands government realised it could not sustain its military supremacy financially in the long term. This sudden armistice prevented the situation from worsening. However, in the Netherlands this was experienced as a national failure to secure its colony as the former colony was deemed a deep wound to national pride (Glissenaar 2003, 11-94).

Ultimately, the loss of the Dutch Indies contained several factors which overshadowed the Comfort Women tragedy. The Dutch population in Europe took a deep interest in the colony in the latter decades of the 19th century from an economic and cultural perspective. There was a sense of guilt (*ereschuld*), however, because the Netherlands had benefited largely due to the lucrative "Cultuurstelsel" policy from which the indigenous Indonesians did not benefit from at all (Blom 2006, 338-340). Thus, in the eyes of the Dutch populace in the Netherlands as well as in the Netherlands Indies the loss of the colony was tantamount to an incomplete cultural endeavor and economic failure because the aspiration to educate and elevate the indigenous population to a higher standard of living (*Mission Civilisatrice*) went unfulfilled. For instance, this popular conservative point of view is on display in the short Dutch documentary *Terug naar Linggajati* (2012). Upon returning to Indonesia the former inhabitant of the Netherlands Indies, Joty ter Kulve, reminisced over her life in the 1940s. She remembered herself protesting against the independence of Indonesia as she screamed: "Indonesia is part of the Netherlands. Not in 400 years will they be ready for independence." When considering the cumulative losses sustained both in the Netherlands and the former Dutch colony, it is evident that these events factored into creating and sustaining an unreceptive atmosphere for the former Comfort Women's tragedy in the national identity and memory.

Another contributing factor which shaped the national identity and memory of the Netherlands was the aftermath of the German occupation, particularly concerning perceived traitors such as members of the National-Socialist party NSB (*Nationaal-Socialistische Bond*) and the "moffenmeiden". "Moffenmeiden" is a derogatory term given to women who slept with German soldiers during the war and were often seen as collaborators. All collaborators with Nazi sympathies were deeply despised and ostracized within the Dutch society. Queen Wilhelmina herself openly condemned collaborators in her speech on Radio Oranje on May.10, 1941: "as for a handful of traitors, there will be no place for them in a liberated Netherlands." Ultimately, this social environment of hostility helped creating the conditions that would further silence former Comfort Women from speaking up and telling their tragic story (De Jong 1988, 468).

During the war, the Dutch government in London were cognizant of the fierce animosity stirring up towards Nazi sympathizers. Upon the nation's liberation, the government instituted a special judicial process to deport war criminals and alleged collaborators alike to internment camps as prisoners awaiting trial. Approximately 100,000-150,000 alleged collaborators were sent to the



internment camps which were scattered around the Netherlands. Prisoners endured maltreatment by the camp overseers for months, if not, years (De Jong 1988, 493-520). Some alleged collaborators, such as NSB member Lein Francke, were never even tried by an official court and were murdered by groups of vigilantes (Van den Dool 2011).

Among the collaborators and traitors were the women who were either members of the NSB, collaborated for opportunistic reasons of gain or survival and those who had a sexual relationship with a German soldier (De Jong 1988, 496-498). A large share of these women were also sent to the internment camps or "education camps". However, before they were arrested and sent off to the camps they, especially the "moffenmeiden", were publicly humiliated during the first days of liberation. When "Bijltjesdag" (Day of Reckoning, literal translation: "Axe Day") came, the "moffenmeiden" were dragged from their houses by incited local residents. In many cases their hair was shaved off and they were 'tarred and feathered' while often holding derogatory signs (i.e. "moffenhoer", German whore). After this event, they were paraded around the streets for the public display of their shame and perceived treachery. A woman from Oegstgeest wrote in her diary on Wednesday May 9, 1945:

"Als een wilde horde lopen ze achter de stoet aan, zingen 'Oranje boven' en vinden een uitlaatklep voor opgekropte ellende . . . 's Avonds giert het publiek om twee kaalgeschoren Moffenmeiden die daarna met teer zijn overgoten en met veren beplakt. In het openbaar zijn ze kaalgeschoren. Tot mijn spijt kom ik net te laat om het te zien.



Als ik me die spijtgevoelens later zal realiseren, is het best mogelijk dat ik er mij over schaam. Nu doe ik dat niet. Later worden ze door het dorp gejaagd, de voortstuw en de menigte achter zich aan. Onder dreiging met zijn revolver heeft de ondercommandant van de BS het fraaie stel moeten ontzetten. Verschillende NSB'ers worden (niet langs de officiële weg) toegetakeld met Hitler-Jugend-petjes op, een heel lange sabel, portretten van Hitler en Mussert, een suikerbiet in hun mond, enzovoorts, enzovoorts. Je gnuift er om (De Jong 1988, 498-499)."

Figure 5: Shaved NSB members and "moffenmeiden" parading the streets of Deventer not long after the liberation. At the back and rear sides are members of the Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten (Domestic Forces) to be found, who collected and pushed them through the streets.

As the above excerpt shows, many "moffenmeiden" were cast aside or judged contemptuously by society. The fear of being ostracized and possibly facing similar consequences that come from being aligned with the actions of traitors may have profoundly influenced the repatriated former Comfort Women to keep silent. Although the nature of the relation with the

enemy differed between the "moffenmeiden" and the "former Comfort Women", the Netherlands reaction towards perceived "traitors" and collaborators created a hostile social environment from which their silence could be sustained. One example is Ellen's return to the Netherlands. In 1945, Ellen van der Ploeg's mother sought shelter in Den Haag where Ellen's uncle lived. To Ellen's astonishment her uncle's reply was: "You are all welcome, except for Ellen. She played the hooker." Apparently the news found its way to the Netherlands through repatriated acquaintances (Ars 2000, 203). The remark of Ellen's uncle exemplifies that some women who had sexual contact with the enemy, forced or not, were seen as mere "hookers" and "traitors". This would indicate that there was hardly any difference in the perception of "moffenmeiden" and "Comfort Women", for they were both "wrong women". In considering the cumulative damage to the national identity and memory (such as the Netherlands wartime experience and the loss of the Dutch Indies colony), the former Comfort Women's tragedy was buried in a dark history of wartime sorrow.

**V. From suffering in silence to unfinished justice:  
The aftermath of different national identities of former Comfort Women**

The 50 years silence eventually broke. After successful nationwide demonstrations for democratic reforms and new elections in 1987 the Republic of South Korea stood at the dawn of a new era of political openness that stimulated discussions about social matters in society. It is in this climate of political openness that a revitalized interest in national history was triggered. Which in turn also meant a reassessment of the history of Japanese-Korean relations and consequently demands for an official apology for Japan's imperial aggression from 1910 to 1945. From one perspective this renewed interest can be seen as a tactic of nation building. The newly established democracy of the Republic of Korea needed to consolidate its authority by bundling all national attention towards a common cause. One of the key issues was achieving official compensation and apology from the Japanese government for the Japanese aggression in the colonial era. In following this trend the journalist Yun Chung-Ok published an article on the Comfort Women during the colonial period in the Hankyoreh Newspaper in January 1990 (Kazuhiko 2015, 259). However, the Japanese government was reluctant to inquire about the case. On June 6, 1990 a representative of the Japanese House of Councilors' Budget Committee spoke the following words to the Diet members:

"After listening to elderly people and piecing together what they say, it appears that the wartime comfort women were taken by private entrepreneurs to different places, going where the military went. Frankly, even if one were to conduct an inquiry into the circumstances, it would not yield any results (AWF 2007)."

This denial about the Japanese state and army being involved in recruitment of Comfort Women and the further reluctance to further inquire about the matter provoked strong disappointment and broad criticism among the populace, especially coming from upcoming women's organizations, in South Korea. A quick response came on October 17, 1990 when 37 women's organizations in South Korea joined forces investigating the history of the so-called "volunteer corps" and issued a declaration of six demands directed at the Japanese government:

- (i) Acknowledge that the Comfort Women were taken away by force;
- (ii) Offer a public apology;
- (iii) Conduct an investigation to discover what really happened and disclose the findings;
- (iv) Victims should be commemorated by the construction of a monument;
- (v) Pay compensation to the victims or their surviving heirs;
- (vi) Establish educational programs to raise awareness of the history behind the issue.

Raising the awareness of the issue gained momentum in the summer of 1991 when Kim Hak-Sun, a former Comfort Woman, stepped up to demand that the Japanese government should take responsibility. Mrs. Kim Hak Sun was the first of the former 'Comfort Women' to speak out after 50 years of silence. Sun, well over the pension age at that time, made it her final wish to get the atrocities recognized by the Japanese government before she would pass away. One major reason why she was the first one to tell the story publicly is that she lost her husband and her two children and had no family left (Howard 1995, 32). The barrier of shame that held her story back crumbled after her last family member passed away. She was even open enough to be the first (and one of the few former Comfort Women) that used her real name in the media, and to use her own name in a lawsuit as a complainant demanding compensation for Pacific War victims in December 1991 (AWF 2007).

In addition, Sun was supported by more and more former Comfort Women from South Korea, as well as other countries, as her case spread over the world through the international media. Directly after Mrs. Kim Hak Sun's case reached the international media the Dutch-Australian former 'Comfort Woman' Jan Ruff-O'Herne joined the cause of her Korean sisters in 1992. At first Ruff-O'Herne was reluctant to share her painful memories with the world, however, she was determined to help the struggling Korean former 'Comfort Women'. Preceding Ruff-O'Herne's coming-out, the news channels in the western hemisphere portrayed the 'Comfort Women' issue as an Asian issue, and thus "someone else's problem". The majority of people in the Netherlands did not know that 'western women' were also subjected to the systematic rape of women by the Japanese military. In other words, it was time to let the world know about a suppressed chapter in world history before it would fade away into a void of forgotten memories.

Through Ruff-O'Herne's presence, as first European witness, at the International Forum on War Crimes in Tokyo in December 1992 she could also reach out to other Dutch former Comfort Women who could aid her and her Korean sisters to form an international front (Talking Heads 2009). The International Forum of 1992 was the first big public hearing on Japan's post-war responsibilities, where the survivors and the representatives of the supporting organizations of the victimized countries had participated, together with international NGOs, researchers, and a UN expert on compensation (Prof. Van Boven). Surviving victims from six countries, including South Korea and the Netherlands, gave their testimonies during this forum that attracted substantial international media attention (Shin 2009, 18-19). This international front of former Comfort Women was needed to create a strong political leverage to finally get recognition and compensation from the Japanese government for all former Comfort Women (Ruff-O'Herne 1994, 137). Eventually, the apology came on August 1993 in the form of the Kono Statement. Despite the official gesture, there was much debate amongst Japanese and international politicians about the sincerity of the apology. The compensation was facilitated through the Asian Women's Fund which was established by the Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in 1994, on the premise of making amends (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 135). However, this fund had its complications as well, which I will discuss later.

In order to receive the money the former Comfort Women were aided in both The Netherlands and South Korea by national (non-)governmental organizations. In the Netherlands there were two independent private non-profit organizations that worked especially hard on transferring the 'boetegeld', or compensation money, to the women who were entitled to it. These organizations are the JER (Stichting Japanse Ereschulden) and the PICN (Stichting Project Implementation Committee in the Netherlands). Some of the dedicated members of both JER and PICN even had history in common with the former Comfort Women, as some had experienced the 'Jappenkampen' first-hand or knew family members who did. One of these members (of both JER and PICN) was the author of the *Geknakte Bloem* (2013) and confidential intermediary to many recipients of the 'boetegeld', Marguerite Hamer-Monod de Froideville. Hamer-Monod de Froideville was also given the responsibility to be the intermediary between the Japanese AWF (Asian Women's Fund) and the PICN. The AWF collected donations in Japan that were based on the moral commitment of the Japanese people to atone for what their countrymen had done to the former Comfort Women 50 years earlier. From the AWF the 'boetegeld' would be sent to the PICN, which in turn would allocate a compensation worth of 33.000 guilders p.p. to the entitled women (and men) via the so called Life Improvement Project. However, there were some former Comfort Women who were not amused by this initiative (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 35-50).

Why did some former Comfort Women not accept the 'boetegeld'? One of the main reasons was because the Japanese government indirectly reaffirmed the image about former Comfort Women that they are victims that must be pitied. The funds from AWF came from donations of Japanese citizens, companies and the government. It was the word 'donation' that insulted many former Comfort Women. "As if the compensation was an act of charity for people in need", was the often heard critique. A second complication was that the offered 'boetegeld' by the AWF was based on the good-will of the Japanese people, and thus it was not based on a preferred official compensation by Japanese law (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 41). In this way the Japanese government shunned the responsibility of formally compensating the former Comfort Women and thereby denying the fact that many foreign women were raped at Japanese military brothels. Ellen van der Ploeg was one of these women who did not accept the boetegeld issued by the AWF, because of the above mentioned reasons.

There were, however, still 78 Dutch former Comfort Women (and men) who accepted the compensation offered by the AWF (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 110). On which premise was their acceptance of the compensation based? One of these women answered the question with the following words: "Ik vind het fijn, dat ik het geld van het AWF heb ontvangen, want het geeft me zo'n goed gevoel, dat de Japanse bevolking uit oprechte spijt gedoneerd heeft aan dit fonds." In other words, she accepted the 'boetegeld' with joy, because this money represented the Japanese people who truly felt sorry for what their countrymen did to her 50 years earlier. She added that she did not find it practical anymore to demand a direct compensation from the Japanese government based on the Japanese law. To her it would be a tedious lawsuit that would drag on for many more years to come, not to mention that the height of compensation would only decrease after time, because of all the negotiations between various parties in and around the courtroom (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 140).

Similarly, during this period, seven Korean survivors accepted AWF money, causing outrage and sharp criticism among Korean activists. To prevent the unity among Korean former Comfort Women from collapsing, between 1996 and 1997, there were two fund-raising campaigns by Korean feminists in Korea in order to counter the temptation of the survivors to accept AWF money. At last, in April 1998, at the request of the Korean Council, the Kim Dae-Jung government approved the payment of an additional thirty-one thousand dollars to each Comfort Woman including approximately 140 survivors who did not accept AWF money (Lee, 1997). This gesture was built on the policy of the former president of South Korea, Kim Young-sam, who was planning to compensate the women with Korean money. Young-sam explained his statement on March 13, 1993:

“We do not plan to demand material compensation from the Government of Japan. Compensation will be undertaken using the budget of the ROK government from next year. Doing so will undoubtedly make it possible to pursue a new Japan-ROK relationship by claiming the moral high-ground (Study Team on the Details Leading to the Drafting of the Kono Statement [under the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs] 2014, 7-8).”

As we can see from the above sources the former Korean Comfort Women were caught up in a national feminist movement that was dedicated to go for an official apology and compensation that was based on Japanese law and nothing less. In doing so a united front was needed where exceptions among the former Comfort Women were not tolerated. However, a fund established to intercept drop-outs was an effective method to keep everyone on board. The national feminist movement and the government of South Korea conjointly supported this gesture to improve South Korea’s “moral upper hand” in Japanese-Korean political relations and perhaps even to divert the attention away from the black pages of Korean history (due to the involvement of Korean officials in the recruitment and silencing of Comfort Women).

In the Netherlands the case was different. The Dutch government was powerless to make the Japanese government offer their official apologies and compensation, however, the lower house of the Dutch Parliament joined the cause of the Dutch former Comfort Women unanimously passing a motion on November 20, 2007. In this motion the government urged Japan to officially compensate the women, who were forced into sex slavery during World War II, financially. “This should send a strong and clear signal to the Japanese government and the Japanese people, that so many years after World War II, people in the Netherlands still want the Japanese to recognize the war crimes of the past and to recognize the victims,” said Hans van Baalen, who tabled the motion in the Foreign Affairs Committee. “It is a matter still taken seriously in the Netherlands,” he added (Choi 2008). A more successful method to help the former Comfort Women came from the aforementioned PICN. The organization that effectively directed the compensation from the Japanese people to the women who were willing to accept the donations. While the Korean women had to act as one front with other Korean former Comfort Women, the Dutch women were given a choice per individual to accept AWF’s money or not. Perhaps this was possible because the small group of Dutch former Comfort Women were not very well organized nor supported by well-established and pro-active feminist organizations. Moreover, the Comfort Women Issue was not highly prioritized on the Dutch political agenda, nor was the issue interpreted as a key national matter in the media, whereas in South Korea the opposite was clearly the case. These aforementioned reasons are plausible factors that created a relatively tolerant climate in which the choices the Dutch former Comfort Women made were respected.

To cast off the image of being perceived as perpetual victims there were several prominent former Comfort Women in the Netherlands and South Korea who actively criticized representatives of the media who gave misinterpretations of what it meant to be “Comfort Women”. One destructive example was the movie *Paradise Road* (1997) by Bruce Beresford. Beresford needed a scene for his film about a Dutch internment camp in the Netherlands Indies where “Military Comfort Women” were registered for the comfort stations. In this scene, however, Beresford portrayed the women as if they voluntarily gave their services to the Japanese military as prostitutes. Jan Ruff-O’Herne was furious when she saw the premier, because she herself was forcefully removed from her camp Ambarawa and put to work at a military comfort station in Semarang. Moreover, the Japanese officers never paid money to the captive “women of comfort” to begin with; this money would directly go to the pimps (that were instructed by the Japanese military command) who controlled the comfort stations (Jan Ruff-O’Herne 1994, 77). Jan Ruff-O’Herne tried to stop the film from being distributed to the theatres worldwide by sending letters to the companies and institutions that were involved in the process of making this film, but her efforts were to no avail. A highly inaccurate image was created about these women that had endured so much pain and shame, now to be viewed by thousands, if not millions, worldwide (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 40-41).

There were, however, directors that were more cooperative and open to the interpretation given by the women who experienced the rape first hand. The South Korean filmmakers Byun Young-joo and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson made a more personal portrait of the former Comfort Women and their struggle for a rightful place in history. In the first installment of Young-joo’s documentary trilogy, “The Murmuring”, the Korean women were initially portrayed as distant and quiet elderly women that were reluctant to talk in front of the camera. As the trilogy progressed they slowly grew into more outspoken and organized activists. This portrayal was partly accurate, as only a small percentage of former Comfort Women became prominent activists that had the intention to challenge the representation of the former Comfort Women being viewed as a national disgrace. In an interview the former Comfort Women Chung Seo Woon tackled the sentiment of being a national disgrace on the grounds that she was raped by the Japanese: “No way, why should I be ashamed? [...] but I told everything to my friends and neighbours. Those who dragged us and made [us] into sexual slaves, they are the ones who should feel shame, not us. [...] I want to die as a daughter of Korea, not as a prostitute. I will accept nothing but legal compensation (Kim-Gibson 2001, 188).”

By demonstrating and participating in conventions, meetings and interviews, some of the international activists among the former Comfort Women fought off the stigmatization of being passive victims and a national shame (Chung 2010, 135-152). Many Korean women stepped away from their identity of ‘Comfort Woman’ that lay in a distant past, from when they were young. Now

they want to be referred to with the term *halmoni*, or 'grandmother' or as *chongsindae halmoni/wianbu halmoni* (Soh 2008, 71-72). This *halmoni* aspect gives an element of respect and wisdom to the term 'Comfort Women'. As legacy of the wartime experience, they were knowledgeable individuals who could educate the next generation about a crime that should not be forgotten nor reproduced in the future.

In the case of the Dutch women there was no equivalent term to compare to the Korean term *halmoni*, rather there was a campaign against the use of the term *troostmeisje*. Historian and information specialist of the University Library of the University of Amsterdam, Mariëtte van Selm, expressed her critique on the representation of Comfort Women as surviving women are often portrayed as victims (Van Selm 2011). In addition, many of the Dutch women condemned the notion of "Comfort Women" for obvious reasons, as Ellen van der Ploeg elaborated: "I didn't 'comfort' anyone, I was a forced prostitute, and I don't want to hear that term ever again." Also Ruff-O'Herne spoke of "sex slaves" in her book *50 Years of shame* (1994). However, historian Brigitte Ars rather considered a utilitarian purpose in the term "Comfort Women". To Ars the notion "Comfort Women" has an ironic historical connotation that refers to a specific period of the global history. Furthermore, the term has been utilized until now by many organizations which are concerned with the Comfort Women Issue. More important to Ars is that the Comfort Women should get a rightful place in history and that they should be accepted and remembered as normal human beings (NPO 2000).

Another aspect of the portrayal of Comfort Women is often neglected when one talks about the Comfort Women Issue in the media and scholarly works. As I briefly alluded to the above paragraphs, there were also young boys systematically sexually abused by the Japanese military. Here we see that 'Comfort Women' is a gender-locked term, which excludes the opposite sex entirely from the Comfort Women Issue. Were there not 'Comfort Men' or 'Comfort Boys'? In fact there were. Although there are no accurate estimates of the size of this group (in South Korea's case there is no available information whatsoever pertaining to the existence and extent of this group), there were four male cases (out of 78 cases) that the PICN accepted in their Life Improvement Project. What happened to these men (they were children between 8 and 12 years old at that time) was serious enough to be accepted in the program. These boys were raped inside and outside of the civilian prison camps by either Japanese military officers and/or Japanese soldiers. Two of these men never searched for professional help after the war since it was too much shame to bear. Due to their experiences by the hand of the Japanese military they were so heavily traumatized that normal communication with their environment became a daily struggle. Although three of the four men later married and got children, for a large part they lived a solitary life (Hamer-Monod de Froideville 2013, 110-111).



## VI. Conclusion

The former Comfort Women of South Korea and the Netherlands both experienced the horrors of structural rape under the Japanese military comfort system. However, the social-historical background shaped how the former Comfort Women were encapsulated within the national memory and identity of their respective nations. The divergent post-war conditions in South Korea and the Netherlands created social environments which vastly contributed to the sustainment of silence for five decades. Thus, I endeavoured to examine which historical events and social mechanisms may have contributed foremost to the prolonged silence of the former Comfort Women. For this research I utilized a framework of a comparison between nations in order to diversify the perspective of the women's portrayal. In addition, by examining a well-known Comfort Women case with a lesser known case, this presentation offers a unique perspective of historical contrast in the discussion of the former Comfort Women Issue. Thus, by combining two cases of varying academic and media coverage, my research includes a broad approach by which to examine systemic components of structural rape during wartime conditions and the social-historical environments which sustained the ensuing silence that resulted from different social-historical backgrounds.

Academia and the media have often focused on the issue of Japanese compensation and the issuance of an official apology. However, in order to identify which components of social-structure may have contributed to the sustainment of the prolonged silence, a broader accounting for responsibility must be examined in order to understand all the components involved. Thus, I proposed to shift the focus towards how the Netherlands and South Korea represented the former Comfort Women in the decades afterwards. The importance of this shift of focus on the Comfort Women Issue is because the perspective of the society from which the former Comfort Women are a part of, holds as much significance in historical terms of accountability as the issue of the Japanese government's reticence to offer satisfactory recompense. Several scholars, such as Min and Soh, emphasized the necessitation of diversifying the perspective of how Comfort Women were represented (and consequently silenced) within their own societies after the war. For this thesis I chose a social-historical perspective to approach the portrayal and silence of former Comfort Women. My approach does not provide a complete view on the Comfort Women legacy. However, I believe, that this research contains substantial evidence that several social-historical aspects, from pre-war to post-war, greatly influenced the sustained silence and the portrayal of former Comfort Women in the national identity and memory. Thus, this research aims to complement a diversified approach that Soh and Min offered through their research.

While comparing the South Korean case in juxtaposition with the Dutch Comfort Women case, I examined social-historical components, specific to each nation, which contributed to a repressive

social environment in which the prolonged silence could be sustained. In the case of South Korea, Korean women were raised in a society which was heavily influenced by Confucian ideology. Women in Korean society were expected to abide by a moral code of filial piety and the “Three Obediences”. Therefore, the chastity and dignity of a woman was tantamount to life itself. The silver dagger was a symbol that perfectly expressed this ideology. The dagger was not intended for self defense against rape. Instead, the dagger was intended for ending one’s own life if sexually assaulted. The large scale rape of young Korean girls and women by the Japanese military was thus very hard to accept in traditional Korean society. As a result, many Korean former Comfort Women took their own lives or remained outcasts from their family after the war. Furthermore, shortly after WW II South Korea was occupied by the Allied forces and experienced a continuity of sexual servitude under the licensed military brothels which compounded the issue of addressing the comfort stations. Due to diplomacy and maintaining stable political relations with the Allied forces, the Comfort Women Issue remained unaddressed. Lastly, coupled with Allied occupation, South Korean dictatorial regimes created and sustained an authoritarian social-political environment which discouraged political debate and the discussion of issues such as the former Comfort Women Issue. The South Korean dictatorial social-political environment, from the inception of Syngman Rhee’s regime in 1948, remained prevalent until the democratization of South Korea in 1987. The South Korean government suppressed information pertaining to the Korean involvement in the Comfort Women system. Thus the former Comfort Women experienced a very repressive environment which influenced a reticence to speak out due to potentially being labelled a traitor or facing punishment for undermining the ruling regimes policies and casting light on a dark chapter in Korean history.

In the case of the Netherlands, the wartime and post-war conditions also contained substantial social-historical components which contributed to an unreceptive social environment through which the prolonged silence could be sustained. The animosity that was directed towards individuals that were accused of having relations with German forces was considerable. Perceived traitors, such as the “Moffenmeiden” and NSB party supporters, were subjected to public humiliation as well as the possibility of imprisonment. Accused traitors often faced a lifetime of being socially ostracized as well as being labelled with derogatory terms. The concern and fear of this potential outcome for the former Comfort Women was very realistic. This was greatly due to the other women in the Japanese internment camps conveying the erroneous perception of the Comfort Women being given preferential treatment by the Japanese military and having the impression that the women were involved for monetary gain. It is noteworthy to include that the loss of a Dutch-Indies colony may have further compounded the issue of addressing the complexities involved with the comfort stations during WW II. The failure of “Mission Civilisatrice” and the economic implications pertaining to the loss of the Dutch-Indies undermined Dutch international prestige and affected the public’s

reception of the news coming from the region. Ultimately, the Dutch former Comfort Women were overshadowed by wartime tribulations and post-war hardships. The fatalities endured during the Hunger Winter, the atrocities that befell the Jews as well as the deaths of thousands of Burma Railroad construction workers had left little room for the former Comfort Women to be properly represented by a nation in devastation.

Pertaining to the terminology of the notion 'Comfort Women' and how the term affected the portrayal of the former Comfort Women in their national milieus, the term had a considerable influence creating and sustaining an image of the Comfort Women being pitiful victims as well as being potentially considered traitors. This image, however, was challenged by pro-active former Comfort Women (such as Hak and Ruff-O'Herne) who were aided by well-organized institutions. In South Korea, where the silence was initially broken, the former Comfort Women were vigorously supported by the nation-wide rise of feminist organizations which focused on humanitarian issues. The Korean government often portrayed the women within a male discourse of *minjokui sunan* (national suffering), but slowly changed their stance since the 1990's. Conjointly with nationally organized feminist institutions, the Korean government decided to address the issue of compensation in South Korea. Using this approach, the South Korean government could not only gain the "moral upperhand" in Japanese-South Korean political relations but also divert the attention from the fact that (former) Korean officials were involved in helping create and sustain the Japanese military comfort stations as well as influencing the silence that came afterwards.

What is remarkable when one considers both nations cases is that the Comfort Women Issue in South Korea was influenced by a strict adherence to national communal characteristics. Conversely, in the Dutch case the issue was not highly prioritized on the national and political agenda. Therefore in the Netherlands there was more room for individuality. Due to this approach to the issue in the Netherlands, one can infer why the contested notion *troostmeisjes* continued being utilized as a term. There was no universally accepted alternate term to refer to the small group of unfortunate women. In addition, various official organizations, scholars and the media already employed the term "Comfort Women" when discussing the issue in reference to the women. However, the term does not necessarily allude to something negative, as Ars explained. The term has a utilitarian function since it serves as a historical point of reference. On the contrary, in South Korea the term *halmoni chongsindae* was introduced which implied a softer and more respectable approach to addressing the women. Since the 1990's, through demonstrations, joining conventions and utilizing other means of expression through the media, the Comfort Women have gradually altered their portrayal. Their portrayal shifted from passive, pitiful and fragile elderly women to strong-willed, assertive and wise women who fought for a rightful place in history. With sharing their stories they may possibly educate future generations of how rape, as an intrinsic aspect of war, should be adequately

addressed in international conflicts in order to help avoid another 50 years of silence and expose the mechanisms that sustain an atmosphere of silence.

Another valuable observation that was made during this research is that the Comfort Women term is a gender-locked term. The term automatically excludes the opposite sex from the Comfort Women Issue. Therefore, terminology ultimately affects how individuals are represented in the national memory and identity as is evident in the gender-locked depiction of "Comfort Women". When I posed my secondary question, I considered if the issue of systemic rape included both genders, thus through my research I discovered the terminology is partly historically inaccurate by excluding the minority male cases as well as having a euphemistic connotation itself. Dutch recipients of the AWF fund showed that 4 out of the 78 cases were men that were compensated. However, there are no accurate estimates pertaining to the actual number of "Comfort Men". Nor is there available data to be found on 'Comfort Men' in the Korean case. Even though the Comfort Women system did not focus on the systematic recruitment of young boys, I assume there must have been a gray area where pedophiles and homosexuals might have exploited. It would be beneficial to further research this grey area, for instance, in order to analyze how men would be portrayed in Korean society if they were raped and what the consequences could be for these men once they returned to society.

In concluding, through examining historical events of South Korea and the Netherlands for the purpose of comparison, I have noted that although the divergent post-war conditions offer historical contrast between the two nations, the post-war struggles of both nations are similar in several aspects. While the Netherlands lost the colony of the Netherlands-Indies to independence and Korea experienced a division through political dissention, both nations experienced the atrocities associated with wartime legacies, especially concerning the representation of rape victims. Both nations endured the Comfort Women system, although a distinctive difference was that while Korea was a Japanese colony from which "Comfort Women" were recruited, the Netherlands-Indies was invaded by a competing empire during WW II. Thus, the Geneva Convention failed to protect the Dutch-Indies female citizens due to the conventional masculine oriented policies which overlooked the rights of non-combative women during wartime. Through my research I have noted similar characteristics in both societies, pertaining to patriarchal traits. An example of these traits is found in the treatment and portrayal of the "Moffenmeiden" whom were publicly shamed in a display of shaving their hair, a symbol of their femininity. In South Korea, women remained outcast after experiencing rape. Both examples contain aspects of male dominion and patriarchal ideology which enforced gender roles and expectations for the females in their respective societies. Although South Korea exhibited stronger patriarchal traits, such as the Confucian influenced "three obediences", the "Moffenmeiden" experience contained a "masculine disciplinary" reaction. Perhaps, patriarchal

mechanisms in society are not local distinctions. Thus, patriarchal constructs in society, while historically ascribed to Imperial Japanese social structure as well as other Asian societies, are ubiquitously found through the characteristics of Western societies as well.

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## Images

Figure 1: A morning ritual where women had to bow to the Japanese imperial flag in 'Jappenkamp' Tjideng (Batavia, now Jakarta).  
<http://indisch4ever.nu/2013/01/18/nooit-meer-buigen/>. Accessed December 12, 2014.

Figure 2: Visitor at a photo exhibition about former Indonesian military comfort women, by photographer Jan Banning (Unika Soegijapranata, Semarang, 11/10/10).  
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Figure 3: A Propaganda booklet from WW II detailing the Imperial Army's structural plan for dominating the nations of the region.  
<http://www.2bangkok.com/wwiipropaganda.shtml>. Accessed December 7, 2015.

Figure 4: Silver daggers that Korean women of status wore before WW II. They were expected to guard their chastity at all costs.  
 Park, H. K., 2012, "The Silver Dagger: Cultural Hybridity and Premarital Sexuality in Evangelical Korean American Women." in *The Journal of Pastoral Theology*, edited by D. Bidwell and E. Campbell-Reed, Vol. 22, Nr. 1, pg. 5. Maney Online.  
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Figure 5: Shaved NSB members and "moffenmeiden" parading the streets of Deventer not long after the liberation. At the back and rear sides are members of the Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten (Domestic Forces) to be found, who collected and pushed them through the streets.  
 Willem van de Poll - Nationaal Archief, access number 2.24.01.03, inventory number 900-2456.