



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree programme – Second Cycle
(*D.M. 270/2004*)
in International Relations

Final Thesis

—
Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

Mass Rape in Wartime Japan and Bosnia-Herzegovina "Comfort Women" and Genocidal Rape

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Rosa Caroli

Co-Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Bruna Bianchi

Graduand

Emina Selmanagić
Matriculation Number 988022

Academic Year

2015 / 2016

INDEX

ITALIAN ABSTRACT.....	7
INTRODUCTION	8

Part I

JAPANESE CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN DURING WW2: THE ISSUE OF COMFORT WOMEN

Chapter 1

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMFORT HOUSES	15
1.1. “Comfort women”: a definition	15
1.2. The roots of the comfort women system.....	16
1.3. Reasons behind the comfort women system	17
1.3.1 The issue of mass rapes.....	19
1.3.2 The issue of sexually transmitted diseases (STD)	21
1.3.3 Spies	23
1.4. 1932: the comfort women system begins.....	23
1.5 The ethnicity factor	27
1.6 The procurement of comfort women	31
1.6.1 The recruitment of women in Japan.....	31
1.6.2 The recruitment of women in Korea and other territories	32
1.7 Life in comfort houses	34
1.8 The end of the war	38
1.8.1 Japanese comfort houses for the Allied troops	39
1.9 Life after the comfort stations.....	42

Chapter 2

COMFORT WOMENS’ QUEST FOR JUSTICE	45
2.1 The Allies and the comfort women.....	45
2.2 Legal matters concerning the violation of international law.....	46
2.3 The issue of comfort women at the Tokyo Trial and the Batavia Court.....	49
2.4 Four decades of silence	53
2.5 The turning point of the 1990s.....	58
2.6 Challenges of the new millenium.....	65

Chapter 3	
COLLECTIVE MEMORY: SHAME, DENIAL AND REVISIONISM.....	69
3.1 Statements of former Japanese soldiers	69
3.2 The disputes in Japan	71
3.2.1 The textbook controversy in Japan	77
3.3 Responses to revisionism	80
3.4 Other countries' positions	83

Part II

GENOCIDE, ETHNIC CLEANSING AND MASS RAPE DURING THE AGGRESSION ON BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (1992-1995)

Chapter 1	
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS	89
1.1 The Bosnian anomaly.....	89
1.2 Islam in Bosnia, between Croat and Serb nationalism.....	93
1.2.1 Bosnia under Austro-Hungarian rule	99
1.2.2 Bosnian Muslims in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and WWII.....	101
1.2.3 Jingoism in Socialist Yugoslavia and the outbreak of the war	104
Chapter 2	
WOMEN IN THE BOSNIAN WAR.....	113
2.1 Sociocide, urbicide, culturicide, eliticide, genocide during the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina.....	113
2.2 Mass rapes and gynocide as means of genocide	119
2.3 Bosnian society and mass rape.....	130
2.4 Feminist debates around genocidal rape	135
Chapter 3	
DENIAL, REVISIONISM, NEGATIONISM AND A DIFFICULT QUEST FOR JUSTICE	139
3.1 Whose responsibility? Denial and support for the war	139
3.1.1 Denial and revisionism after the war: an impossible peace	143
3.1.2 The testimonies of the perpetrators	147
3.1.3 Dissident voices and women's organizations	150

3.2 The world's responsibility	152
3.3 Prosecuting war criminals.....	158
CONCLUSIONS.....	165
PHOTOS	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	175
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES.....	180
WEBSITES	183
VIDEOS	185

ITALIAN ABSTRACT

Questo elaborato si propone di analizzare due casi di stupro di massa in tempo di guerra: quello delle cosiddette "comfort women" (donne di varia nazionalità, perlopiù coreane, usate come schiave sessuali dall'esercito giapponese durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale), e quello delle donne bosniache musulmane stuprate durante l'aggressione serba in Bosnia-Erzegovina tra il 1992 e il 1995. Entrambe le situazioni hanno diversi punti in comune ma anche molti elementi che le differenziano, la più importante delle quali riguarda le motivazioni e gli scopi della schiavitù sessuale. Il sistema delle "comfort women" fu ideato dalle autorità giapponesi con tre principali funzioni: limitare gli stupri dei civili nelle aree occupate dall'esercito, confinando tali abusi nelle "comfort stations"; evitare il diffondersi di malattie sessualmente trasmissibili; infine, evitare il rischio di possibili spie nei bordelli civili. Nel caso della Bosnia-Erzegovina, invece, gli stupri di massa furono una componente importante della politica di "pulizia etnica" e genocidio promossa dalle autorità di Belgrado, il culmine di un antico nazionalismo serbo caratterizzato da islamofobia e dalla negazione della Bosnia-Erzegovina come stato unitario.

L'elaborato si propone di analizzare i fatti dal punto di vista storico evidenziandone in particolare il concetto di "doppia violenza": se, infatti, lo stupro rappresenta il primo livello di violenza, la successiva negazione di tale violenza infligge un'ulteriore umiliazione alla donna stuprata, questa volta di natura puramente psicologica, che toglie legittimità alla vittima e alla sua testimonianza, rendendo peraltro possibile il perpetuarsi di tali abusi.

INTRODUCTION

Sexism and misogyny take various forms, and are a burden that most countries in the world have to bear, with the most developed ones being no exception. What war does, and what it has always done, is to exacerbate traditional gender roles and gender inequalities, with concepts such as subjugation, domination, masculinity, machism and patriarchy becoming more interwoven than ever. Thus during wartime men are expected to unleash their 'inner warrior' and aggressively serve their country while women stay confined in their homes, preserving their honour and breeding as many healthy children as possible.

Nevertheless, there is another aspect of this dichotomy, as another fate awaits the women who belong to the enemy side: they become the 'spoils' of war, with their bodies being identified with the occupied territory. An act of hostility against the women of the enemy is an act against the enemy nation as a whole; to rape these women means subjugating and humiliating not only their families (generally, little thought is given to their own emotions) but their whole nations.

Psychologists may distinguish between various types of rape and rapists, but the fact remains that rape is not generally considered only a mere sexual act: it can also be an action that encompasses various feelings and aims, such as disdain (or hate, even) for the victim and the willingness to humiliate and/or dominate her. This parallelism between non-consensual sexual acts and domination becomes even more evident during wartime, when even common men are brainwashed by war propaganda, and when violence takes possession of every aspect of civil life, and not only of the life of the soldiers directly involved on the battlefield.

As it has already been pointed out, said battlefield has been identified with women bodies since the dawn of times, and there seems to be no end to this sordid trend. It is important, however, to properly distinguish between various conflicts and various instances of wartime rape: as a matter of fact, mass rape (often

accompanied by forced impregnation and extermination of male representatives of a certain group) is also used as a weapon of national, religious and ethnic hatred, thus it is no wonder that sexual violence and mass rape are included in the Nuremberg Charter definition of crimes against humanity and war crimes,¹ and that terms such as “genocidal rape” have been coined.

As a Bosnian student of Eastern Asian and European relations, I decided to focus my dissertation on two particular cases: the Japanese crimes against Asian women during the Second World War and the issue of the so-called “comfort women” (which will be discussed in the first section), and the practice of mass rape in Bosnia during the Bosnian war of the early 1990s (which will be the case study of the second section).

Both situations have several points in common, but it is no difficult to point out the differences either: for instance, mass rape in Bosnia was a crucial part of the “ethnic cleansing” carried out by the Serb forces against non-Serbs (especially Bosnian Muslims), while “comfort stations” under Japanese command had other primary functions, although we can notice the importance of ethnicity also in this case.

The main goal of this dissertation is to underline the meaning of “double violence” rather than just describing the facts from a historical point of view (which will be done in the first part of each section). As a matter of fact, while the first level of violence consists of the physical violation (and is, therefore, more easily definable), the second level is represented by the lack of proper justice and the denial of the crime. More often than not this second step is forgotten or dismissed, either unconsciously or deliberately.

The denial of the rape can come from different actors (the perpetrators, the supporters of the perpetrators, even from the victim itself,etc.) and take various

¹ See articles 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, article 5 of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia’s Statute, and articles 3 and 4 of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’s Statute.

shapes (direct attack against the victim, attempts to condone of the crime, lack of apologies, etc.) but one fact is certain: it inflicts another level of violence and humiliation on the victim, this time purely psychological. While it is true that nothing can erase a heinous crime such as rape from the victim's life, receiving satisfaction is an essential step in giving back to the victim her dignity and preventing such crime from occurring again. When, on the other hand, the crime is either ignored or condoned and the perpetrator absolved (or even celebrated, like it is the case with certain war criminals), the victim ends up feeling even more violated, used, helpless and desperate. Sadly, this is the case in most situations.

As a Bosnian, as the daughter, granddaughter, friend of men and women who have witnessed unconceivable monstrosities, as a woman, a feminist, and as a citizen of the world (at least to a certain degree), I too understand and feel the bitterness of those women who have endured the unendurable, even though I have not experienced such ordeals directly. My heart fills with anger and pain everytime I think about what they have gone through, but it is probably the indifference of the rest of the people that hurts the most. Let it be know that this group includes mostly "neutral" actors who had nothing to do with the crime, but who still, due to their their lack of knowledge and experience (or in spite of those) disregard or downplay the feelings of the victims.

In conclusion: denying the crime is as inhumane as the act of rape, and what this bizarre world that we live in currently needs the most is humanity. The goal of this dissertation is not only to describe the mere historical facts and point out the analogies and dissimilarities between the two case studies, but also to raise awareness about a topic that should be known and researched more than it currently is. If the goal is to prevent such atrocities from being committed again, the first step is to identify the causes which lead to them.

Finally, this dissertation is my small tribute to all the women of the world who have suffered unspeakable abuses.

PART I
JAPANESE CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN DURING WW2: THE
ISSUE OF COMFORT WOMEN

CHAPTER 1

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMFORT HOUSES

1.1. “Comfort women”: a definition

With the term “military comfort women” (jugun ianfu in Japanese, jungun wianbu in Korean) we define the hundred of thousands of women and young girls of various nationalities who were forced to serve as sexual slaves in the Asian territories occupied by Japan during the Second World War. Abducted through coercion or deception, they were imprisoned in “comfort houses” set up by the Japanese army, where they suffered all kinds of abuses (not limited to rape only).

Comfort stations were established in all the territories of the Japanese empire, or at least in all the territories where the Japanese troops were stationed: China, Hong Kong, French Indochina, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, British Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, Thailand, New Guinea, the Okinawan archipelago, Hokkaido, the Bonin Islands, the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin (to mention only those areas which scholars are sure of).¹

Unsurprisingly, it is impossible to pin down the exact number of the victims of this crime; estimates range from 100.000 to 200.000,² although some scholars consider the latter number to be too high.

In this context, the term “comfort women” sounds tragically ironic, not to mention rather offensive: while the word “comfort” might imply two concepts (either lack of hardship or consolation), neither of them is applicable to these grossly abused women; they were called women of “comfort” simply because

¹ Yoshiaki YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, translated by Suzanne O’Brien, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995, p.91.

² Dai Sil KIM-GIBSON, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women*, Parkersburg, Mid-prairie Books, 1999, p. 40.

they provided temporary solace to Japanese soldiers in the form of sexual relief, little did it matter if it was done against their will. It is not difficult to notice that these women were considered nothing more than mere objects and military supplies.

These are also the reasons why many prefer to use the term “military sexual slaves”.³ For practical reasons, in this dissertation the original definition will be used; also, I happen to agree with Kim-Gibson when she states that ““comfort” more accurately depicts the sexual servitude committed in a chilling casualness as well as dehumanizing brutality”.⁴

1.2. The roots of the comfort women system

According to several scholars, there was a specific background for the establishment of comfort stations, a background deeply rooted in Japanese society, mentality and history.

For example, Yoshimi Yoshiaki states that it was exactly the patriarchal Japanese mindset that paved the way to the disdain for and, subsequently, the exploitation of woman. As a matter of fact, it was a system that gave a fair number of marital and sexual liberties to men but none to women: according to the 1898 civil code, for instance, the head of the household (naturally identified in the husband) possessed all sorts of powers and legal privileges while “wives were defined as legally incompetent”.⁵ Also, adultery committed by the husband was sanctioned only in certain cases.⁶

From this point of view, the Japanese case didn’t probably differ that much from all other civil codes, including the ones of the modern Western countries. It has been argued that it was in fact the West which influenced Japan during the

³ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ YOSHIMI, op. cit., p. 200.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 201.

Meiji Era as regards the inequality between genders: the Japanese ryosai kenbo ideology (“good wife and wise mother”), according to which the role of the respectable woman was refined in the household, was directly drawn from Western Victorian values.⁷

On the other hand, Japan was a specific case when it came to its history of prostitution. As a matter of fact, a new figure emerged in the late nineteenth century, namely the karayuki-san, translatable as “a person travelling to China”: these were “young women smuggled out of Japan and sold to brothels in neighboring countries, in particular China and the east coast of Russia”.⁸ Thanks to the exploitation of these impoverished girls from rural areas, the Japanese prostitution business abroad flourished. In other words, by the time the first comfort stations were built, Japan already had a long tradition of smuggling sexual workers.

There is, therefore, a logical connection between the issue of the karayuki-san and that of the comfort women: “Japan’s military leaders, the administrators of the comfort women system, viewed it as an extension, indeed a rationalization of the karayuki-san system”.⁹ Still, what differentiates the comfort women system from the more common prostitution system is that the former was directly managed, as we will see, by the highest ranks of the military, therefore by the state itself.¹⁰

1.3. Reasons behind the comfort women system

It is not sufficient to justify the presence of comfort stations by simply stating that Japanese soldiers were thought to need some kind of distraction from

⁷ Maki KIMURA, *Unfolding the ‘Comfort Women’ Debates: Modernity, Violence, Women’s Voices*, Palgrave & MacMillan, 2015, p. 73.

⁸ Yuki TANAKA, *Japan’s Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation*, Routledge, 2001, p. 167.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

battle; neither is the need for sexual relief, which in war is reinforced and brutalized by the ever-present possibility of death, the sole reason behind the establishment of the comfort women system, although this factor did in fact play a significant role. The roots of this system ran much deeper, and they mirrored the concerns of the high ranks of the Japanese military and government.

It is true that by the early 1930s Japan had embarked in an intensive, cruel war of aggression against its neighbouring countries (a war harshly condemned by other countries, a fact which would prompt Japan to leave the League of Nations in 1933) and that, therefore, the idea that soldiers needed this type of sexual “comfort” was a common misconception, since there was nothing else that could represent some kind of leisure or distraction. It was considered the only way to keep the discontent at tolerable levels in an army that did not even grant leave to its soldiers.¹¹

In addition, as we have already pointed out, there is a strong connection between violence and sex: it is not only a matter of escaping from reality through sex, but rather a matter of imposing violence and control on a third party (namely, the woman) who has nothing to do with the battle. It is arguably another way to assert one’s manhood, preferably if it is done in front of his comrades. There is also evidence, provided by Hayao Takeo, a medical officer at that time, that certain officers considered rape a necessity since it taught young soldiers aggression.¹²

Nevertheless, this was only the premise. The main rationale behind the comfort station system can be found in three basic concerns: the prevention of rapes, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and the avoidance of spies.

¹¹ YOSHIMI, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹² YOSHIMI, *Jugun Ianfu Shiryoshu*, Tokyo, 1992, Document No. 47, pp. 224-233, *cit. in* TANAKA, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

1.3.1 *The issue of mass rapes*

First of all, the rape of Chinese civilians was a main concern for the high ranks of the Japanese military. This might induce to think that the Japanese had developed some kind of consideration for the well-being of the local populace; however, their concern had nothing to do with human rights, but rather with mere political calculation.

With every war, and in particular with every war of aggression and occupation, acts such as mass rapes, massacres and looting are, sadly, to be expected; the war initiated in Asia by Japan was of course no exception.

Japanese leaders were perfectly aware of what their soldiers were doing in China. They were also aware what intolerable offense rape represented to the Chinese, as we can discern from the observations of the general staff headquarters of the Kwantung Army: “The Chinese value honor very highly, and for appearances’ sake treat their wives with respect. Among all immoral and violent acts, the Chinese regard rape to be the worst and consider it an extremely serious social problem”.¹³

Moreover, this attitude was not limited only to the Chinese, as Hwang Keum Ju, a surviving Korean comfort women, explains: “[...] For us, Korean women, chastity was more precious than life itself”.¹⁴

Mass rapes naturally exacerbated the antagonism of the local populace towards the occupying forces. Therefore, the primary concern was to keep this antagonism at controllable levels, as Okabe Naosaburo, Chief of Staff of the North China Area Army, noted in 1938:

[...] now it is the norm for the entire local population of each area to be so enraged, particularly by rapes, as to seek revenge even unto death [...].
Rapes also undermine public order and obstruct the combat activities of the

¹³ Kantogun sanbobu senden sanko [Kwangtung Army General Staff Headquarters], “*Kanminzoku no tokushitsu*” (July 1933), in Rikugunsho, *Manshu jihen rikugun eiseishi*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Rikugunsho, 1938), p. 196, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁴ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 1.

military as a whole. We ought to call them acts of high treason that threaten the nation [...]. The provision of facilities for sexual comfort as quickly as possible is of great importance, as it will eliminate cases in which people violate the prohibition for lack of facilities.¹⁵

The only preoccupations the Japanese leaders were, as it appears, the reputation of their country and the success of military operations, as indirectly noted in the 1942 Army Criminal Law: "...rape in the occupied territory is fundamentally different from rape in the national territory and will defame the Empire".¹⁶

Thus, instead of punishing the soldiers responsible for this crime, the Japanese high ranks simply saw fit to confine the sexual abuse in "official" structures where everything would be supervised. It was a self-contradictory system in the sense that it was aimed at lowering the level of violence while rendering rape possible on the other hand.

It is true, however, that some kind of regulation regarding the punishment of rape did indeed exist in the Army Penal Code, promulgated in the year 1907. As a matter of fact, Article 86 of said code did consider rape to be a severely punishable felony but apparently only when it was directly linked to looting.¹⁷ In other words, the procedure to prove the culpability of those who committed rape was quite complicated, and more often than not such acts were deliberately ignored. It must also be pointed out that in certain cases rapists killed their victims in order to avoid any penal procedure.¹⁸

All in all, what this argument shows is a profound ignorance of human

¹⁵ YOSHIMI, *Jugun Ianfu Shiryoshu*, op. cit., p. 210, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁶ Aiko UTSUMI, *How the Violence Against Women were Dealt with in War Crime Trials*, in Indai L. Sajor ed., *Common Grounds; Violence Against Women in War and Armed Conflict Situations*, Asian Centre for Women's Human Rights, Quezon, 1998, p. 192, cit. in TANAKA, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁷ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

nature and sexuality (rape is not a product of the lack of sexual activity, but rather a complex mix of negative feelings), not to mention an utter disregard for the lives of the locals.

The perhaps most tragic aspect of this matter is that, unsurprisingly, rapes did not cease. This did not escape from the attention of the high ranks as well. As we have already pointed out, comfort houses were in reality rape stations: soldiers were not taught human behaviour or respect for women's bodies; what they were taught was that they could give vent to their needs in institutionalized comfort stations instead of committing rapes in front of civilians.

This whole argument is summarized in the memoirs of First Lieutenant Hayao Torao, a psychiatrist affiliated with the Konodai Army Hospital. In 1939, he dedicated a whole section, entitled "Sexual Desire and Rape, of his report ("Phenomena Particular to the Battlefield and Policies Toward Them") to this issue:

The line of communications unit had the good sense to suppose that restraining the sexual desire of soldiers at the front for long periods of time would naturally lead to violence against Chinese women, and they quickly established comfort stations in central China. The essential purposes of these stations are to pacify the soldiers through satisfying their sexual desires and to prevent rapes that damage the honor of the Imperial Army [...] Still there are considerable numbers of rapes in the countryside, and we also see many behind the front lines [...] The idea that soldiers are free to do things to enemy women that would never be permitted at home is extremely widely held [...] Furthermore, the unit commanders consider rapes necessary to build up the soldiers' morale [...] Commissioned officers were the first to go to comfort stations and recommended to soldiers that they go as well.¹⁹

1.3.2 The issue of sexually transmitted diseases (STD)

The problem of the transmission of sexual diseases was deeply linked with the issue of rapes. The Japanese had already had a similar experience in Siberia

¹⁹ YOSHIMI, *Jugun Ianfu Shiryoshu*, op. cit., pp. 228-232, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

between the end of the 1910s and the early 1920s when high numbers of soldiers had contracted such diseases and were therefore perfectly aware of the possibility of such problem.

The reasons for preventing the spread of sexual diseases among troops were obvious. First of all, infected soldiers were not fit to fight, therefore the spread of such infections would mean less soldiers to send to the front (not to mention that contracting such diseases was considered highly dishonourable). Secondly, it represented a problem for the military as a whole, since the recovery could last for a very long time and the costs of hospitalization were high. Thirdly, Japanese soldiers on leave could spread the infection at home.

For all these reasons, soldiers were not allowed by the military to visit civilian brothels. In this context, the establishment of comfort stations seemed the logical solution, especially when we consider that said comfort houses were provided with regulations regarding their use. Soldiers were instructed to make the woman wash herself before the intercourse, to use both a condom and a disinfecting lubricant, and to ask for medical assistance after returning to the barracks, among other rules contained in the North China Area Army's "Procedures for the Hygiene Education of Key Officers".²⁰

Reading these long, detailed instructions might induce to think that the Japanese military had everything under control as regards the spread of STD. In reality, it was precisely because of the length and the complexity of such rules that many soldiers didn't follow them. Soldiers had very little time to spend at comfort houses and were usually in a haste to achieve sexual relief before the next battle, therefore it was unrealistic to expect adherence to the instructions: facing death everyday, they probably had little or no concern regarding their own health.

In addition, medical controls were carried out regularly in comfort stations but most of times only on women. Even the soldiers who were aware of having

²⁰ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

contracted a sexually transmitted disease were reluctant to admit it, since they would be demoted two ranks.²¹

Moreover, comfort women were forced to work even when they were infected,²² since it was considered sufficient to make soldiers wear condoms (something that, as it has been pointed out, happened very rarely).

Hence, comfort stations were inefficient in preventing the spread of STD, just like they were inefficient in preventing mass rapes. It could even be said that comfort stations helped spreading STD, since totally unprotected intercourse occurred regularly between irregular partners.

1.3.3 Spies

The last reason behind the establishment of comfort stations is that the high ranks were concerned about the possibility of foreign spies working undercover as prostitutes in civilian brothels in the occupied territories. In comfort stations, where both women and soldiers would be controlled and examined thoroughly, no military secrets would leak.

1.4. 1932: the comfort women system begins

Most scholars agree on the fact that the first comfort stations (ianjo in Japanese) were established in 1932 during the so called “First Shanghai Incident”, which was a direct consequence of the Manchurian Incident of 1931. As a matter of fact, in January 1932 the Japanese opened hostilities against Chinese forces in Shanghai in order to distract the Western powers from the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo.²³

Another point of agreement is that the first comfort stations were established

²¹ TANAKA, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²² YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

by, and were opened exclusively for the Japanese navy. Still, these first comfort stations, which were managed by the Japanese state, can be considered common licensed brothels: women who worked in them were called “restaurant serving women” (ryoriten shakufu in Japanese) and underwent rigorous medical examinations conducted by doctors appointed by the military and the Foreign Ministry.²⁴

As regards the women involved in the operations, it is important to note that they still were not locals, but rather Korean and Japanese prostitutes sent to China by the military.

While the first comfort stations were reserved for the navy, in March 1932 Okamura Yasuji, Vice Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, decided to set up comfort houses for the military as well. It was only one year later, however, that the first official military comfort station was established in Pingquan, in the northeastern China.

Due to the lack of documentation, little is known about these first comfort houses. We do know for certain that there were numerous groups of women following the army whenever it went.

It was only with the intensification of military operations in 1937, however, that the system of comfort stations received a decisive push. After the occupation of the city of Nanking in December, atrocities such as mass killing of civilians and, obviously, mass rape ensued, prompting the Japanese army to build more and more comfort houses to prevent soldiers from raping Chinese women. As it will be demonstrated, the effort was destined to fail.

The expansion of the stations continued in the areas of China which ended up being occupied by the Japanese, namely, along the Yangtze valley and in the northern territories. The situation in these areas was so critical to manage that each unit under the command of the Area Army Chief of Staff was ordered to

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

build comfort houses.²⁵ In the meantime, the number of comfort women climbed in the southern territories as well.

At this point, it is crucial not only to highlight the fact that it was precisely the elite members of the army who pushed for the construction of these stations, but that the Ministry of War itself (presided at the time by Sugiyama Hajime) was directly involved as well. Several official documents (adduced by Yoshimi) corroborate this thesis, including “Matters Concerning the Recruitment of Women to Work in Military Comfort Stations”, issued on March 4, 1938. With this notice, both the North China Area Army and the Central China Expeditionary Force were given instructions on the establishment of comfort houses:

“[...] In the future, armies in the field will control the recruiting of women and will use scrupulous care in selecting people to carry out this task. This task will be performed in close cooperation with the military police or local police force of the area. You are hereby notified of the order [of the Minister of War] to carry out this task with the utmost regard for preserving the honor of the army and for avoiding social problems”.²⁶

Yoshimi also notes that the importance of this document lies in the fact that it demonstrates how every step of the establishment of such stations would be directly supervised by the Japanese armed forces; it also proves that the involvement of the Ministry of War is undeniable.

On September 19, 1940 the Ministry of War issued a report named “Measures to enhance Military Discipline in Light of the Experiences of the China Incident”, which was sent to each army unit as educational material, and which might summarize all the points that have been made thus far:

“[...] many criminal acts contrary to the true nature of the Imperial Army such as looting, rape, arson, and massacres of prisoners of war have

²⁵ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁶ YOSHIMI, *Jugun Ianfu Shiriyoshu*, pp. 105-106, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 59.

occurred. Such acts incur animosity toward the sacred war at home and abroad and regrettably impede the achievement of its goals. [...] The emotional effects of sexual comfort stations on soldiers should be considered the most critical. It must be understood that the competence or lack thereof in overseeing the operation of comfort stations has the greatest influence on the promotion of morale, the maintenance of military discipline, and the prevention of crimes and sexually transmitted diseases".²⁷

A similar scenario would ensue in Southeast Asia after Japan declared war against the United States and the British Empire in December 1941: in these areas it was the Headquarters of the Southern Army who were in charge of managing the comfort stations.

The beginning of open hostilities in Southern Asia and the Pacific did, nevertheless, bring a change in the way the transport of comfort women was managed: "After the start of the Asia Pacific War, authority over the travel of comfort women and comfort station operators in Southeast Asia and in islands in the Pacific was exercised by the army and navy. It became possible for people to travel with only army or navy identification papers, without involving the Foreign Ministry".²⁸ What can be inferred is that the Foreign Ministry probably wanted to wash its hands clean as regards the whole issue of comfort women.

Moreover, from the early 1940s onwards, the involvement of the Ministry of War in the establishment of comfort stations would become increasingly evident.²⁹

The occupation of Indonesia (or the Dutch East Indies, as they were known at the time), which would start in the spring of 1942 and last for three and a half years, was of particular importance since it was a territory rich in oil fields. While Dutch women weren't spared from rapes, the attitude of the Japanese towards Indonesian women seems to have been surprisingly benign, at least in the first

²⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 166-167.

²⁸ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 82.

²⁹ *Ivi*, p. 86.

stage of the occupation.³⁰ In addition, the Indonesians themselves viewed the Japanese as possible liberators from the Dutch rule of their country.

After September 1942, Dutch civilians started to be interned in camps, with the men being separated from the women, the children and the elderly. Many of these women would be forced to become comfort women.

1.5 The ethnicity factor

Pinpointing all the nationalities of the women who were forced to serve in comfort stations is as difficult as pinpointing the exact number of these women due to the lack of official documents (many of which were deliberately destroyed). It is known for certain that Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipina, Vietnamese, Burmese, Indian and Dutch women experienced this ordeal. Japanese authorities also tried to abduct Australian nurses but it seems that their efforts failed thanks to the intervention of the Red Cross.³¹

Korean women were apparently the first choice, followed by Chinese women. Most scholars find that the reason why the number of Koreans was disproportionately higher than other nationalities (albeit the relatively low number of comfort stations in Korea itself) were the complex relations that tied Japan and Korea.

As a matter of fact, the peninsula had been a Japanese colony for several decades before the break of the war. The first step for the domination of Korea was the Kangwha Treaty of 1876 with which Japan aimed at opening the borders of its neighbour country; in only a few years, “Japan’s exploitation of Korea was in full force under the pretext of modernization”.³² In 1905, the Taft-Katsura agreement (signed by the Japanese Prime Minister and the American Secretary of War) marked another milestone in the history of the peninsula: the United States

³⁰ TANAKA, op. cit., p. 63.

³¹ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 94.

³² KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 34.

would accept the Japanese domination of Korea in return for the acceptance of the American rule in the Philippines. In November of the same year the Treaty of Protection (hogo joyaku) was signed; using the lack of national strength in Korea as an excuse, “Japan took control of all Korean foreign relations and the Japanese Residency General (tonkafu) was established, supposedly to direct matters relating to the foreign affairs of Korea but practically to rule the country”.³³

On August 22, 1910 Korea, which had formally been an empire under the Joseon dynasty, became an effective colony through the Treaty of Annexation, which Emperor Sunjong was forced to sign and with which the peninsula lost all of its sovereign rights. As it is to be expected with every colonial domination, the Japanese proceeded to denationalize the new acquired territory: Korean language, history and geography were banned while every aspect of Japanese culture was forced upon Koreans with the purpose of the “Japanization of Korea”.³⁴

Thus, scholars identify various reasons for the massive presence of Korean women in comfort stations across Asia, and in China in particular. Tanaka Yuki, for instance, adduces the following ones:

Firstly, it seems that pressing local civilians into military prostitution was seen by the military authorities as an unwise strategy, as it would further arouse anti-Japanese sentiment among the local Chinese civilians. Secondly, Koreans were regarded by the Japanese as the people who were culturally and ideologically much closer to the Japanese than the Chinese were. The fact that many Koreans could understand the Japanese language –a result of Japan’s colonization- was seen as another advantage of using Korean girls.³⁵

Hicks, on the other hand, focuses more on mere preferences: “In Japanese society, then as now, there was status consciousness linked to ethnic origins.[...] On the scale of Japanese preference, Koreans were ranked after Japanese and

³³ *Ivi*, p. 35.

³⁴ *Ivi*, p. 36.

³⁵ TANAKA, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Okinawans; then came the Chinese, and lastly Southeast Asians, who tended to be darker-skinned”.³⁶

Other scholars see a more deep connection with the colonization and suppression of Korea, like Kim Il-myon who states that rounding up Korean women was an aspect of a “fundamental policy to frustrate and strangle the desire of the Korean people for national independence” which aimed at the “ethnic annihilation” (minzoku shometsu) of Koreans.³⁷ While Yoshimi Yoshiaki rejects the term “ethnic annihilation”, he describes the whole process as “expunging the ethnicity” (minzoku massatsu) and admits that “ethnic discrimination was at the root of the act of making women from the colonies into comfort women”.³⁸

Nevertheless, this does not minimally imply that Japanese women weren’t brought to the brothels, but most of the times they were women who already worked as prostitutes in Japan, hence their position in comfort stations was quite different, which proves how well-rooted racism was:

[...] Japanese military leaders did not believe Japanese women should be in that role. Their mission was to bear and bring up good Japanese children, who would grow up to be loyal subjects of the Emperor [...]. So hypocritical was the Japanese military leaders’ attitude that on one hand they strongly demanded that Japanese women be chaste, while on the other they did not hesitate to preside over the extreme sexual exploitation of other Asian women.³⁹

Another reason for recruiting young, unmarried Koreans in higher numbers than Japanese prostitutes was that women belonging to the first category were obviously virgins, hence a great deal less likely to have already contracted any kind of STD; since the prevention of the spread of venereal diseases among the

³⁶ George HICKS, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, W.W Norton & Company, New York, 1997, p. 48.

³⁷ Il-myon KIM, *Tenno no guntai to chosenshin ianfu*, Tokyo: San’ichi shobo, 1976, p. 19, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 153.

³⁸ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 154.

³⁹ TANAKA, op. cit., p. 32.

troops was one of the Army's major concerns, this "hygienic" reason seemed to have had sense at the time.⁴⁰

The subject of comfort women's ethnicity has in fact sparked a discussion among female and especially feminist scholars. On one side of the debate we can identify those scholars, like Ueno Chizuko, who stress the importance of transnational feminism and who do not pay much attention to the ethnicity and nationality factor; the rationale behind their argument is that women of all nationalities, including Japanese, were forced to work in comfort stations and that the focus should be on the exploitation of women as gender, rather than on a specific nationality, hence their criticism of Korean scholars' "nationalism".⁴¹ What is problematic about this argument is that it could be easily used to sweep Japanese crimes (which were a consequence of the predominant racism and the country's imperialism) under the rug. This is why other scholars, such as Kim Pu-ja, state that this "feminism without nationalism" leads to the lack, from the side of Japanese feminism, of "a critical awareness of the history and legacy of Japanese colonialism", hence the involuntary complicity with Japan's racism.⁴²

Ueno Chizuko and Kim Pu-ja had a direct confrontation on the matter during a workshop on comfort women at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995; the Japanese feminist writes that, since then, she has "taken this criticism as weighty homework assignment and continued thinking about the subject"; still, she cannot accept that "the general assertion that the nationalism of oppressed peoples is inherently legitimate".⁴³

There are however scholars who try to find a convergence between the two positions, such as feminist historian Suzuki, who considers the comfort women

⁴⁰ Chizuko UENO, *The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self*, translation by Jordan Sand, *History and Memory*, Vol. 11, N°2, 1999, p. 130.

⁴¹ Gap Min PYONG, *Korean "Comfort Women": The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class*, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17, N°6, December 2003, p. 3.

⁴² KIMURA, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁴³ UENO, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

system as the “combined form of racial and sexual oppression and exploitation”.⁴⁴

1.6 The procurement of comfort women

Yoshimi states that there were essentially two main cases in the rounding up of comfort women. The first case is relative to the territories occupied by the Japanese army, in which women were recruited by expeditionary forces.

The second case, on the other hand, is relative to the procurement of women in Japan, Korea and Taiwan and entails two different scenarios:

The first involved the army in the field appointing a director or private operator and sending him to Japan, Korea or Taiwan to recruit comfort women. [...] The other method entailed armies in the field sending requests to army units in Japan or to the Taiwan or Korea Army. That army would then choose an agent to round up comfort women.⁴⁵

Hence the main difference in the procurement of women in the colonies and in occupied territories was that in the latter case “the army gave the orders directly”.⁴⁶

1.6.1 The recruitment of women in Japan

As it has already been briefly mentioned, the procurement of women at homeland followed a substantially different procedure, which was controlled by the police.

Women had to be chosen among working prostitutes and, since they were to be smuggled out of the national borders, they had to be at least twenty-one.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, p. 118.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 100.

There were nevertheless instances in which even younger women were sent overseas, which shows that, even in this case, regulations were sometimes ignored.

Japanese women could serve also as waitresses and, provided they were old enough, even as proprietresses of a comfort house or brothel.

1.6.2 The recruitment of women in Korea and other territories

The procurement of women in Korea was closely tied with the peninsula's status of Japanese colony. As a matter of fact, as early as the late 1930s hundreds of thousands of Koreans were mobilized to work in factories (in Korea, Japan or other countries) and other facilities (which usually entailed manufacturing jobs) to help Japan in its war effort. It was the "National General Mobilisation Law", passed originally in 1938, "used for the comprehensive exploitation of Koreans only from late 1942".⁴⁸

Women weren't of course spared, since "Japan saw Korean women as easily exploitable and inexpensive labour".⁴⁹ In their case, the term "Voluntarily Committing Body Corps for Labour" (*kunro jungshindae*) was coined- even though the recruitment didn't have any "voluntarily" base. Many of these women would end up serving as comfort women, thus we can identify the first method used for rounding them up: deception. As a matter of fact, fraud would be the most common way for rounding up comfort women not only in Korea but also in the other occupied territories.

The whole process would be known as "virgin recruitment" since the main target was represented by young, unmarried girls: "[...] the Japanese compiled detailed data on all available girls in every village, town, city and province and pursued them under the official pretense of *Kunro Jungshindae*".⁵⁰

⁴⁸ HICKS, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴⁹ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵⁰ *Ivi*, p. 40.

Thus many girls would be promised a well-retributed job abroad (nursing, waitressing, manufacturing etc.) with which they would be able to provide for their families at home. In case they showed any sign of hesitation, “invoking the dreaded kempeitai was usually the clinching argument”.⁵¹ Most of them would face the bleak reality only once arrived at the comfort house, usually after a long journey.

Albeit being, as it seems, a carefully crafted process, the target of the Kunro Jungshindae encompassed a wide range of women: the vast majority came from a poor, rural background and were uneducated but there were instances when also girls from wealthy families were recruited.

Since schools were also considered to be a good source of comfort girls, there was technically no place where local women were totally safe, especially when we consider that there were also Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese and worked as recruiters, most of the time for personal gains.

Poverty was so spread that certain families even sold their daughters to the Japanese. There were then cases where women were simply spotted, considered to be fit to work in comfort stations and abducted by force (many times after being gang-raped); this was common especially in the Philippines, where the Japanese considered the whole population to be the enemy due to the guerrilla activities against the Imperial Army, hence the aggressiveness toward Philipino women.⁵²

In the case of China, the Japanese would push village notables to round up local women themselves in exchange for the safety of the village.⁵³ From 1943 onwards a similiar technique was also used in internment camps for Dutch people in Indonesia, where nevertheless the locals showed desperate resistance; forcible seizure would thus ensue. Moreover, while white Dutch women were pushed to sign a formal contract to formally avoid the violation of the Geneva conventions,

⁵¹ HICKS, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

⁵² YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

⁵³ *Ivi*, p. 120.

the Japanese didn't bother to do the same for Indonesian women.⁵⁴

1.7 Life in comfort houses

Comfort stations were not all the same. Yoshimi, in particular, makes three types of distinctions.

First of all, comfort stations were managed in different ways. One of them was to involve exclusively military personnel in the management and use of the station. The second way was to formally let civilian operators manage the station, which would still be overseen and regulated by the military. The third type of stations were something between a brothel and a comfort house since they were opened to the general public (priority was nevertheless given to military personnel). As the war intensified, however, the military started to gain more and more control on all types of stations.

The second distinction regards the location of comfort stations. While certain stations were located in large cities and could therefore be visited by any member of the military, other stations were attached to a certain unit.

The final distinction encompasses the types of visitors. Japanese prostitutes worked mainly in the so-called "officer's clubs"- as the name suggests, these were restaurants and comfort stations for the exclusive use of the high ranks. Comfort houses where women of other nationalities worked were opened for the use of noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, even though officers could still visit them.⁵⁵

With maybe the exception of Japanese prostitutes, life for comfort women didn't differ that much according to various types of comfort houses. Each woman was given a tiny, dirty room (not wider than seven square metres)⁵⁶, separated by

⁵⁴ The Dutch National Archives (Algemeen Rijksarchief) Collection, Algemene Secretarie 5200, cit. in TANAKA, op. cit., p. 77.

⁵⁵ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

⁵⁶ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 50.

the other ones by a curtain; the only piece of furniture to be found was a futon. Some comfort stations were newly-built while others were set up in buildings that had previously served for civilian use, such as schools, hotels, shops, restaurants, etc.⁵⁷

Meals, consisting mainly in nothing more than rice and vegetables, were provided on an irregular basis and in any case they were quite scarce.

Detailed instructions about concerning the use of comfort stations were prepared. In particular, the visiting schedule was quite strict: enlisted man could visit comfort women from the early morning until the early afternoon (about half an hour was given to each man), noncommissioned officers from the early afternoon until the evening, and officers could use the comfort station from the evening until morning, which meant that “enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, and officers would never overlap at the comfort station”.⁵⁸ It also meant that comfort women practically didn’t have free hours and that nothing could prevent the army to make them “work” twenty-four hours a day.

The fee also varied according to the rank, a fact which favoured officers among all.⁵⁹ As a matter of fact, visiting comfort houses was not free: the visitor would pay a fee at the front desk and receive a ticket in return, which he would later give to the woman; at the end of the “working day” she would deliver all the tickets to the manager as a proof of her activity.⁶⁰ According to most testimonies, however, the majority of these women didn’t receive any money at all: the cost of clothes, food, medical expenses and such was all added to their debt. In addition, it must be considered that most comfort women were illiterate, hence it was quite easy to trick them. As for those who somehow managed to save some money, their effort would prove to be useless:

⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁸ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁰ TANAKA, op. cit., p. 55.

Not only did those who saved their money take huge losses when their old yen were converted to new yen and inflation soared after the war, but those born in the colonies [...] were unable to withdraw their money after the war. Also, those women who were forced to accept military currency for their pay lost everything because after the defeat, military currency was worthless.⁶¹

Still, money for comfort women was the least of their problems since nothing could shelter them from all kinds of abuses. While non-consensual sex was their grim, everyday reality, other physical abuses were common as well, especially when drunken soldiers managed to get into the comfort station: women were often beaten, tortured, threatened and wounded with swords.

Bae Jok Gan, a former comfort women, recalls why many women preferred to deal with soldiers rather than with officers: “When I didn’t obey them, many of them took out swords, threatened me, and used them on my body. When they did, they made sure that I bled”.⁶² Another former comfort women, Kang Soon-Ae, describes how some women were burnt with cigarettes, had their breasts cut off or her stomachs cut open by soldiers.⁶³

The both physical and psychological pain that these women endured as a result of various abuses was unimaginable, and yet they were never given a break. In certain cases they were only given two days off per month or Saturdays afternoons.⁶⁴ According to testimonies, not even being on their period could prevent soldiers from violating them. Thus, their bodies could never recover properly, since they were not even provided basic medical care.

Medical check ups were, in fact, carried out quite regularly (on comfort women more often than on soldiers), but only with the purpose of finding out whether women had contracted a venereal disease. It has already been pointed out

⁶¹ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 144.

⁶² Quoted in KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 52.

⁶³ Uistinia DOLGOPOL and Snehal PARANJAPE, *Comfort Women: an Unfinished Ordeal, Report of a Mission*, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, 1993, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁴ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 141.

how soldiers were reluctant to follow the regulations regarding hygiene, hence it is not difficult to imagine the state in which the bodies of these women were in.

In case they were found positive, the procedure to follow was quick and basic: “Infected women were usually segregated and treated. If cured, they were brought back. When the women’s bodies became unsalvageable, they disappeared”.⁶⁵ Another treatment for curing venereal diseases that the Japanese often resorted to was the infamous “606” Salvarsan injection, which was so strong and so toxic that it would damage the women’s bodies permanently, often making them infertile.

Another obvious problem that comfort women came to face was unwanted pregnancy. In case it occurred, a doctor would perform an abortion on them; if it was too late for an abortion and if miscarriage didn’t happen, the newborn was immediately taken away after birth.

Escape wasn’t a feasible option for comfort women since comfort stations were heavily guarded and usually fenced with barbed wire. In addition, most women were not stationed in their home countries: even if they had managed to somehow escape, they had nowhere to go and nowhere to find shelter, in a country where they couldn’t even communicate in the local language.⁶⁶

Many comfort women tried to find solace in the use of drugs and shots (usually opium) to make their lives more bearable.

Death remained an ever-present possibility, whether due to an illness or to physical abuses. Unsurprisingly, many suicides occurred, with women drinking soap or a mixture of alcohol and drugs to put an end to their sufferings.

Each woman would end up serving in a comfort station for a different period of time: some of them stayed in them for a few months, while others spent several years imprisoned. The age of comfort women also varied, with most of them ranging from teenagers to women in their late twenties.

⁶⁵ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 56.

⁶⁶ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

1.8 The end of the war

As the war became more and more desperate and Japan's defeat approached visibly, the condition for comfort women got even more dire, especially for those serving near the frontline. Not only were they exposed to enemy fire, they were also ordered to assist in war operations, usually as nurses.

While most comfort women didn't naturally know what exactly was happening, the Japanese did. They were aware that the Chinese, the Russians and the Americans were gaining momentum and that Japan was losing its occupied territories. The question, therefore, was what to do with comfort women.

As early as September 1944, the navy issued a repatriation order for Japanese comfort women, who were sent back to their homeland, but no such order was issued for other comfort women.⁶⁷

There were instances where comfort women were directly killed by Japanese soldiers before the battalion fell under the Allied forces. This happened during the siege of Teng Yueh (the modern-day Tengchong), when a sergeant threw two hand-grenades in the dugout where several comfort women had found shelter.⁶⁸

In other cases comfort women, hearing that the Allied troops were coming, and assuming that their position wouldn't change if they fell in their hands, committed suicide.

More often than not, however, these women were simply abandoned in comfort stations without previous notice. At this point their ways parted: after leaving the comfort station, some of them managed to find their way home and, in certain cases, even their families; others, due to the lack of orientation and means, would never return to their homeland.

⁶⁷ *Ivi*, p. 192.

⁶⁸ HICKS, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

1.8.1 Japanese comfort houses for the Allied troops

On August 15, 1945, Japan officially surrendered. Being aware that the country would soon be occupied by the Allied forces, the Japanese couldn't help panicking. Their concerns regarded, first and foremost, the possibility that the occupators committed rapes on a massive scale.

In fact, their fears were not groundless: American soldiers had been raping Japanese civilians, especially during and after the Battle of Okinawa. It is likely, in addition, that the Japanese were also aware of how their soldiers had been treating other Asian women in occupied territories during the war and were afraid that the same fate was awaiting them.⁶⁹ Government propaganda didn't certainly help to calm down the citizens' anxieties- on the contrary, it only exacerbated them.⁷⁰

As a result, public disorder ensued. As early as August 16 railways stations in Tokyo were crowded with women and children trying to get away from the capital.⁷¹ Several evacuation orders for girls and women were issued.⁷² Women were even instructed not to appear to feminine or "friendly".⁷³

The Allied forces landed in Japan during the last days of August. Even though many rapes did actually occur (a trend that, sadly, would continue through the decades), the mass rape and killing of civilians (similar to that of Nanjing) which the Japanese authorities had feared did not. However, prompted by rumors and speculations, said authorities had already planned a solution to the possible issue long before the arrival of the occupying forces: on August 18, the establishment of comfort houses was ordered by the Japanese government, more

⁶⁹ John W. DOWER, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York, W.W Norton & Co., 1999, p. 124.

⁷⁰ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 179.

⁷¹ Meiko YAMADA, *Nippon Kokusaku Ianfu: Senryo-gun Ian Shisetsu, Onna-tachi no Issho*, Konjinsha, Tokyo, 1996, p. 9, cit in TANAKA, op. cit., p. 113.

⁷² YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op.cit., p. 179.

⁷³ DOWER, *Embracing Defeat*, op. cit., p. 124.

specifically by Hashimoto Masami, bureau chief of the Home Ministry's Police Protection Bureau.⁷⁴ The notice, which reached the governor of each prefecture and the Chief of the Metropolitan Police, gave guidance regarding the construction of the facilities, specifying which women could be recruited for the "task": "geisha, licensed and unlicensed prostitutes, waitresses, serving women, and women imprisoned for repeatedly engaging in illegal prostitution".⁷⁵

In practice, it was a matter of sacrificing some women in order to save others: the same Japanese authorities which had encouraged all Japanese women to preserve their chastity during the war (while imprisoning other Asian women) now did not think twice about putting their own female citizens through the same ordeal; said authorities apparently deemed that certain categories of women were disposable.

On August 28, eight professional organizations formed in Tokyo the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA), a private enterprise which would be in charge of the recruitment of Japanese comfort women and the provision of "recreation" for occupying forces.

On the previous day the first comfort house for Allied forces, named Komachi Garden, had been opened in Omori. According to testimonies, as American soldiers began entering the facility, "The women were petrified and began weeping. There were even some who clung to the posts and wouldn't move".⁷⁶ This reaction might induce to think that these women had not been thoroughly informed about their role.

For instance, we know that in Hokkaido "officers [...] visited the villages [...] where these women lived, gave them blankets, socks and sugar, and asked their cooperation by persuading them to work again for the sake of the nation and

⁷⁴ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 180.

⁷⁵ Rodosho fujin shonen kyoku, ed., *Baishun ni kansuru shiryō*, rev. ed., Tokyo, 1955, pp. 12-13, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 180.

⁷⁶ Daijirō KOBAYASHI and Akira MURASE, *Minna wa shiranai: Kokka baishun meirei*, rev. ed., Tokyo, Yuzankaku shuppan, 1992, pp. 12-14, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 181.

for the safety of the Japanese people”.⁷⁷ Thus we can notice how patriotic war-time rhetoric didn’t cease despite the end of the war itself: these women were encouraged to become the “Okichis of the Showa era” (Showa no Tojin Okichi), referring to the young Japanese woman who in the mid 1850s had become Townsend Harris’ concubine, hence being considered a national martyr.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, this rhetoric implicitly hid another aspect of the ryosai kenbo ideology, namely the dichotomy between good/respectable females and the “fallen” ones: while the role of “good wife and wise mother” was reserved for upper and middle class women, lower class women became associated with the “fallen/bad” ones category. Hence Kimura’s statement makes sense in this context: “Modern, regulated prostitution was founded on this very distinction between ‘good’ and ‘fallen’ women, exploiting the bodies and sexuality of lower-class women while protecting those of upper and middle-class women”.⁷⁹

The cooperation between prefectural and metropolitan governments, the police and right-wing activists (who mainly served as financiers, and who apparently had no problems collaborating with the former enemy despite their well-known nationalism) was crucial for setting up comfort stations. As regards the government itself, its role “consisted primarily of formally endorsing the project and providing it with loans and police support”.⁸⁰

In the end, many women who had nothing to do with prostitution were recruited to work in comfort stations. This was the case of several high-school students, mainly orphans, who had been members of the Women’s Volunteer Corps and had worked in factories during the war.⁸¹

One of the main differences between comfort houses in Japan and those

⁷⁷ Nippon Keisatsu no Ianfu Seisaku, Part I, p. 53, in *Kikan Senso Sekinin Kenkyu*, 1996, cit. in TANAKA, op. cit., p. 135.

⁷⁸ DOWER, op. cit. p. 126.

⁷⁹ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 74.

⁸⁰ DOWER, op. cit., p. 126.

⁸¹ TANAKA, op. cit., p. 138.

which Japanese forces had built in other countries was that now women seem to have been paid properly: for every ticket that a woman collected from a soldier and gave back to the manager, half of the sum went to the RAA and half to the her.⁸²

As had been the case with comfort houses across Asia, the ones established in Japan for the occupational forces did not serve their purpose entirely: rapes didn't cease and venereal diseases spread quickly among American troops. For the latter reason, the occupators decided to put an end to these facilities: on March 25, 1946, an American decree forbade the troops to engage with "licensed, unlicensed, or illicit prostitutes".⁸³ Nevertheless, Dower argues that rapes, despite not ceasing, were proportionally low considering the huge dimension of the foreign occupation.⁸⁴

Just like racism towards other Asians had been an important element from the Japanese part in the establishment of comfort houses, prejudice and racism diluted in a good amount of orientalism were a pillar of the American attitude towards the Japanese: "Japan –only yesterday a menacing, masculine threat- had been transformed, almost in a blink of an eye, in a compliant, feminine body on which the white victors could impose their will".⁸⁵ In the case of Japanese women, this racism would take the form of almost permanent erotization.

1.9 Life after the comfort stations

The experiences of comfort women were all quite similiar, and yet they differ. The ordeals that they had to endure during their time of "service" were the same and so were the problems they had to face after the war; however, the endings to the stories of these women are not.

⁸² *Ivi*, p. 147.

⁸³ Fusae ICHIKAWA, *Nihon fujin mondai shiryō shusei*, vol. I, Tokyo, Domesu shuppan, 1978, p. 551, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 184.

⁸⁴ DOWER, op. cit., p. 130.

⁸⁵ *Ivi*, p. 138.

One of the issues that these women had to face after the war were their own physical shackles. Unsurprisingly, months or years of physical abuses, unprotected sex, miscarriages and poor hygiene would leave deep traces on their bodies for life: venereal diseases and uterine diseases were the most common, while sterility, as it has been shown, would also affect many of them. Physical injuries non-related to sexual abuses, such as broken bones, were also hard to heal since they hadn't been treated properly.

Psychological shackles also prevented former comfort women to lead normal lives. One of the most common consequences of years of abuses was post traumatic stress disorder, which would lead to various types of impediments (speech impediments, dementia, general inability to face everyday life) and, in certain cases, to suicide. Incessant sexual abuse had obviously erased their desire for men and intercourse: as a result, many former comfort women never married, choosing to spend the rest of their lives in miserable loneliness; if they did marry, they were unable to experience a normal marital life, as a former Korean comfort woman, who goes under the pseudonym of Madam X, explains: "You might think that I hate the Japanese, but I don't. I just hate all men and I hate sex. It's a terrible thing to say, but I even hate the sight of my son-in-law, who lives in this house".⁸⁶

In a way, this is linked to another set of problems: social stigma.

"In a society dominated by patriarchal views of chastity and morality, and a lack of openness about sex, the shame of the whole repugnant experience silenced many women. Many may have felt themselves to blame for their fate.[...] The view that a raped woman is a defiled woman dies hard everywhere in Asia".⁸⁷

As a result, many of these women were rejected by their families, or at least

⁸⁶ Quoted in HICKS, op. cit., p. 166.

⁸⁷ *Ivi*, p. 165.

frowned upon for the rest of their lives. Some of them never confessed the truth, knowing what would expect them- but keeping their sufferings for themselves didn't certainly make things easier.

Very few of them were lucky enough to find a man who would show sympathy for their sufferings without blaming them and, consequently, get married and have children. These are examples of former comfort women who, despite all the sorrow and grief, managed to somehow lead a happy life. If we consider that, economically speaking, women were completely dependent on men in the patriarchal Korean society of that time, the inability to find a husband could seriously lower their chances of independence and survival.⁸⁸

All in all, each raped woman represented a ruined life. Shackled by physical and psychological problems, abandoned by people, unable to find a job, or simply anyone who was willing to listen to them, many of these women would spend the rest of their lives at the bottom of the social pile.

⁸⁸ PYONG, *op. cit.*, p.13.

CHAPTER 2

COMFORT WOMENS' QUEST FOR JUSTICE

2.1 The Allies and the comfort women

The Japanese government wasn't the only one to know about the comfort stations: as a matter of fact, there is evidence that the even before the occupation of Japan, the American armed forces were aware of the issue as well.

Tanaka adduces several documents which corroborate this statement. The first one is a report drafted in February 1945 by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service, named "Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces", which explains in detail how Japanese comfort houses (here called "brothels") across Asia were managed.¹

The second group of documents entails interrogation reports, namely the "Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report, N°49" written by the Psychological Warfare Team of the US Army and "Psychological Warfare: Interrogation Bulletin N°2" published by the South East Asia Translation and Interrogation Centre. The former document contains interviews to twenty Korean comfort women who had been serving in Burma until August 1944, when the US forced had freed them, and it proves that these women were brought to the comfort house through deception.² The second document contains a summary of these interviews.

The main aim of the Psychological Warfare Team was to get more familiar with the psychological conditions of the Japanese soldiers, thus to know "under what conditions they would decide to surrender".³ Hence it is no wonder that little attention was paid to comfort women themselves and to the whole issue of human rights; the fact that the comfort stations were labelled as "brothels" and that the

¹ TANAKA, op. cit., p. 84.

² *Ivi*, p. 85.

³ *Ibidem*.

word “amenities” was used says quite enough about the mindset of Americans forces towards the topic.

Tanaka states that there were two main reasons behind said mindset. Firstly, the attitude of the Allies can be attributed to their general racism towards Asians. Secondly, they probably didn’t consider this to be a case of unprecedented scale since rape was seen as a common practice during warfare and womens’ bodies were the battlefield. In addition, according to the common mindset of that time, it was considered almost necessary for women to provide “amusement” and solace to the fighting men.⁴

2.2 Legal matters concerning the violation of international law

At the time of the Second World War, Japan had ratified several international conventions and treaties regarding the protection of those which nowadays would be classified as human rights. But which laws were specifically broken by Japan through the establishment of comfort houses? In other words, which acts are imputable to who?

International law consists of two main pillars: treaties, which bind only the parties which accept them, and customary law, which is created by the generality of states and binds all parties. As it will be demonstrated, Japan violated both.

The violations of international law can be imputed directly to the State of Japan: as a matter of fact, the establishment of comfort houses was initiated directly by the Japanese government and the high ranks of the military, not by private Japanese individuals.⁵

In 1925 Japan had ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic of Women and Children of 1921. The aim of the Convention was to give a more complete range of action to the International Agreement for the

⁴ *Ivi*, p. 87.

⁵ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

Suppression of White Slave Traffic of 1904 and the International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic of 1910, which Japan also signed in 1925.⁶ According to the terms of the Convention, the parties committed to prosecute and punish those who engaged in the traffic of women and children of both sexes.⁷

Nevertheless, Japan seemed to have found a loophole in the system thanks to Article 14 of the Convention.⁸ Said article stated that

Any Member or State signing the present Convention may declare that the signature does not include any or all of its colonies, overseas possessions, protectorates or territories under its sovereignty or authority, and may subsequently adhere separately on behalf of any such colony, overseas possession, protectorate or territory so excluded in its declaration.⁹

In Japan's case, these territories entailed Korea, Taiwan, the Kwantung Leasehold Territories, Sakhalin and the South Seas islands. The International Commission of Jurists (from now on indicated as ICJ), however, deems Japan responsible of violating the 1921 Convention on the following grounds: firstly, many comfort women from these areas were first smuggled to Japan, were the Convention was in force;¹⁰ secondly, the ICJ claims that "it was not the intent of the drafters of the Convention to allow countries to engage in the practice of creating and fostering trafficking of women".¹¹

Abe Koki, and international legal scholar, has an even stricter of view than that of the ICJ: according to this interpretation, Japan must be held accountable on the grounds that Japanese ships, on which many women were transported,

⁶ Stephanie WOLFE, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies*, Springer, New York, 2014, p. 237.

⁷ See articles 2 and 3 of the Convention at www.childtrafficking.com

⁸ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁹ See Article 14 at www.childtrafficking.com

¹⁰ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

¹¹ *Ivi*, p. 158.

corresponded to the Japanese territory under the international law.¹² In addition, Koki states that the “act of solicitation” to round up comfort women took place in Japan, hence Japan’s accountability.¹³

As regards the violations of customary law, we shall first of all mention the Hague Convention of 1907, which Japan had ratified in 1911 and which the ICJ considers to be correspondent to customary law.¹⁴ Article 46 of said regulations states that “family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious and practice, must be respected”.¹⁵ The terms that are most relevant in our case are “family honour”, by which it is inferred that rape had to be avoided (rape was still considered to be an offence against the husband and/or the family rather than against the woman), and “lives of persons”. As it has already been shown, Japanese soldiers committed atrocities such as rape, torture and murder, thus violating a significant amount of terms. Nevertheless, the ICJ points out that since “Article 42 et seq. only refer to occupied or enemy territory, whereas they do not regulate the protection of the belligerents’ own inhabitants”,¹⁶ proper distinctions must be made: Korea was a Japanese colony, thus said articles cannot be applied to its case, while the same cannot be said for other territories such as the Philippines.

Another case worth of mention is the 1926 Slavery Convention. Albeit the fact that Japan never ratified the treaty, the ICJ considers the country accountable by arguing that said treaty corresponded to what was commonly perceived as customary international law at the time.¹⁷ Article 1 of the Convention gives a thorough definition of “slavery”:

¹² Koki ABE, *Guntai “Ianfu” Mondai no Hoteki Sekinin*, Hogaku Semina 466, October 1993, p. 65, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 159.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 160.

¹⁵ See Article 46 of the Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land at www.icrc.org

¹⁶ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 159.

- (1) Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.
- (2) The slave trade includes all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him; all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a slave acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and, in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves.¹⁸

Given that Japan was involved in the forcible seizure, smuggling and imprisonment of women, and that the military “acted as it owned the women, thus treating them as slaves”¹⁹, the terms above can be considered as been violated.

2.3 The issue of comfort women at the Tokyo Trial and the Batavia Court

Many atrocities committed by the Japanese army would not remain unpunished. As a matter of fact, in 1943 the United Nations’ War Commission was created for the purpose of investigating war crimes, and three years later the Far Eastern Commission was set up thanks to an agreement between the Allied powers.²⁰ As a result, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE from now on), also known as the Tokyo Tribunal, and, subsequently, the Batavia Court were established.

On 19 January 1946 the Charter of the IMTFE, modelled on the Nureberg Charter, was issued;²¹ just like the statute of the Nureberg Trials would distinguish between war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and crimes against peace (aggression), the Tokyo Trials Charter would identify three types of

¹⁸ www.ohchr.org

¹⁹ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 159.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 133.

²¹ Madoka FUTAMURA, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nureberg Legacy*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 53.

crimes: “A” crimes entailed the planning of the war and aggression, “B” crimes entailed “conventional” war crimes (namely, violations of the laws and customs of war), while the “C” type encompassed atrocities and crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, et cetera).²² The IMTFE would open on 3 May 1946 and it would operate until late 1948. It is interesting to note that “the number of sessions and witnesses and the duration of the proceedings [...] were double that of Nureberg”.²³ Since the goal of the trials was, ultimately (and coherently to the goals of the occupation itself), to demilitarize and democratize Japan, the principle of de-collectivization won: the target was not the Japanese nation but Japanese individuals.²⁴

The IMTFE has been subjected to more criticism than the Nureberg Trial due to its presumed “politicization”, among other things:

What was missing from the Tokyo Trial was civilians in other Asian countries who had suffered most from Japan’s war and colonial rule. The Tokyo Trial did not examine in detail their sufferings for political reasons [...] In this sense, the trial did not offer a forum for ‘victim’s justice’ and reconciliation between Japan and people in her neighbouring countries.²⁵

It has been pointed out many times that one of the flaws of the Tokyo Trial was the lack of charges against Emperor Hirohito: as the supreme chief of the country, and the one “who under the Meiji Constitution bore ultimate responsibility for the war”,²⁶ many argue that he was the one to be deemed accountable for the war in Asia, and the atrocities that would ensue. On the contrary, the Emperor wasn’t brought to the court- not even as witness. Here lies one of the main difference between the IMTFE and its Western counterpart, the

²² DOWER, op. cit., p. 456.

²³ FUTAMURA, op. cit., p. 54.

²⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 56-57.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 58.

²⁶ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 109.

Nureberg Trial: “the nature of the defendants and the crimes they were accused of committing”.²⁷ From this point of view, the Tokyo Trial seems to have lacked completeness:

No head of the dreaded Kempeitai [...] were indicted; no leaders of ultranationalistic secret societies; no industrialists who had profited from aggression and had been intimately involved in paving the ‘road to war’. The forced mobilization of Korean and Formosan colonial subjects was not pursued as a crime against humanity, nor was the rounding up of many tens of thousands of young non-Japanese who were forced to serve as ‘comfort women’ [...].²⁸

Since all the Japanese were subjects of the Emperor (or “children of the Emperor”) according to the 1889 Constitution, including the soldiers who had fought during the war, and since the Emperor himself, “under whose name the Pacific War was fought and war atrocities committed, was pardoned”, it became very difficult, even outside the IMTFE, to pin point who was responsible for the crimes. Thus, no one came to be held accountable for many atrocities committed.²⁹

It is crucial to keep in mind in what geopolitical climate the IMTFE came to operate: the relations between the Western powers and the URSS were deteriorating rapidly, with the two factions competing for supremacy in certain areas of the world, with Eastern Asia being one of them, as the Korean War which would ensue no long after would demonstrate. In this context, Japan could become a pillar of the capitalistic, democratic West: it didn’t take long for the Americans to change their attitude towards Japan from revengeful to eager to rebuild the country.

The bottom line is that the issue of comfort women wasn’t even mentioned

²⁷ DOWER, op. cit., p. 458.

²⁸ Ivi, pp. 464-465.

²⁹ Naoki SAKAI, “*You Asians*”: *On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary*, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99(4), 791-817, 2000, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 45.

during the Tokyo Trials, even though documents about forced prostitution were presented and rape was prosecuted as a war crime.³⁰ The consequence was that “a certain collective memory of silence on sexual violence against women during the war was produced at the international level during the Trial and has been maintained for decades”.³¹

Only those deemed responsible of “A” crimes would be tried in Tokyo, while those charged with the other types of crimes would be prosecuted in national or other courts.³²

The Dutch, in particular, held trials across the East Indies. A military court was established in 1948 in Batavia (the modern-day Jakarta) where seven Japanese officers and four comfort stations operators (civilian military employees) were found guilty of committing crimes against 35 Dutch women.³³ The accusations included: forcible seizure of women and girls for the purpose of forced prostitution, coercion to prostitution, rape, and mistreatment of prisoners.³⁴

While the Batavia court was undeniably a partial victory since it was the first tribunal to tackle the issue of comfort women and to recognize forced prostitution as a crime against humanity, its scope was remarkably limited: not only it encompassed exclusively the case of comfort houses established in the Dutch East Indies but it also failed to bring justice to women of other nationalities who had been imprisoned in Dutch territories. The 35 women victims were all Dutch, whites of European descent: no one showed interest for women of other ethnicities (such as Indonesian, Malay, Indo-Dutch, etc.) who had experienced the

³⁰ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 218.

³¹ Nicola HENRY, *Memories of an Injustice: The ‘Comfort Women’ and the Legacy of the Tokyo Trial*, *Asian Studies Review*, 2013, 37(3), 362-80, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 219.

³² PICCIGALLO, P.R., *The Japanese Trial*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979, cit. in DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 134.

³³ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁴ “Hanketsubun”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 30 August 1992, p. 9, cit in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 172.

same ordeal and were under Dutch protection.³⁵

The will to investigate the issue of comfort women was visibly lacking from all parties, let alone the will to prosecute those responsible of these crimes. What was also missing was tangible evidence, as Yoshimi Yoshiaki has explained during an interview with Kim-Gibson:

“The Japanese government burned public documents during the two week period between its surrender and the arrival of the U.S. Army of occupation [...] because those documents might have worked against them in a court-martial. Since they could not recognize which documents would be used for trials, they burned everything published by government offices- especially documents about the Army and the police”.³⁶

2.4 Four decades of silence

The world wouldn't hear about comfort women until the early 1990s. Japan wasn't the only party responsible for this, however: Korea itself didn't tackle the issue, either. It has already been highlighted that most former comfort women decided to keep quiet about their ordeals, afraid to be judged harshly or simply not willing to recall such a painful experience. It is not surprising, considering how patriarchal society was:

“The violation of the chastity of these women was a matter of male as well as national pride. Some men felt dishonored by the violation of their women by the colonizer and others ignored it as a non-issue. Some simply did not want to recall their colonial past. Further, the government has not considered it important enough to warrant attention in face of pressing economic issues and has been unwilling to alienate Japan, a crucial economic partner”.³⁷

This feeling of guilt and shame wasn't exclusive to Asian women and to the

³⁵ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 137. TANAKA, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

³⁶ Quoted in KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

Asian social climate: it was also spread among former comfort women who had been brought up in the Christian faith (both Asians and Europeans) and who thought that the loss of virginity and sexual intercourse in general, abortions and miscarriages were unforgivable sins, albeit forced (an example is the testimony of Jan Ruff O’Herne, a former comfort woman of Dutch nationality, who was prevented from becoming a nun after her ordeals).³⁸

Their fears of ostracism wouldn’t prove to be groundless: such was the anti-Japanese sentiment in many countries after the war that many former comfort women were criticized, if not punished, for having been “intimate” with Japanese soldiers; this was common in China during the Cultural Revolution.³⁹

Nevertheless, this does not imply that there wasn’t a very limited number of former comfort women who tried to speak about their ordeals- they simply weren’t listened to. Hwang Keum Ju, for instance, has reported how immediately after the 1965 treaty between Japan and Korea (which will be analyzed shortly) she tried to approach Korea’s First Lady, Mrs. Park. After listening to her, the First Lady urged her to keep her story (which she labelled as “dangerous”) secret, explaining how Korea and Japan had already signed a treaty, and clarifying that maybe Hwang Keum Ju would have the possibility to come forward in the future, in times of “true peace”.⁴⁰

Japan on its part was much less willing than other aggressor countries (like Germany, for instance) to admit its faults: Yoshimi has summarized the country’s attitude towards its past crimes by stating that “Japan only talks about half of its history, the half where Japan is victimized”.⁴¹

In the meantime, several events that took place in the four decades after the

³⁸ Chunghee Sarah SOH, *The Korean “Comfort Women”: Movement for Redress*, Asian Survey, Vol. 36, N° 12, December 1996, p. 1229.

³⁹ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁰ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

⁴¹ David E. SANGER, *History Scholar in Japan Exposes a Brutal Chapter*, The New York Times International, January 27, 1992.

Second World War would shape further the issue and, in general, the relations between Japan and its neighbouring countries.

The first of such events was the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, which formally ended the war between Japan and the Allies and through which Japan formally accepted the outcome of the Tokyo Trial, thus regaining its sovereignty.⁴² Since Korea was but a Japanese colony at the time of the war, the country wasn't represented at the conference, and neither were other countries that had suffered from Japan's aggression, with the exception of the Philippines, which however wouldn't ratify the treaty until 1956.⁴³

What the treaty also did was prompting Japan to pay reparations, but only towards the Allied Powers: once again, Asian victims were ignored. The only thing that Korea gained from the treaty was the restoration of its sovereignty, plus the provision for "a legal settlement of claims by negotiation between Korea and Japan" which would pave the way for 1965 Japanese-South Korean Basic Treaty.⁴⁴

With the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation, signed on June 22, 1965, and through which the Republic of Korea aimed at gaining compensation for wartime damage, Japan committed to provide the Republic of Korea with \$300.000.000 in grants, \$200.000.000 in soft loans and \$300.000.000 in loans for private trust,⁴⁵ described as an Independence Congratulation Fund. According to the terms of the treaty, no party would make any further claims, as everything was deemed to be settled once and for all.⁴⁶ It wasn't as much a legal solution but rather a political one.⁴⁷

⁴² FUTAMURA, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴³ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

⁴⁴ HICKS, op. cit., p.170.

⁴⁵ Shigeru ODA, *The Normalization of Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea*, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 61, N°1, January 1967, p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, p. 47.

⁴⁷ HICKS, op. cit., p. 171.

Once again, the issue of comfort women was swept under the rug:

With a series of military men at the helm of repressive regimes, and the Korean War to deal with in the 1950s and 1960s, comfort women were not a priority. The fact that many of the Korean women pressed into sexual service by the Japanese came from the poorer lower classes possibly made the issue insignificant to the ruling élite.⁴⁸

The importance of the treaty lies in the fact that it would be invoked countless times, usually from the Japanese part, to dismiss claims for apologies and compensation.

The following decade saw an increase in Korea of interest for wartime issues. The subject of comfort women was first raised in 1972 with the establishment of the Korean Forced Draft Investigation Group, which, as the name itself suggests, focused on the conscription of labourers during the Japanese occupation.⁴⁹ Given that, as it has been demonstrated, the forced draft of labourers would entail the provision of comfort women, the issue was bound to be brought forward.

The 1970s would contribute to the rise of general consciousness also in another, more indirect way. As a matter of fact, during the decade sex-tourism in Korea skyrocketed. Japanese men made up the majority of the “tourists” but the business was concentrated also in the proximity of American Military bases. The Korean government, seeing the flourishing of the industry as a source of foreign exchange, not only did nothing to prevent it but even encouraged it, with one Director of Education calling it “patriotic”.⁵⁰ This prompted South Korean women to take action: outraged by sex tours, a number of women’s organization from South Korea and Japan, mainly of Christian nature, started to held

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 172.

⁴⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 172-173.

⁵⁰ *Ivi*, p. 174.

demonstrations at airports.

Professor Yun Chung Ok, who had narrowly avoided forced conscription during the war and who would become known as a pioneer in the quest for justice for comfort women, saw the sex tours and the issue of comfort houses as deeply interwoven by drawing a parallelism between Japanese sex tourists and wartime Japanese soldiers: the modern Japanese “industrial soldier” was contributing to the homeland’s power, once again by taking advantage of Korean women’s bodies.⁵¹

In 1977, the Asian Women’s Association was established with the purpose to protest against the exploitation of *kisaeng* (female entertainers).

Neither Japan wasn’t excluded from this wave: journalistic reports, movies and books concerning Japanese war crimes began circulating. Examples include Yamatano Tetsuo’s 1979 movie “An Old Lady in Okinawa: Testimony of a Military Comfort Women”, which is based on the experiences of a Korean comfort woman, and Kim Il-myon’s 1976 study “The Emperor’s Forces and Korean Comfort Women”, which was published in Japan.⁵² In 1983 Yoshida Seiji, a former Japanese soldier, published his book of memoirs, “My War Crimes: The Forced Draft of Koreans”, in which he described the atrocities that the Army committed on civilians of other nationalities during the war.

It was not until the late 1980s, with the end of the South Korean dictatorial regime and the start of the process of democratization, that the women’s movement received a final push. 1988 in particular was a decisive year: under the leadership of professor Yun, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (shortened as Korean Council from now on) was established within the South Korean Church Women’s Alliance. What was revolutionary was the mindset that the Korean Council aimed to promote:

⁵¹ *Ivi*, pp. 175-176.

⁵² KIMURA, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Under the influence of feminist thought, the group abandoned the traditional condemnation of prostitution as an offence against chastity- an essential patriarchal coconcept. It favoured instead an emphasis on women's sexual freedom and self-determination. Professor Yun and her associates criticise even the sympathetic Kim Il-myon for distinguishing between Japanese comfort women, who were mainly of prostitute background, and 'innocent' Korean draftees. The distinction between 'respectable' and 'disruptable' women is meaningless, they say, if neither has sexual freedom under patriarchy.⁵³

Yun's group wasted no time in taking concrete action, starting by visiting former comfort women in a series of investigative travels and making their findings public.

In 1989, when Emperor Hirohito died, a demonstration was held in Seoul's Pagoda Park against sending an official mission of condolence, which was used also as an occasion to bring forward the issue of comfort women and demand an official apology from Japan.

2.5 The turning point of the 1990s

Yun's findings were published starting from January 1990 in a series of articles in the South Korean Hangyore Newspaper and they made considerable impact on the country's public.⁵⁴

In May of the same year, as president's Roh Tae Wu official visit to Japan approached, three Korean women's organizations issued a joint statement with a list of demands from the Japanese government, which included admitting the crime, apologizing for it, and compensating the victims.⁵⁵ The Korean Foreign Ministry requested an official list of Korean labour draftees of the Second World War, which the Japanese government granted, but comfort women didn't appear

⁵³ HICKS, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

⁵⁴ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵⁵ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 100.

in it as a specific category. During Roh's visit the concern of Emperor Akihito (who had rose to the throne the previous year) was limited to expressing sorrow for the ordeals which Koreans had to endure during Japanese rule, which apparently was enough for Roh but not for women's organizations.

A month after Roh's visit, the issue was raised again, this time in the Japanese Diet by Motooka Shoji, a member of the Social Democratic Party, who claimed to have evidence concerning the involvement of official authorities in the control of comfort houses; he was dismissed by Director-General Shimizu, who tried to justify the forced recruitment of women by stating that everything had been carried out according to the terms of the National General Mobilisation Law, and that he had "heard from senior people" that private operators were responsible for recruiting comfort women.⁵⁶

In Autumn of the same year, the Korean Council issued a letter to the Japanese government, addressing Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki. Describing the response of the "aggressor-nation"s government as "irresponsible", the letter contained six demands which, when satisfied, could redeem Japan of its past crimes and render the country a "democratic state endowed with true morality": admitting the forced recruitment of comfort women, issueing a public apology, disclosing the evidence, build a memorial for the victims, compensating the women or their families, including the issue in historical education programs.⁵⁷

They wouldn't receive a reply until April 1991, when the Japanese Embassy in Seoul verbally responded that there was no evidence to prove the coercive recruitment of Korean women; in addition, it was stated that Japanese textbooks already expressed regret for the former imperialistic politics, and that every dispute had been settled with the 1965 treaty.

What the Korean Council would continue doing was holding meetings and symposiums to publicise the issue, without receiving satisfying responses nor

⁵⁶ HICKS, op. cit., p. 182.

⁵⁷ The whole text can be found in HICKS, op. cit., pp. 183-185.

from Japan nor from their own government.

The turning point arrived on 14 August 1991, when Kim Hak Sun became the first former comfort women who decided to testify publicly, thus bringing the issue to a level of legal action.⁵⁸ She has stated that what prompted her to testify were the Japanese lies about comfort women, and their claims that the women did it voluntarily for compensation.⁵⁹

It is also true that the political climate of the 1990s encouraged the disclosure and rise of various issues, including that of comfort women, since it was the decade when “the problematic issue of women’s sexual exploitation by capitalism, colonialism and nation-states and in war and conflicts started to be discussed widely in Asia and globally”.⁶⁰

After Kim Hak Sun’s, other two testimonies of women who decided not to reveal their true names followed shortly; their action would culminate in December, when the three former comfort women sued the Japanese government in a Tokyo district court, opening what would be known as the Asia-Pacific War Korean Victims Compensation Claim Case. In the course of the following months and years, many other former comfort women would do the same.

Various events snowballed so that it became impossible, especially for the Japanese, to ignore the subject. On 11 January 1992, the Asahi Shinbun newspaper published the documents, found by Yoshimi Yoshiaki, attesting the direct involvement of the Japanese military in the establishment of the comfort stations system. Given that the disclosure coincided with the visit, on January 16, of Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi to South Korea, Miyazawa couldn’t avoid the issue, which brought him to apologize and express regret, both before and during his visit, for the wrongs that Koreans had endured at the hands of the Imperial Army. A few days before, on January 8, a gathering organized by the

⁵⁸ *Ivi*, p. 188.

⁵⁹ Quoted in KIM-GIBSON, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁶⁰ KIMURA, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Korean Council in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul had taken place: the so-called “Wednesday Demonstrations” had begun; continuing to this very day, it is the longest running weekly demonstration in South Korea.⁶¹

Thanks to the work of professor Yoshimi, the Japanese authorities had to do what until then had been denied: admitting their country’s fault. Miyazawa wouldn’t be the only one to apologize publicly: on July 6 Kato Koichi, at the time Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party, expressed his sincere apology (owabi) for what had happened during World War II.⁶² He would be followed, among the others, by Prime Minister Murayama Tomichi and Foreign Minister Watanabe Michio. Still, the importance of the language used by the Japanese politicians has been highlighted: terms like “remorse” (hansei), “aggression-like acts” and “acts of aggression” are far from being as explicit as “crime” and “war of aggression”, which were never mentioned.⁶³

After Miyazawa’s visit, it was decided to set up two fact finding committees, one in Japan and one in South Korea, whose reports would decide on the future of a possible measure ‘in lieu of compensation’ for comfort women.⁶⁴

The Japanese report, which many many government agencies participated to, was published on 6 July 1992, containing 127 documents. Its main flaws were the lack of relevant documents from the Police Agency and the Labour Agency, of documents regarding the recruitment of comfort women, and the paucity of interviews with actual witnesses, all reasons that earned the criticism of the Korean Council which described the report as mere enumeration of data, “something extremely insincere which does not mention the concrete content of injuries or the locus of command and responsibility”.⁶⁵ Moreover, they expressed

⁶¹ www.womenandwar.net/contents/general

⁶² Maria Amelia ODETTI, *Jugun Ianfu (Comfort Women): La Schiavitù Sessuale nel Sud-Est Asiatico Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale e la Memoria Femminile*, DEP (Deportate, esule, profughe), 4 March 2006, p. 38.

⁶³ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 103.

⁶⁴ HICKS, op. cit., p. 198.

⁶⁵ Quoted in HICKS, op. cit., p. 231.

their indignation regarding the possibility of a livelihood fund as a measure in lieu of compensation, which would only prolongate their humiliation.

The South Korean report was published on 31 July and consisted of a survey of the Japanese report's contents and of the U.S.A. Army reports, plus a certain amount of testimonies, in addition to a critique addressed to the Japanese counterpart for its lack of comprehensiveness. What the South Korean report did what specifying the difference, which until then had been blurred, between Labour Service women and comfort women.⁶⁶

Worth of mention is also the North Korean report on the matter which came out in September of the same year; it was essentially similiar to the South Korean one, even though much more vehement in tone, showing also more aggressiveness towards Japan.⁶⁷

The issue of comfort women received even more international recognition and closer ties with the United Nations thanks to the International Public Hearing on Post-war Compensation by Japan, held in Tokyo on 9 December 1992. It consisted of both verbal and documentary reports and testimonies of victims, many of who precised that they demanded a sincere apology rather than compensation.⁶⁸

Another Japanese report, supplementary to that of July of the previous year, was published on 4 August 1993. The following facts were acknowledged: that the military was directly responsible for the establishment of comfort houses; that women were "in many cases" recruited against their will; that they were kept in coercion in comfort houses where they endured abuses. In conclusion, the government expressed once again its apologies an regrets.⁶⁹ Cabinet Chief Secretary Kono Yohei made also a public statement of great impact on the matter,

⁶⁶ HICKS, op. cit., p. 229.

⁶⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 232-234.

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, p. 257.

⁶⁹ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 36.

reiterating what was acknowledged and apologizing to those women whose “honour and dignity” were injured at the hand of the military.⁷⁰

Without downplaying the importance of the report and Kono’s statement, there were still a few flaws in the document: firstly, it was still unclear how significant was the involvement of the military in the forcible seizure of women when compared to that of private recruiters; secondly, only Koreans were mentioned, leaving former comfort women of other ethnicities out of the matter; thirdly, the government response to all that was acknowledged was limited to apologies, without the interest to engage in questions of international law and deepen the subject of the international and legal dimension of the crimes committed.⁷¹

In September 1994, the “Murayama Plan” (named after the Prime Minister of the time) was announced, which would consist of two funds: a governmental one with over \$1.000.000.000 and a non-governmental one with incomes coming from private citizens and organizations; together, they would be named “Asian Peace and Friendship Fund for Women”- with only the second one being used for payments to the victims, while the governmental fund would be used to promote peace and friendship in Asia. Hence the issue of compensation became a matter of citizen charity, which was viewed as an added insult.⁷²

The Asian Women’s Fund was based on the principles of moral requirement (ongi) and social duty (giri) of the Japanese citizens. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the Japanese denomination of the fund is “National Foundation” (Kokumin kikin), which doesn’t mention comfort women at all.⁷³ In other words, it has been broadly considered as a measure to avoid legal matters. The fund

⁷⁰ The whole statement can be found at www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html

⁷¹ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷² Jordan SAND, *Historians and Public Memory in Japan: The “Comfort Women” Controversy*, History and Memory, Vol.11, N°2, 1999, p. 120.

⁷³ ODETTI, op. cit., p. 41.

would end up being closed in 2007.⁷⁴

In April 1996, a report on the comfort women was submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights by Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Rapporteur of the U.N. on violence against women. The report claimed that the comfort women constituted a clear case of sexual slavery and, reporting the will of the former comfort women who had been interviewed, demanded from the Japanese government the following actions:

- apologize individually to all survivors;
- recognize the involvement of the government in the sexual slavery system;
- recognize that the comfort women system constituted a crime against humanity, a violation of international humanitarian law, a crime against peace;
- accept moral and legal responsibility;
- compensate the survivors through governmental funds;
- withdraw the Asian Women's Fund;
- initiate a thorough investigation of the facts;
- include the issue in the Japanese historical education programs;
- identify and prosecute, under Japanese law, all individuals involved in the process.⁷⁵

The Japanese response consisted of another report to the U.N. in which its Permanent Mission replied that various Japanese Prime Ministers had already apologized, that school books already contained references to comfort women, and that every dispute had already been settled through the San Francisco and other bilateral treaties, adding that, according to international law, the right to individual compensation was not part of the Universal Declaration of Human

⁷⁴ www.awf.or.jp/e3/dissolution.html

⁷⁵ E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1, in hrlibrary.umn.edu.

2.6 Challenges of the new millennium

The 1990s were the decade when the issue of comfort women, from being recluded in the victims' minds and hearts, crossed international boundaries, becoming a subject of global interest. Albeit all the legal difficulties in dealing with Japan's responsibility, the new millennium started on a fairly high note for victims and activists: the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, a people's tribunal, was held in Tokyo from from December 8 to 12 with the aim to "consider the criminal liability of leading high-ranking Japanese military and political officials and the separate responsibility of the state of Japan for rape and sexual slavery as a crime against humanity".⁷⁷

Frustrated by the lack of proper response to the issue (including the absence of the subject at the IMTFE), various victims and NGOs were prompted to unite their efforts and establish the Tribunal, with the Violence Against Women in War Network of Japan being the main instigator back in 1998. The prosecution teams came from ten countries, all of which had been victims of Japan's war of aggression. The Tribunal was seen as an addendum to former trials, with the difference that, being a people's tribunal, it had no legal authority.

The trial consisted of former comfort women's testimonies as well as documentary and expert evidence that linked the crimes to the Japanese authorities and Emperor Hirohito himself- and here lied the main success of the Tribunal: not only was Hirohito named as an accused, he was also found guilty by the judges on the grounds that, being the supreme commander in chief, he was responsible for the other organs' actions.

Japan had been notified about the start of the trial in November and invited

⁷⁶ E/CN.4/1996/137, in www.awf.or.jp

⁷⁷ Christine M. CHINKIN, *Women's International Tribunal on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery*, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 95, N°2, 2001, p. 335.

to participate; the former aggressor country neither responded, neither came.⁷⁸

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's statements of March 2007 represented a major setback: it consisted in denying that the military was directly involved in the recruitment of sexual slaves (although he did admit that coercion in the process was the norm) and that private recruiters were responsible for it, adducing the lack of evidence as a proof.⁷⁹ What was achieved with the Kono Statement of seemed to vanish, even though in the end Abe decided to uphold the statement of 1993.

A response came also from the U.S.A. in July of the same year: with the Resolution 121 passed by the House of Representatives, Japan was encouraged to "formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner", but Japan rejected the resolution altogether.⁸⁰

On 28 December 2015, after talks between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye over the issue, a formal agreement was reached between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, with Japan granting a fund of \$8.3 million to the victims and South Korea promising to limit the criticism of Japan's behaviour and work on the removal of the memorial statue for comfort women in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, just like Japan had requested.⁸¹ Once again, the sum granted was described as "humanitarian gesture" by Abe, with Seoul claiming that the issue was settled "finally and irreversibly" and that the country would not raise the question again at the United Nations nor in any other international forum.⁸² Surviving comfort women expressed their indignation for not been consulted, claiming once again that they only demanded

⁷⁸ *Ivi*, p. 338.

⁷⁹ Hirofumi HAYASHI, *Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System and Its Perception in History*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 617, 2008, pp. 123-124.

⁸⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 128-129.

⁸¹ Jake ADELSTEIN and Angela KUBO, 'Gesture of Healing': South Korea and Japan reconcile on World War II sex slaves, *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 2015.

⁸² Justin McCURRY, *Former sex slaves reject Japan and South Korea's 'Comfort Women' Accord*, *The Guardian*, 26 January 2016.

a face-to-face apology and official compensation.

The dispute has largely become an issue between South Korea and Japan, since the latter has stated that there are no plans to settle agreements with comfort women in other countries.⁸³

On 26 July 2016, based on the bilateral agreement of the previous year, the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation was established by the South Korean government to provide for the 40 recognized surviving comfort women in South Korea and the families of the deceased ones, with the payments stemming from a billion yen with the contribution of the Japanese government.⁸⁴ As for August 2016, Japan is still pushing for the removal on the statue of the comfort girl in front of its embassy in Seoul, a request that is heavily contested by activists.

⁸³ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁴ Kentaro NAKAJIMA, *Foundation Set Up in ROK for 'Comfort Women'*, The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun, 28 July 2016.

CHAPTER 3

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: SHAME, DENIAL AND REVISIONISM

The fear of being socially stigmatized was what had prevented former sexual slaves to speak about their ordeals in the first place. It is sadly true that a certain mixture of shame and guilt is common to almost every rape survivor and that those feelings, coupled with the fear of being judged, are what prevents many of them from testifying or even speak about the rape.

In the case of former comfort women these fears were not groundless, judging from the reactions that their testimonies prompted in the early 1990s. As if what they had experienced had not been traumatic enough and testifying painful enough, what they had to face next were the judgemental attitudes of the people that, at least until then, had been close to them: several victims have reported how neighbours, friends and sometimes even relatives decided to cut ties with them completely, apparently deeming their conduct during the war “dishonorable”.¹

But what was, and what still is, the perception about the issue of other actors, such as former Japanese soldiers, other countries occupied by Japan during the Second World War, and the Japanese nation?

3.1 Statements of former Japanese soldiers

Since the issue emerged, many former members of the Imperial Army have decided to come forward and testify about their own involvement in the comfort women system. Three of them, Nagatomi Kouki, Ichikawa Ichiro, Suzuki Yoshio were interviewed by the Internal Commission of Jurists in 1993. They had similar motivations as to why they were willing to testify, adducing the Japanese

¹ KIMURA, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

government's lack of remorse for its past crimes,² thus showing a critical view of the comfort women system.

The first two soldiers aforementioned had been in charge of a comfort station during the war, with Ichikawa been tried for "C" class crimes and spending five years in a detention camp in Siberia after the conflict. Ichikawa's testimony in particular was inconsistent in various points with the womens' testimonies, with him claiming than no other form of violence was inflicted upon the prisoners apart from the sexual one, that women were free to leave the comfort station momentarily and that they were given money.³

Suzuki specified that he himself had used the comfort station upon becoming a non-commissioned officer, adding that what happened inside of the station was indeed rape, that many women whom he visited recounted how they had been deceived, and yet in his interview he does not show any specific feeling of remorse for his own actions: he recounts his visits to comfort stations and how these were in reality rape stations, but he seems far from considering himself a rapist.

The problem is in fact that many soldiers viewed the comfort stations as ordinary brothels, and that therefore, even though many of them didn't openly despise or mistreat the women, they weren't interested in how miserable they were, either; in fact, the "romanticization" of the comfort woman was a spread mindset.⁴ This is, after all, were the word "comfort" stemmed from. As one former soldier recalls: "I also heard that when soldiers were transferred, they were presented with farewell gifts by comfort women, I had an impression that comfort stations were amiable rather than miserable".⁵

There are then witnesses who are even more openly skeptical about

² DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, op. cit., p. 121.

³ *Ivi*, p. 122.

⁴ KIMURA, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

⁵ *Ivi*, p. 126.

labelling what happened in comfort houses as rape, as is the case with another former soldier:

I felt that these women behaved as professional prostitutes. [...] Generally, they seemed to focus on earning money. [...] In fact, we took advantage of this and fulfilled our sexual needs, but this is what we had to do at that time. I don't feel particular guilty. They saw themselves as professionals, and we, too, considered them to be earning money. Therefore, I never witnessed or heard anyone who was forced against their will. So, I don't have any guilt feelings.⁶

In conclusion, there seem to be very few witnesses who side completely with the survivors. Kim Hak Soon has recounted how she received support from one of them during a prayer meeting in Japan in 1994, when activists sat in front of Diet:

The majority of Japanese of our generation simply avoided us. But there was one Japanese man, about seventy years of age who came and said, holding my hand 'I know you are telling the truth. I know all about it because I was an army doctor in China'. Then, he sat beside me. So there are some good Japanese people.⁷

3.2 The disputes in Japan

Being a former aggressor country which has perpetrated heinous crimes during the Second World War, but also a country which has bore horrors at the hands of others (especially the U.S.A.) during and after the conflict (with the two atomic bombs and the crimes against civilians in Okinawa being the most obvious examples, not to mention the internment camps for Japanese Americans), the issue of war-time responsibility is subject to seemingly unending discussions in

⁶ Kyoto 'Oshietekudasai "Ianfu" Jyoho Denwa' Hokokushu Henshu Inkaei, *Sei to Shinryaku*, Tokyo, Shakaihyoronha, 1993, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 126.

⁷ Quoted in KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 104.

Japan. As in other countries, the main dichotomy is between right-wingers, who stand on more defensive positions, denying, if not the crimes altogether, their weight, and left-wingers who push for more room to discuss certain matters and who are way harsher towards the government.

Even if not openly nationalistic and revisionist, the mainstream narrative in Japan represents war as universally evil and puts the sufferings of all Asians at the same level, without drawing a distinction between the Japanese war of aggression and wars of resistance against it, thus absolving not only the crimes of the Imperial Army but also those large portions of Japanese society which supported fanatical nationalism, enabling a sort of collective amnesia.⁸

The arguments against comfort women's case have been summarised by women's groups and reported by Hicks as follows:

- Enormities of all kinds are inevitable in war;
- Comfort women were a 'necessary evil' to maintain order and health;
- Apart from possible coercion, which is asserted and not proved, recruitment was on a contractual basis in accordance with then-legal procedures;
- Compensation was settled by the 1965 Basic Treaty;
- The whole issue is Japanese media hype to gain public interest and sell newspapers;
- The past is past, which most people prefer to forget like a bad dream;
- Why only Koreans?
- Korean brothel keepers were involved;
- There is no way of determining the total number of women involved;
- The issue is best ignored for the sake of future good relations, since it can only be a source of friction.⁹

It has already been pointed out how the post-war climate and the willingness

⁸ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., pp. 4-5 (translator's introduction).

⁹ HICKS, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

of the Western Powers to render Japan a useful ally for the sake of the common efforts against the Soviet Union have contributed to the disinterest towards Japanese crimes. When we consider how patriarchy predominant was (and that under patriarchy the concept of sexual violence has a different relevance and significance) and that most former comfort women came from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is no surprise that the issue was even less researched and considered in comparison to other atrocities.

It is important to stress that, although patriarchy and nationalism can be deeply interwoven, being a woman does not imply siding with the woman victim, if nationalism proves to be stronger: an example is Uesaka Fuyuko, a freelance journalist who in 1992 published an article in the *Shukan Post* in which she questioned why the issue had arisen so suddenly, implying that it might be economically motivated.¹⁰ In addition, she claimed that the Japanese forces of the time considered the comfort stations a “necessary evil” and that the present generations should not carry such burden in any case. More of half the letters that she received after the publication were of support; nevertheless, the newspaper in which her article was published is right-leaning, hence it would be an exaggeration to state that her views mirrored those of a large part of Japanese society.

Despite the significant presence of left-wing intellectuals, the conservative and nationalistic stance on history has always been predominant in Japan, where the “political establishment has maintained silence on questions of war responsibility whenever possible”.¹¹ From this point of view it is not difficult to notice the difference between the post-war mindset of two aggressor nations, namely Germany and Japan: unlike its Western counterpart, Japan has never offered compensation to the victims of its Second World War actions.¹²

¹⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 216-217.

¹¹ Jordan SAND, *Historians and Public Memory in Japan: The “Comfort Women” Controversy*, *History and Memory*, Vol.11, N°2, 1999, p. 118.

¹² *Ivi*, p. 119.

A factor that most likely played in favor of a more revisionist conception of history in Japan was the country economic and social situation of the 1990s: the rise of the comfort women issue (and its booming, if we will) coincided with what seemed to be the end of Japan's economic and technological advance, which had accompanied the country for roughly four decades and whose incredibly fast pace had surprised the whole world. It is universally acknowledged that economic crises fuel dissatisfaction, social unrest and, ultimately, nationalism. Japan was no exception.¹³

In this climate, right-wingers managed to do what left-wingers couldn't, or did not wish to do: take advantage of their countrymen's protective feelings towards their parents, grandparents, uncles; in other words, the argument of the right-wing is that it is not fair to accuse those who made enormous sacrifices during the war of being rapists, torturers and such.¹⁴ As Kobayashi Yoshinori, a right-leaning manga cartoonist, put it: "We forgive the sexual desire of our fathers who fought for the fatherland".¹⁵

Kobayashi's stance on comfort women is in fact the proof that political and historical matters are not quite limited to the political sphere, but more often than not peruse other, more public and universally accessible spheres such as art and pop culture, which ends up being even more dangerous for the public memory. Kobayashi's graphic novel "The New Statement of Arrogance" (Shin Gomanism Sengen) of 1997 became a best-seller but it also triggered a variety of criticism for its historical revisionism and the author's denial regarding sexual slavery.¹⁶ By creating contrasting images, with modern-day Japanese people enjoying life in all possible ways in what has become a first-world country on one side and Japanese

¹³ Claudia SCHNEIDER, *The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 617, *The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective*, 2008, p. 110.

¹⁴ KIMURA, op. cit., pp. 132 and 136-137.

¹⁵ UENO, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁶ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 170.

soldiers fighting in dire conditions during the war, he creates a rationale according to which those who enjoy a carefree life can only be thankful to the sacrifices that so many of their countrymen made during the conflict, thus Japanese retroactive responsibility is absolved.¹⁷

One of the main excuses of what might be called the “anti-apology team” is that sexual slaves were simply prostitutes, thus women who decided on their free volition to engage in sexual intercourse with Japanese soldiers to gain money and escape from rampant poverty (as one former soldiers who we quoted has stated). What this logic implies, is that what might have been an unpleasant experience is not enough to demand an apology from Japan.¹⁸ This was also the stance of Okuno Seisuke, the former Justice Minister, who declared in 1996 that comfort women were nothing more than prostitutes.¹⁹

In July 2014, Yamamoto Yumiko, President of Nadeshiko Action (also known as Japanese Women for Justice and Peace), claimed during a conference that no one denied the existence of comfort stations but that it was not a matter of sexual slavery, and that bringing the issue forward, especially in the U.S.A., would put the Japanese abroad in a difficult position.²⁰ She added that these women were prostitutes and they in fact enjoyed stable living conditions, enjoying mundane activities and receiving enough money to buy all the supplies they wanted.

Some have even gone as far as praising the Japanese authorities for building what they label as brothels and for “protecting” the “working women” against private operators and pimps, claiming that “if the Japanese government had been

¹⁷ Yoshinori KOBAYASHI and Yoshikazu TAKEUCHI, *Kyokasho Ga Oshiekanenai Jigyaku* (The Masochism that Textbooks are Perfectly Capable of Teaching), Center for Research Into False Charges of War Crimes Against Japan, Tokyo, 1997, 184, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 16 (translator’s introduction).

¹⁸ See for example Koichi MERA, *Comfort Women not “Sex Slaves”*: Rectifying the Myriam of Perspectives, Xlibris, 2015.

¹⁹ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 12 (translator’s introduction).

²⁰ Watch the whole statement at www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8rd1kXMUM8

involved at all, [...] it had intervened only to protect these women and to keep order in comfort stations”.²¹

A common trend among revisionists is to depreciate the former comfort women testimonies, and this is done in various ways. First of all, discrepancies in testimonies are highlighted, which brings revisionists to label these women as not trustworthy, adding that it is support groups who manipulate them in order to win legal procedures.²² The core of the matter is that there are in fact slight inconsistencies in certain testimonies, most of which have been attributed to former comfort women’s senility and post-traumatic stress disorder.²³

Nevertheless, the accusations of lying do not stop here:

[...] they consider that the testimonies of ‘comfort women’ lack validity because of their ‘dishonourable’ lives after the war. [...] ...the revisionists have also challenged women’s testimonies on the grounds that what has been testified is implausible [...] ...only what they regard as possible can happen in history, and [...] these events can be supported by evidence in official documents. [...] However, they are not as empirical as they claim: what they say is based on an assumption that what is unthinkable cannot be true, and that only those events on which official records exist actually happened; [...] Finally, conservative critics have exploited the relative absence of testimonies of Japanese women and have claimed that women of any virtue would not dare to testify to their experience of having sex with a number of soldiers.²⁴

Thus it can be noticed, especially from the last claim, that revisionism is not just an expression of blind nationalism but, being based on nationalism, is also interwoven with patriarchy and therefore with the dichotomy between respectable and fallen woman, which we have already analyzed several times.

²¹ Yoshinori KOBAYASHI, *Shin Gomanism Sengen*, Tokyo, Shogakkan, 1997, and Yonson AHN, *Korean ‘Comfort Women’ and Military Sexual Slavery in World War II*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 128.

²² KIMURA, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

²³ *Ivi*, p. 134.

²⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 130-131.

In May 2013 the Mayor of Osaka, Hashimoto Toru, co-leader of the Japan Restoration Party, commented that the comfort women system was “necessary”.²⁵ Many politicians have distanced themselves from Hashimoto’s remarks and criticism towards him, even from the mass media, has been harsh. Regardless, many mainstream politicians (most coming from the LDP), including, as we have seen, Prime Minister Abe, remain skeptical about admitting Japan’s past faults and are on the contrary great admirers of prewar Japan,²⁶ thus is unrealistic to expect any kind of honest sympathy from their part for former sexual slaves: during the election campaign of 2012, the LDP (which, under the leadership of Abe, would end up winning) integrated in its manifesto a plan to review “incorrect” historical teachings, including the matter of comfort women.²⁷

3.2.1 The textbook controversy in Japan

The debates around Japan’s colonial past and responsibility have influenced, as we have seen, many spheres of everyday life. One of the most significant battlefields where the right and the left wings have confronted each other was the field of education, with a particular focus on textbooks. The question was if, and how to include the issue of Japan’s past hostile acts towards their nations, and if and how to integrate the subject of comfort women. An important actor from this point of view has been the Japanese Ministry of Education (MOE) which, albeit claiming to have neutral stances on the matter, has always leaned towards the conservative side.²⁸

Even though the dispute reached its climax in the mid-1990s, the discussion around textbooks had started much earlier. Already in 1955 conservative politicians were criticizing then-existing history books, stating that they mirrored

²⁵ www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22519384.

²⁶ HAYASHI, op. cit., p. 129.

²⁷ H. YAMAMOTO, *Jyugun Ianfu Mondai no Keii-Konodawa wo Meguru Ugoki wo Chushin ni*, National Diet Library of Japan, Tokyo, 2013, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁸ SCHNEIDER, op. cit., p. 109.

“anti-Japanese” and “pro-Chinese” stances and calling them “deplorable”.²⁹ In 1982 the issue gained international attention when mass media reported, in what later was recognized to be a hoax, that the MOE had ordered a revision of textbooks in order to whitewash the part which depicted the country as a colonial power and aggressor, which triggered the reactions of Japan’s neighbours, with the immediate result that the MOE added the “Neighbouring Countries Clause Criteria” for school books: consideration had to be given to other countries’ perception of history, a source of discontent for conservatives.³⁰

In 1995 the MOE gave its approval for a new type of school books to go in use in 1997, namely junior high-school textbooks which mentioned for the first time comfort women (although school text for high school which highlighted the subject had already circulated).³¹ Although intellectuals had struggled a great deal to convince the MOE, and although the mention of comfort women in the new textbooks consisted only of a few lines,³² the decision prompted Nishio Kanji, a professor of German literature and philosophy, Fujioka Nobukatsu, a professor of education at Tokyo University, and Kobayashi Yoshinori to found the Japanese Society For History Textbook Reform, also known as the Liberalist History Research Group (Jiyushugi Shikan Kenkyukai or Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho Wo Tsukurukai).

The adjective “liberal” was here employed in a peculiar way, since the aim of the group was to “liberate” historical studies from the biased views of the extreme right and the extreme left, namely from the so-called “Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal perspective”, the “Comintern History” but also from the “affirmation of the Greater East Asian War”, thus eliminate what in their view was a “masochistic” teaching of Japanese history and free the latter from any

²⁹ *Ivi*, p. 108.

³⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 109-110.

³¹ SAND, op. cit., p. 120.

³² YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 25.

ideology.³³

Albeit their claims about neutrality, the group's stance was clearly nationalistic: going as far as stating that Japan was "a nation ideologically and spiritually enslaved", thus "not a sovereign nation",³⁴ their aim was to foster self-confidence in Japanese people, which was apparently to be done through the elimination of the subject of sexual slaves in history books. It is in this context that Kobayashi's manga work was published, and must be understood.

The group adduces as a justification for Imperial Japan's actions the fact that Western powers, some of which Japan fought side to side with, are not apologizing for their brutality either and that therefore it is not fair to demand a different behaviour from Japan.³⁵ While it is true that historical partiality deeply affects Western countries to this very day, the group's demands seem to stem from a delusional perspective, especially if we consider how much Germany has done to amend for its actions.

Former comfort women and their supporters have held a special place among the Liberalist Group's targets. Ueno Chizuko has summarized the group's arguments against the inclusion of the subject in textbooks in four points:

- First, they assert that there are no tangible proofs that the women were forced to perform the job; as Kimura Maki has pointed out, it is the mistake of thinking that the lack of documents implies that something is automatically unthinkable;
- Second, they assert that verbal testimony, especially if coming from women who have been silent for so long, is not trustworthy;
- Third, they state that the subject of sex and the "dark side" of sex must be avoided in school; quite weak an excuse, if we consider the

³³ UENO, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

³⁴ Eita NAMIKAWA, *The Iniquities of History Education in Japan During the Postwar Period*, in Society for History Textbook Reform, "The Restoration of a National History", 15, cit. in YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 17 (translator's introduction).

³⁵ UENO, op. cit., p. 130.

amount of daily exposure to sex in Japan, and that many victims of the sexual slavery system were about the same age as these pupils.

- Fourth, Japan must recover its national pride.³⁶

Sand has described the work of the group as a “dangerous mix of selective positivism and relativism” as these intellectuals, while appealing to the patriotic, emotional feelings of their countrymen (hence using irrational means) on one hand, demand from their counterparts evidence “in the most narrow, legalistic sense”.³⁷

The group ended up producing its own school text titled “New History Textbook”, which was approved in 2001 after a fair number of revisions demanded by the authorities to tone down the nationalistic tones, an effort which gave poor fruits given the low rate of the textbook’s adoption among schools.³⁸

By 2005, all mentions of comfort women were erased from schools texts due to political pressure.³⁹ In general, the coordinated work of the MOE, of the LDP and the mass media have contributed to downsize the mention of Japan’s aggression and crimes.⁴⁰ After 2012 therefore there have been no high school textbooks mentioning the sexual slavery system,⁴¹ even though the South Korean and Chinese governments have filed official complaints and feminists and left-wing historians have tried to challenge the predominant narrative.

3.3 Responses to revisionism

Although in Japan the right-wing and revisionist side of the debate has

³⁶ Ivi, pp. 131-132.

³⁷ SAND, op. cit., p. 123.

³⁸ SCHNEIDER, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 116.

⁴⁰ HAYASHI, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴¹ Women’s Active Museum, *Nihongun ‘Ianfu’ Mondai Subete no Gimon ni Kotaemasu*, Tokyo, Godoshuppan, 2013, 65, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit., p. 17.

always had a significant advantage, it would be unfair to disregard the efforts of the Japanese left. It must not be forgotten, after all, that it was the Japanese historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki who brought the issue forward, and that the Women's International Tribunal of 2000 was initiated by a Japanese organization.

Another example of commitment to justice on the Japanese side is the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility (JWRC, Nihon no Senso Sekinin Shiryo Sentaa), established in 1993 (with Yoshimi as one of the founding members), which in 2007 pushed the government to adopt the U.S. Resolution on comfort women,⁴² and which constantly encouraged it to admit the Japanese authorities' faults for the sexual slavery system.

Nevertheless, scholars such as Kimura and Ueno have pointed out inaccuracies and mistakes that have been made by left-wingers and feminists in their response to revisionism, mistakes that have, in a sense, costed them the victory on their counterpart and, in certain cases, even the trust of former comfort women.

These inaccuracies stem predominantly from wrong philosophical assumption since, as Kimura asserts, left-wingers and feminists have "employed a similar conceptual framework to the revisionists".⁴³

First of all, both for Kimura and Ueno the concept of "quest for truth" can be rather problematic from a philosophical point of view. Semantically, the word "truth" and the discussions around "objective truth" and "facts" can open a Pandora box. This becomes evident, they argue, when for instance we confront the testimonies of former Japanese soldiers and surviving sexual slaves, which look incompatible: Ueno asserts that instead of "truth" we should look out for "realities", which are not in error, and that "the problem is recognizing that the 'reality' of the oppressed, which has been concealed and forced into conformity

⁴² HAYASHI, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴³ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 132.

by the ‘reality of the dominant’, has such an unimaginably different face”.⁴⁴

Ueno and Yoshimi had a confrontation on the matter, with the latter accusing the former of having “misunderstood or overlooked the strategic and activist nature of much of the research into the comfort women issue”.⁴⁵ I personally find myself to side with Yoshimi, not being a supporter of cultural and historical relativism (a problem which Ueno herself seems to be aware of).

Secondly, in certain debates feminists have employed, probably unintentionally, the traditional, patriarchal dichotomy between respectable (virgin) and fallen woman when talking about the victims, as highlighted by Fujime.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, a line has sometimes been drawn between “innocent” Korean virgins and professional Japanese prostitutes, between “pure” and “impure” victims, where the former category of women, having had sexual intercourse only because against their will, would be more “victimized” than the latter. Ueno has written about the concept of “model victim”, namely the young, innocent Korean virgin gang-raped and brutally abducted, the story that is predominantly heard and wants to be heard,⁴⁷ but as we have mentioned sexual slaves came from different backgrounds and their experiences, though similar, were not all identical.

Kimura explains that this is one of the reasons why Japanese comfort women did not come forward in the 1990s, the majority being former prostitutes and thus not considering themselves as “deserving victims”.⁴⁸

The third point highlighted by Kimura concerns the “essentialization” of Japanese culture which is closely tied with orientalism; but whereas revisionists essentialize Japanese culture to present somehow a positive version of it, their

⁴⁴ UENO, op. cit., p. 143.

⁴⁵ YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women*, op. cit., p. 14 (translator’s introduction).

⁴⁶ Yuki FUJIME, *Jyoseishi Kara Mita “Ianfu” Mondai*, Kikan Senso Sekinin Kenkyu, N°17, 2-9, cit. in KIMURA, op. cit. pp. 137-139.

⁴⁷ UENO, op. cit., pp. 141-143.

⁴⁸ KIMURA, op. cit., p. 139.

counterpart considers it essentially oppressive to women.⁴⁹

3.4 Other countries' positions

Japan and South Korea, the countries most involved in the comfort women issue, have been the primary focus of this dissertation so far. But what have been the positions on the subject of other Asian countries who have experienced the sexual slavery system at the hand of Japan?

The relations between Japan and the Democratic Republic of Korea are not yet normalized, with North Korea still demanding compensation. North Korea has always had a less appeasing attitude towards Japan than its southern counterpart: Pyongyang called the agreement of December 2015 between Japan and South Korea “humiliating”.⁵⁰ Given its totalitarian character, the North Korean regime has largely used the ordeals of Koreans of WWII as anti-Japanese propaganda.

The People’s Republic of China is rather careful with accusations against Japan, fearful that words such as “massacre” could remind citizens of the government’s own actions against its people, such as the 1989 Tianmen slaughter.⁵¹ Still, the country is pushing Japan to recognize its crimes in their fullness, and has shown skepticism towards the Tokyo-Seoul agreement.⁵²

In Taiwan feelings towards the Japanese have not been particularly harsh, with one reason being that the two governments heavily depend on each other economically, and another being that “the Kuomintang regime had been (if possible) more harsh than Japanese colonialism”.⁵³ As of August 2016, Taiwan is still hoping for an agreement with Japan on the issue of sexual slaves, but at the

⁴⁹ Ivi, p. 132.

⁵⁰ Vasudevan SRIDHARAN, *North Korea Derides Japan-South Korea Agreement Over “Comfort Women”*, International Business Times, 29 December 2015.

⁵¹ KIM-GIBSON, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵² Shannon TIEZZI, *China, Taiwan Apply Pressure to Japan Over ‘Comfort Women’ Issue*, The Diplomat, 6 January 2016.

⁵³ HICKS, op. cit., pp. 239-241.

same time acts carefully in order not to alienate what could be a useful ally against China.⁵⁴

The Philippines have been characterized by a strong cooperation between the government and NGOS.⁵⁵ As in other countries, former comfort women strongly demand official recognition, apologies and compensation, with the government being more cautious towards an important trade partner and main source of aid.⁵⁶

Neither Malaysia nor Indonesia have been particularly active regarding the issue, with most of the activities being organized by NGOs (interesting enough, the person who was most concerned with the issue in Malaysia was a man, Hajj Mustapha Yacoob, the secretary of the United Malay National Organisation in the early 1990s).⁵⁷

Governments have reacted differently also regarding the much discussed Asian Women's Fund: while the Netherlands and the Philippines have left the choice whether to accept or not the money to individuals, in South Korea, Indonesia and Taiwan many decisions were taken by the political elites.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Mina POLLMANN, *Will Taiwan's 'Comfort Women' Get an Apology From Japan?*, *The Diplomat*, 4 March 2016.

⁵⁵ DOLGOPOL and PARANJAPE, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ Iris C. GONZALES, *In Philippines, 'Comfort Women' Have a Special Demand*, *Womens News*, 29 February 2016.

⁵⁷ HICKS, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁵⁸ ODETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

PART II
GENOCIDE, ETHNIC CLEANSING AND MASS RAPE
DURING THE AGGRESSION ON BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
(1992-1995)

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

1.1 The Bosnian anomaly

We cannot analyze the practice of mass rape during the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina without understanding the reasons behind this war, and we cannot achieve this without first highlighting the importance of ethnicity and nationality and the weight of nationalism in the Balkans, more precisely in what is known as “former Yugoslavia”. It is with a reason that Noel Malcolm has defined national history as the curse of the Balkans.¹

Even to this very day the region remains a mysterious, confusing subject for those who do not stem from it due to its ethnic and historical complexity. Western media failed to offer an accurate depiction of what exactly was happening during the 1990s wars, simply attributing the atrocities to thousand-old hatred between the various nationalities, ethnicities, religions. And yet, very few know what differentiates Croates, Serbs and Bosnians, or why Bosnians are predominantly Muslim, or what a “Croatian Serb” or a “Bosnian Serb” is, and so on.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, in fact, has been considered as one of the most complex countries in the Western Balkans and an anomaly when compared to its neighbours Croatia and Serbia: while Croatia can be described as predominantly Catholic and Serbia as predominantly Orthodox, in Bosnia a variety of faiths have been practiced for centuries, including Islam (which remains the predominant one), Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Judaism.² This religious divisions have created

¹ Noel MALCOLM, *Bosna: Kratka Povijest*, Buybook, Sarajevo, 2011, p. 44 (translation by Zlatko Crnković of *Bosnia: A Short History*, Macmillan, London).

² The results of the 2013 census, published in 2016, showed that on a total population of 3.531.159, 1.790.454 identified as Muslims, 1.085.760 as Orthodoxs, 536.333 as Catholics, while the remaining as “not declared”, “other”, “atheist”, or “agnostic” (www.popis2013.ba).

conflicts stemmed from blind jingoism and religious intolerance which culminated in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Nevertheless, to depict Bosnia-Herzegovina as a land of ancient hatreds which can't be nor understood nor solved, as it has been done, is a gross exaggeration.

To fully understand the reasons behind the Bosnian anomaly, and the circumstances that it created (religious hatred and, ultimately, ethnic cleansing, not to mention their denial in post-war Bosnia) it is of utmost importance to outline a short religious history of the country to avoid any superficial understanding of the facts.

The roots of the country's religious pluralism are to be found early in Bosnian history, more precisely during the Middle Ages. At that time, Bosnia (a Slavic land just like its neighbours) was already a peculiar country from the religious point of view, mostly due to its geographical position: while Catholicism managed to gain Croatia and Orthodoxy conquered Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia, Bosnia, which is for the most part hilly and mountainous, hence difficult to grasp, became a "no man's land".³ Nevertheless, Rome gained momentum in the country thanks to the missionaries from the Dalmatian coast and around the tenth century Bosnia was, at least nominally, a Catholic land, even though due to the low level of literacy among its inhabitants this Catholicism was quite primitive and imprecise.⁴

Political and religious events intertwined and shaped the future of Bosnia forever. Around 1180 Bosnia managed to become, at least practically, a banate independent from Hungary;⁵ the former ruler would never cease in its quests to

³ John V.A. FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, in Mark PINSON (edited by), *I Musulmani di Bosnia: dal Medioevo alla Dissoluzione della Jugoslavia*, Donzelli Editore, Roma, 1995, p. 7 (translation by Camilla Miglio of *The Muslims Of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, Harvard University Press).

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ William MILLER, *Bosnia Before the Turkish Conquest*, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 13, N°52, 1898, pp. 650-651.

regain the Bosnian territories, using the peculiar character of Bosnian Catholicism (from now on, Bosnia would be considered a heretic land) to justify its attacks on the country. In the 1230s Hungary, with the help of the Pope, led military actions against Bosnia; these “crusades” failed and contributed to strain the relations between Bosnia and Hungary (and the papacy) even more.⁶

Relations between these actors continued to deteriorate. It was this context that birthed what came to be known as the Bosnian Church: notwithstanding the fact that the scism with Rome was never official, at the beginning of the thirteenth century the Bosnians (the nobility and the clergy, that is), prompted by Hungary’s and the papacy’s aggressiveness towards them, asserted their independence through religion, in particular through those deviations from the official doctrine which other Catholic countries had found so problematic, but which at the same time rendered their country so unique.⁷ This is certainly not the place to delve into theological matters; suffice it to say that the Bosnian Church was created not out of theological disputes but rather political ones and, albeit being considered by many even to this very day (including Bosnian themselves) as manichean, it was essentially Catholic in doctrine but less rigid in practice.⁸ In addition, it never became a state church despite its autonomy.⁹

This is not to say that Catholicism and Orthodoxy ceased to exist in Bosnia, it was in fact quite the contrary: what characterized the country was that, unlike Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia, its rulers and nobility did not show particular interest in religious matters, with mixed marriages and conversions to one faith or another (usually out of political interest) being absolutely common.¹⁰

In the meantime, Bosnia gained more and more power as a country. In 1377

⁶ John V.A. FINE, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation. A Study of the Bosnian Church and Its Place in State and Society from the 13th to the 15th Centuries*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1975, pp. 140-144.

⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 149-152.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰ *Ivi*, p. 11.

it became an independent kingdom under the Kotromanić dynasty; the reign of the first sovereign, Tvrtko, is still considered the most prosperous era of the country's history, with Bosnia extending its borders (encompassing large portions of Dalmatia and Serbia) and becoming the most powerful state of the Western Balkans, albeit for a brief period.¹¹ Nevertheless, king Tvrtko's reign was an exception: most of Bosnia's medieval history is marked by internal disputes between nobles, which weakened the country and set the foundations for the Ottoman conquest of 1463. A clear example of this is that part of Bosnia still named Herzegovina after the herceg (or herzog in German), the "duke": the fact that these territories were named "lands of the duke" or "duchy" should say a great deal about the decentralized character of the Bosnian kingdom.

In the last period before the arrivals of the Ottomans Bosnia returned to be a Catholic country thanks to the intensive missionary work of the Franciscans. Due to the threat of the Ottoman invasion, Bosnians were eager to forge military alliances with the Catholic West, thus showing their adherence to the official doctrine was paramount.¹² This turning point became official in 1459, when the king Stefan Tomaš, pressured by the Pope, who would help him against the Ottomans at the price of the persecution against the «heretical» Bosnian Church, gave to its clergy the choice between conversion or exile (most would end up converting to Catholicism).¹³

Nevertheless, the king's efforts would be in vain: in 1461 his son, the last Bosnian king Stefan Tomašević, plead Catholic Western nations (including the papacy, Hungary, and Venice) to assist Bosnia against the Ottomans, receiving no answer.¹⁴ A couple of years later the Bosnian kingdom, just like neighbouring Serbia, would fall under the Ottoman Empire. The last territory of modern-day

¹¹ MALCOLM, op. cit., p. 62. MILLER, op. cit., p. 658.

¹² FINE, *The Bosnian Church*, op. cit., p. 307.

¹³ FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁴ MALCOLM, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

Bosnia to be conquered by the new occupator would be Bihać, in the extreme North-West of the country, in 1592. Bosnia would be an Ottoman province until 1878, when it would pass under the Austrian Empire, but it would regain its full independence only in 1992, despite never losing its territorial unity.

1.2 Islam in Bosnia, between Croat and Serb nationalism

Given that both Serbia and Bosnia were Ottoman provinces for nearly five centuries, it would be normal to ask why the two countries were, and still are, so different from a religious point of view.

We have already paved the way for the answer, at least partially: even during the European Middle Ages, an era characterized by infamous religious zealotry, Bosnians were not “good Christians”.¹⁵ Three churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Bosnian) had transformed the country into a battlefield; even when they were not openly competing against one other, none of them was strong enough to conquer the whole territory and to establish itself as state religion. Christianity in Bosnia had created confusion and triggered persecutions, while most of its inhabitants, including the nobility, remained non-religious or at least had a very superficial understanding and interest in religion. Even the indigenous confession, the Bosnian Church, remained a disorganized institution and thus destined to fail and disappear. In addition, due to the other nations’ aggressiveness towards Bosnia (in particular the papacy and Hungary, but also Serbia), Bosnians felt dissociated from other Christian states.

With the Ottomans, a new religion entered the scene: Islam. It was “dynamic”, well-preached”, not to mention that it brought all kinds of worldly advantages.¹⁶

It is still a common opinion among Serbs and Croat jingoist (but not limited

¹⁵ FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 16.

to this group only) that Islam was “forced” by the Ottomans on the Slavic populations. Most scholars do not agree with this assertion, but it does not take a historian to understand what can be seen by the bare eye: how was Islam “forced” when former Ottoman provinces such as Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia maintained their Orthodox character in its entirety, and when in Bosnia mosques, Orthodox churches, Catholic churches and synagogues have been built one next to another for centuries?

That is not to say that the Ottomans did not miss a chance to encourage the spread of Islam, which was also one of the Empire’s main aims.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Turkish cadasters (defters) show two main characteristics of the conversions to Islam: gradualness and variation.¹⁸ The first term indicates that conversions occurred very slowly in the course of the centuries, starting in the sixteenth and culminating in the seventeenth. The second term indicates that conversions were multi-directional: while it is a common misconception that Orthodox were always orthodox, Catholics always catholic and Bosnian Muslims simply the descendants of members of the Bosnian Church, this was not the case. Members of all three churches converted to Islam, but intra-Christian conversions occurred as well.

In this context, Catholicism was the most disadvantaged faith, while Orthodoxy enjoyed a higher status: while the former was the religion of the European enemies of the Turks, the latter was already an important presence in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ This explains also why Orthodoxy in Bosnia remains the second most practiced faith to this very day and Catholicism only the third.

As regards the worldly advantages that Islam brought to the newly-converted, being Muslim in the Ottoman Empire was certainly useful but not always necessary: it is true that non-Muslims had to pay a tax (cizye), but

¹⁷ Husejn ef. ČAJLAKOVIĆ, *Širenje Islama u Bosni i Hercegovini Za Vrijeme Osmanlija*, Zenica, 2006, p. 48.

¹⁸ FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁹ *Idem*, *The Bosnian Church*, op. cit., p. 380.

Muslims had another type of tax to pay, namely the zekjat, the religious tax for the poor and one of the five pillars of Islam.²⁰ In addition, Muslims were advantaged when it came to retaining land and property but there were instances where families retained both their lands and their Christian faith.²¹ It is true however that “infidels” were discriminated from other points of view, including the impossibility to sue Muslims.²²

There is no evidence, therefore, that Turks pressured newly-conquered Europeans to convert to the new faith (also because, if they did so, they would not have any more “infidels” on who to impose the tax).²³ The only example of somehow forced conversion is the devshirme, an Ottoman practice which consisted in the levy of male Christian children to fill the ranks of the Janissaries, or to occupy positions in the administration. Still, islamization in this case was a consequence, and not the aim of the levy.²⁴

Fine asserts that “acceptance” is a more accurate term for what happened in Bosnia rather than “conversion”: just like Christianity was understood and practiced superficially, now Bosnians adopted a few Islamic practices with symbolic value.²⁵ For them, adopting a new religion didn’t represent nor a large sacrifice nor a big change.

The bottom line is that Bosnian Muslims are Slavs, just like their neighbours Croats and Serbs. Their names and language are Slavic. Bosnian Muslims are not descendants of Turks, they are not former colonizers, they are simply Europeans whose ancestors accepted Islamic faith. Since Islam has hugely been considered as alien to Europe or, at best, an “exotic” faith belonging to “others”, and since

²⁰ MALCOLM, op. cit., p. 143.

²¹ FINE, *The Bosnian Church*, op. cit., p. 382.

²² MALCOLM, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

²³ FINE, *The Bosnian Church*, op. cit., p. 382.

²⁴ Alexander LOPASIĆ, *Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia*, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5:2, 1994, pp. 171-172.

²⁵ FINE, *The Bosnian Church*, op. cit., pp. 386-387.

much of the political discourse since 9/11 has been focused on the role of Islam in the West but glossing over 500 years of Bosnian (and Albanian) Muslim experience, it is important not to disregard the fact that there are blonde, blue-eyed European Muslims who, as we will see, have found no problems in conciling their faith with Western values and lifestyle. Their existence, nevertheless, is still ignored by large portions of both the traditionally Christian West and, albeit in lesser portion, the predominantly Islamic Middle East.

The conversion of many Bosnian to Islam was seen, and is still being seen, by their neighbours Serbs (but also by Croats) as a heinous act of treachery. Serbia, as a matter of fact, had a much more troubled relation with the Ottomans and with Islam in general, despite being able to preserve their language and their Serbian Orthodox Church, with the latter actively collaborating with the imperial authorities: “As a predominantly illiterate peasant population lacking an intellectual and political elite, they did not develop a productive cultural exchange with their Islamic environment. Their relationship to it remained one of distrust, deception and conflict”.²⁶

The orally transmitted Serbian epic folk poetry contributed to foment nationalism by depicting Serbs as defenders of Christian Europe against the invasion of Muslim barbarians: “The impressive decasyllabic Serbian epic folk poetry had the social function of conveying to the illiterate and oppressed Serbs the indispensable level of self-confidence. It could do so only by distorting and mythologizing history”.²⁷

These were the roots for a mindset that came to the surface and found codification in the nineteenth century, an ideology which Michael Sells has labeled as “Christoslavism”: it is based upon the assumption that Slavs are by nature Christian (glossing over, or forgetting, their ancestral Pagan, polytheistic

²⁶ Mojmir KRIŽAN, *New Serbian Nationalism and the Third Balkan War*, Studies in East European Thought, Vol. 46, N°1/2, Nationalism and Social Science, 1994, p. 48.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

cults) and that therefore conversion to another faith entails the betrayal and the loss of the race.²⁸ According to this vision, Bosnians converted to Islam due to their weakness and cowardice, “turkifying” themselves and transforming into an alien race, non-humans, Judas whose hands are blood-dirty, and their elimination is a “religious duty and a sacred, cleansing act”.²⁹

A clear example of this attitude is the 1847 historical drama in verse *The Mountain Wreath* (*Gorski vijenac*) by the Montenegrinian Petar II Petrović, who wrote under the pseudonym of Njegoš. Allegedly based on real events that took place in Montenegro at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the drama is set during Christmas Eve and centers around the extermination of Muslim men, women and children at the hands of Serb «heroes». The play is still considered one of the most popular and important works of Serb literature.

While the Ottoman Empire certainly showed a certain tolerance for other faiths, the system which it implemented, based on the so-called millets (religious communities) fostered divisions based on the identification of “faith” with “ethnicity”. Since in Islam Jews and Christians, having been the first ones to receive God’s revelation, are referred to as the “people of the Book”, a high level of tolerance for other faiths was to be expected, at least when compared to the Christian West.³⁰ Despite the persistent Western European mythology about the “terrible Turks”, it was the Christian nations who swept away any traces of Islamic architecture and heritage when they freed Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Hungary and Croatia, while Bosnia under the Ottomans (and even after that) always stayed a multi-confessional land.³¹

²⁸ Michael Anthony SELLS, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, University of California Press, 1998, p. 37.

²⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 45, 47, 51.

³⁰ Mitija VELIKONJA, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Eastern European Studies, N°20, Texas A&M University Press, 2003 (translation by Rang’ichi Ng’inja of *Bosanski Religijski Mozaiki: Religije in Nacionalne Mitologije v Zgodovini Bosne in Hercegovine*, Ljubljana, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 1998), pp. 57-57.

³¹ Ivo BANAC, *I Musulmani di Bosnia: da Comunità Religiosa a Nazione Socialista e Stato Postcomunista (1918-1992)*, in PINSON, op. cit., p. 87.

Rejecting the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle, the Ottomans divided their subjects according to their faith, into “relatively autonomous and protected assemblages, which had an organized internal hierarchy and were subordinated to the sultan” in order to avoid possible conflicts between the communities.³² The millet system had an internal hierarchy as well: the Muslim millet was naturally at the top, while the Orthodox millet was the second favoured and most numerous one; the Catholics belonged to the Armenian millet (also called the “infidel millet”), and the Jews had their own millet.³³

Islam as a matter of fact wasn't the only new religion to appear in Ottoman Bosnia: exiled from Spain in 1492, Sephardic Jews found shelter in areas of the Ottoman Empire, including Bosnia, establishing themselves as an active, prosperous community, particularly in Sarajevo.

As the Ottoman Empire declined, the economic, political and social situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina worsened, exacerbating the relations between Muslims and Christians. While islamization and urbanization had been two parallel phenomena, Christian communities in the countryside experienced a kind of regression to a primitive, tribal state (also caused by the departure of the clergy and intelligentsia to Eastern areas free from Ottoman control), which fostered “ancestor cult and belief in mythological and historical heroes, militarism, religious messianism, and stubbornness”.³⁴ The polarization between the two faiths was present also in the social hierarchy, since most feudal landowners in the nineteenth century were Muslims and the majority of peasants working the land were Christians,³⁵ which also contributed to raise the resentment of Catholics and Orthodox against the privileged Muslims.

In the Western world, the nineteenth century was the era of nationalisms, of

³² VELIKONJA, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

³³ *Ivi*, pp. 60-62.

³⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 57-58.

³⁵ MALCOLM, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

the romanticization of national histories. Croatia and Serbia were no exception, and both of them aimed at enticing Bosnian Muslims in order to transform Bosnia in their territory: Bosnians did have a sense of citizenship (which Ottomans encouraged in the nineteenth century as opposed to the division according to religion)³⁶ but it was much weaker than in the neighbouring countries; this was also probably due to the fact that Islam discourages nationalism in favour of a universal union of Muslims (the Umma).

1.2.1 Bosnia under Austro-Hungarian rule

In 1878, Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For the Bosnian Muslims, this was the first time, at least after their conversion to Islam, to be governed by “infidels”, but governing a country with a Muslim majority was also a brand new experience for the Hapsburgs. Both parties decided to proceed cautiously, and their relation proved to be fruitful: not only did the Austro-Hungarians modernize and industrialize the country, but they also initiated a vigorous process of secularization of Bosnian Muslims which would find its completeness in socialist Yugoslavia; for instance, Muslims started for the first time to organize themselves in political parties, adopting the models of the Western European political life.³⁷

Another novelty was the revival of the Catholic community, which received a new impetus under the new governors which shared the same faith.

In the meantime, Serb and Croat nationalisms were becoming stronger and stronger, influencing the perception that Bosnians of all faiths had of themselves and creating a problematic national situation which characterizes Bosnia-Herzegovina to this very day. In Serbia, in particular, the union between the concepts of Orthodox religion and “Serbdom” became indissoluble: Orthodox

³⁶ VELIKONJA, op. cit., p. 88.

³⁷ Mark PINSON, *La Dominazione Austroungarica (1878-1918)*, in PINSON, op. cit., p. 64.

were automatically identified as Serbs regardless of their location, thus the goal was to unify “Serbs” of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia with the “motherland” in order to create the Great Serbia.³⁸ Already in 1844 Ilija Garašanin, a Serbian politician and minister of interior, had wrote his “Outline” (Načertanije) in which he asserted that expansionism was a "holy historical right" of the Serbs thanks to which the splendour of the medieval State could be restored.³⁹ As for Croats and Bosnian Muslims, they were considered Serbs of Catholic and Islamic faith; Bosnia-Herzegovina came to be viewed as a Serb land in its entirety.

Croat nationalism had started to develop later than the Serb one. Another difference was that, while Serbia had its own autocephalus Church, in Catholic Croatia the influence of the Church was not as decisive.⁴⁰ Croat nationalism had different shades and split in various trends, one of which, the most exclusive, viewed all South Slavs as Croats and therefore aimed at unifying all the Western Balkans under a Croatian State. Bosnian Catholics were considered obviously Croats because of their faith; Bosnian Muslims, as the descendants of the ancient Bosnian Church which was essentially Catholic, were also Croats of Islamic faith. The obvious implication was that all Bosnia-Herzegovina must belong to Croatia.

Croat and Serb nationalisms were, therefore, essentially different in character: while the former lacked any particular anti-Islamic tradition and can be viewed as more benevolent towards Muslims, albeit quite patronizing, the latter aimed at the annihilation of Islam and of any traces of Ottoman heritage (a possible solution was the conversion of Bosnian Muslims to the original Serb Orthodox faith). Notwithstanding this not-irrelevant difference, what the expansionist plans of the neighbouring countries were implying was the denial and the annihilation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of Bosnian identity, a trend that

³⁸ Ivo BANAC, *Nacionalno Pitanje U Jugoslaviji: Porijeklo, Povijest, Politika*, Zagreb, Globus 1988, p. 72, cit. in VELIKONJA, p. 101.

³⁹ KRIŽAN, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴⁰ VELIKONJA, op. cit., p. 106.

would find its culmination in the wars of the early 1990s.

The consequences of the influence of these nationalisms on the Bosnian identity were catastrophic: all of a sudden, Bosnian Catholics began to consider themselves as Croats and Bosnian Orthodox as Serbs, both reclaiming a piece of Bosnia-Herzegovina for themselves.⁴¹ Bosnia came to be viewed as a "multiethnic" land instead of simply "multiconfessional" and nonsensical labels such as "Bosnian Croat" and "Bosnian Serb" began to be used: religious communities had been nationalized, encouraged also by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the country.⁴² Bosnian Muslims, the only ones who refused to identify with another nation, were left in the middle.

1.2.2 Bosnian Muslims in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and WWII

Bosnian Muslims began to endure crimes at the hand of Serbian military already during the First World War, when Serb soldiers seized various Muslim villages. These episodes can't be considered incidents: Serbia had already "cleansed" its territory of Muslims late in the nineteenth century and now it had plans for newly acquired territories, as the authorities didn't even bother to hide. These intentions were clearly expressed in 1917 by Stojan Protić, leader of the Serbian Popular Radical Party and future Prime Minister: "We have the solution for Bosnia... When our army crosses the Drina, we will give the Turks [local Muslims] twenty-four hours, or even forty-eight hours, of time to return to their ancestral religion. Those who do not wish to do so are to be cut down, as we did in Serbia earlier".⁴³

The new Kingdom of Yugoslavia comprised Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The aspirations of all national

⁴¹ FINE, *Le Radici Medievali-Ottomane della Società Bosniaca Moderna*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴² VELIKONJA, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴³ Norman L. CIGAR, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing"*, Texas A&M University Press, 1995, p. 17.

groups clashed almost immediately, with Serbia seeing the new state as the coronation of their struggles to unify all Serbs under their monarchy rather as a congregation of countries.⁴⁴

Immediately after the war, the king promoted a series of reforms for the redistribution of the land which ended up targeting in particular Bosnian Muslims, with thousands of families reduced to extreme poverty.⁴⁵

Another blow came in 1929 when king Alexander proclaimed his dictatorship. Together with the chief of the Bosnian Serbs radicals, Milan Srškić (who is quoted saying "I cannot stand to see minarets in Bosnia, they must disappear")⁴⁶ the monarch implemented a plan with which Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided in 9 administrative units (banati); each unit did include parts of Bosnia but always in combination with Croatian, Serbian or Montenegrinian districts and all of them had a Serb majority.⁴⁷

The Second World War brought a new balance of power. In 1941, with the occupation of Yugoslavia by Germany, both Croatia and Serbia established Fascists states allied to Germany. Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the puppet Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH) and was immediately dismembered in 12 provinces (župe).⁴⁸

The NDH was ruled by the fascist Ustaša movement which aimed at the annihilation of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies through genocide, while its stance on Bosnian Muslims was antithetically different: the leader of the movement, the lawyer Ante Pavelić, was a Bosnian Catholic himself who, growing up in predominantly Muslim areas, had become familiar with Islam and even showed appreciation for it. All in all, the Ustaša movement adopted that branch of Croat

⁴⁴ KRIŽAN, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴⁵ VELIKONJA, op. cit., p. 145.

⁴⁶ Ivan MEŠTROVIĆ, *Uspomene na Političke Ljude i Dogadjaje*, Buenos Aires, 1961, p. 231, cit. in CIGAR, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁷ BANAC, *I Musulmani di Bosnia*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 93.

nationalism which considered Bosnian Muslims to be "Croat brothers of another faith".

The Ustaša movement had strong ties with Catholicism: not only did it use Catholic symbology, but there were also many cases of members of the clergy who actively collaborated with the regime, while criticism from other members was quite tepid and even the Vatican's position was ambiguous.⁴⁹

To counter the Ustašas' policy of persecution and pogroms against the Serbs, Serbian nationalists created the Četnik movement which aimed at establishing a Great Serbia under Serbia's royal family.⁵⁰ In addition, its plans included cleansing the territory of all minorities and "anti-national" elements, including Muslims.⁵¹ The Četnik movement gained popularity especially among Bosnian Serbs, with the latter ravaging villages in Eastern Bosnia, also to take revenge against the Ustašas' crimes against Serbs (Croat nationalists were often quick to blame Muslims for these actions).⁵² As regards the role of the clergy in this case, "the Orthodox Church was antifascist and nationalist in nature, but it was more inclined to the Chetniks than to the partisans", with some of its members fighting alongside the nationalist militia.⁵³

As for the Bosnian Muslims themselves, there were elements that did indeed collaborate with the Ustaša regime and commit atrocities against the Serbs, while many of them joined the ranks of the fascist army to counter Četnik's attacks against Muslim villages.⁵⁴

Members of all ethnic affiliations of Yugoslavia joined the ranks of the partisans, led by Josip Broz "Tito", in a fight against Nazi occupiers, the Ustašas

⁴⁹ VELIKONJA, op. cit., pp. 173-176.

⁵⁰ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵¹ *Dokumenti o izdajstvu Draže Mihajlovića*, vol.1, Belgrade: State Commission for the Documentation of Crimes by the Occupiers and their Collaborators, 1945, pp. 10-13, cit. in CIGAR, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵² BANAC, *I Musulmani di Bosnia*, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

⁵³ VELIKONJA, op. cit. pp. 177-178.

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 178-179.

and the Četniks. Bosnian Muslims could be found in all these groups, and they endured crimes and persecutions at the hands of all of them, losing about 8,1 of their population.⁵⁵

Bosnia-Herzegovina, thanks to the efforts of all its inhabitants (regardless of religious affiliation) against nationalism of any extraction, returned to be a unitary state, a component republic in the new, socialist Yugoslavia.

1.2.3 Jingoism in Socialist Yugoslavia and the outbreak of the war

In theory, the new constitution of 1946 granted freedom of religion while obviously establishing the complete division between state and church. In practice, things were slightly different: while Yugoslavia, which wasn't a member of the Eastern Bloc, never openly promoted an aggressive policy of atheism, it certainly sought to curb religious practices.

As regards Islam in particular, even Muslim charity and cultural associations were shut down and often those who refused to eat pork were at least frowned upon, if not pushed to do so.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the state seemed to change this policy when Yugoslavia sought closer ties to other members of the non-aligned movement, many of which were countries with a Muslim majority.

In 1971, the category "Muslim" appeared in the census alongside "Croat" and "Serb":⁵⁷ what is by definition private, namely religion, became a national category, bringing those Muslims who simply wanted to be identified as Bosnians (be it because they weren't observant, or rejected the religion altogether, or for other reasons) in an uncomfortable position. Once again, the struggles for the affirmation of a Bosnian identity were frustrated.

Notwithstanding the government's policy and propaganda in favour of the motto *bratstvo i jedinstvo* ("brotherhood and unity"), nationalisms and ethnic

⁵⁵ MALCOLM, op. cit., p. 337.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, p. 341.

⁵⁷ SELLS, op. cit., p. 14.

tensions were far from being eradicated, with minor ethnic groups marginalized while the Serbs were overproportionally represented in the federal bureaucracy, military, diplomatic corps, economic infrastructure, judicial system and Communist Party.⁵⁸

These issues were exacerbated by Tito's death in 1980 and the disappearance of the old political elite. The decade would be marked by economic crisis and the incessant rise of nationalism and jingoism, with Serbia in particular not hiding its reasons for grievance.

A first wave of tensions began in 1981 when Kosovo Albanians, who made up the majority of the population and are mainly Muslim, started to demand more autonomy. Serbia responded with a ferocious media campaign that awakened the citizens' prejudices and fears, claiming that the Albanians were committing all kinds of atrocities against Serbs in Kosovo which would eventually lead to their "genocide", none of which was true.⁵⁹ One of the elements that was put forward was the high birth rate of Albanians which, according to the official opinion, would overwhelm the Serb majority: Albanian women were labelled as "breeding machines" while Serb women were allegedly in danger of being raped en masse.⁶⁰

Serbia's intellectuals contributed a great deal to the general climate of paranoia. On January 21, 1986 a petition titled "Against the persecutions of Serbs in Kosovo" ("Protiv gonjenja Srba na Kosovu"), signed by 212 prominent Serbian intellectuals, was published and addressed to the parliaments of Serbia and Yugoslavia.⁶¹

Another document, the "Memorandum" of the Serbian Academy of Sciences

⁵⁸ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 20. KRIŽAN, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁹ Alexandra STIGLMAYER, *The War in the Former Yugoslavia*, p. 14, in Alexandra STIGLMAYER (edit by), *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1994 (translation by Marion Faber of *Massenvergewaltung – Krieg Gegen die Frauen*).

⁶⁰ SELLS, op. cit., p. 56.

⁶¹ KRIŽAN, op. cit., p. 57.

and Arts was unofficially published in September of the same year; it condemned the "open and total war" of Albanians against Serbs in Kosovo and the "permanent anti-Serbian coalition" upheld by Slovenia and Croatia.⁶² In addition, it promoted the union of all Serbs, regardless of their location, in a single Serb state, which was viewed as a historical right.⁶³

In 1987 Slobodan Milošević, a promoter of his new wave of nationalism, became Serbia's president, enjoying the support of the intellectuals and the people from the beginning.

In the meantime, Serbian propaganda shifted from targeting a particular nationality (Albanians) to targeting Islam, which would of course include Bosnians, reviving in this way old myths, stereotypes and hatreds in a new wave of Christoslavism. Muslims, together with Catholics (both viewed as genocidal Ustašas), were represented as retrograde and aggressive through a series of Orientalist stereotypes, a menace to civil Europe and in particular to Serbia.

Vuk Drašković, a Serb politician and author, condemned the "fury of offensive and intolerant Islam in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Sandžak, and Herzegovina... the vampire-like resurgence of the tradition of the Shariah... the strategy of jihad with the goal of creating an Islamic state in the Balkans".⁶⁴

Another philosopher and writer, Dragoš Kalajić, asserted that Bosnian Muslims were a race of "semi-Arabs" who possess desertic genes and behaviours and that they are therefore unable to accept and follow basic European enlightened values.⁶⁵ The article was accompanied by an illustration of a belly dancer.

Croatian Serb psychiatrist and politician Jovan Rašković claimed that

⁶² *Ivi*, p. 59.

⁶³ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 23.

⁶⁴ Vuk DRAŠKOVIĆ, *Šta menjati u Ustavu*, speech to the Union of Serbian Writers, February 5 1988, in *Koekude, Srbijo*, 4th ed., Belgrade, Nova Knjiga and Glas Crkve, 1990, p. 74, cit. in CIGAR, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶⁵ Dragoš KALAJIĆ, *Kvazi Arapi protiv Evropljana* ("The Semi-Arabs Against the Europeans"), *Duga*, September 13-19, 1987, pp. 14-15, cit. in CIGAR, op. cit., p. 27.

Muslims suffered from "anal fixation" which led them to obsession with hygiene (shown through ablutions taken before every prayer), Croats from castration complex while the Serbs were the dominant race.⁶⁶

Another case included political scientist Miroljub Jevtić (who today teaches at Belgrade University): according to him, Islam was by definition intolerant and aggressive (therefore, all Muslims were "fundamentalists") and that Muslims were planning to take over Serbia; in addition, Bosnian Muslims, by converting, had betrayed their country and king (therefore they were retractively guilty).⁶⁷

Racism, Islamophobia and aversion to Catholics found expression also in the work of satirical cartoonists. One example includes a cartoon by Milenko Mihajlović of September 1990, published in the Literary Gazette of Belgrade, which belonged to the Association of Serbian Writers. In the cartoon, a Catholic priest and a fez-wearing Bosnian Muslim fight over a Serb child, with the former wanting to baptize him and the latter eager to circumcise him; the second scene shown the prelate gouging out the boy's eyes and the Muslim stretching his foreskin while wielding a large knife.⁶⁸

The Serbian Orthodox Church also contributed to foster these sentiments, with many clergy members stating that Islam was a disease, that Serbs were under pressure from a jihad, that the nation had to be unified in a single state which transcended republican boundaries, with many nationalistic articles published in the Church's official magazines.⁶⁹

Still, the demonization of alleged "enemies" was just one of the steps in the creation of the foundations for aggression. Another element was the affirmation of the Serbian nation as "superior race". One example includes the book of linguist

⁶⁶ Interview with Jovan Rašković by Mira RUŽIĆ, *O Etnokarakterima; Edipovci i Kastrati* ("On Ethnic Characteristics; Sufferers on the Oedipus and Castration Complexes"), *Intervju*, September 15 1989, p. 15.

⁶⁷ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 27-30.

⁶⁸ The cartoon can be found in SELLS, op. cit., p. 65.

⁶⁹ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 30-32.

Olga Luković-Pjanović, titled "Serbs: The Oldest Nation" (Srbi...Narod Najstariji), in which the author claimed, among other things, that the Biblical Garden of Eden was located in Serbia and that numerous ancient writers, including Ovid, originally wrote in Serbian.⁷⁰ A minister in the Serbian government asserted that Serbs are an "eternal" nation which "many around the world" wish to belong to, while a Bosnian Serb politician, Velibor Ostojić, labelled Serbs as a "heavenly wonder".⁷¹

In 1988 the remains of medieval Prince Lazar (who had been recently canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church) were taken on a procession through "Serb lands", which included part of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷²

The concept of the Serb nation as *nebeski narod*, "heavenly people", found full impetus. The other facet of this argument was the claim that Serbs were being ambushed by all sides in what could result in their annihilation: theories of an international conspiracy (upheld by the Islamic world, by the Catholic world and the Western nations, among others)⁷³ were numerous and circulated quickly. It was simply natural for these various elements to create a climate of warmongering.

What is generally considered as the event that marked the culmination of Serb nationalism took place on June 28, 1989, in Kosovo Polje, when 1 million Serbs met to mark the 600th anniversary of the highly mythicized battle against the Turks after which the medieval kingdom had lost its glory. Politicians and members of the Serbian Church's high hierarchy also attended the ceremony. Slobodan Milošević delivered a speech in which, among other things, he stated that Serbs had never been attackers but exclusively freedom fighters, that other battles were impending and that it wasn't excluded that they would be fought with

⁷⁰ David Bruce MacDONALD, *Balkan Holocaust? Serbian and Croatian Victim-Centered Propaganda*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2002, p. 73.

⁷¹ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 74.

⁷² VELIKONJA, op. cit., p. 217.

⁷³ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 77. SELLS, op. cit., p. 65.

weapons.⁷⁴

Poet Matija Bećković, a member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, wrote the following:

Six hundred years ago nothing more significant than the Battle of Kosovo Polje happened on the globe. Today again, six hundred St. Vitus-days later, there is nothing more decisive for the destiny of Serbian people than the ongoing Battle of Kosovo and for Kosovo. [...] From the beginning two realities and two truths persist. [...] Today, as on St. Vitus-day 1389, one can see there again 'who is faith and who is faithless'.⁷⁵

Apart from presenting a Serbo-centric vision of history, the work entailed the dichotomical vision that many Serbs had of their struggle: an eternal fight between Good and Evil, in which one of the two had to perish.

The other Yugoslavian republics weren't naturally willing to accept Milošević's and Serbia's hegemony. Slovenia and Croatia (the latter led by the ultranationalist Franjo Tuđman) announced in 1990 that they would organize multi-party elections, to which Milošević responded that a new Ustaša regime was threatening the Serbs. The Croatian government tried to reason with the Serb minority in the country receiving only a refusal. Milošević claim that Serbia existed wherever Serbian graves were (the whole territory of Yugoslavia, in other words)⁷⁶ spoke clearly about his intentions. The next step was to arm the Serb minority in Croatia and instruct the Yugoslav Army (Jugoslevnska Narodna Armija, JNA), in which Serbs represented 70% of the generals, to preserve Yugoslavia's unity at any cost.⁷⁷

Disorders ensued in the Serbian parts of Croatia and in January 1991 the Serb minority founded in its territories the Republika Srpska Krajina, the Republic

⁷⁴ The whole speech can be watched at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdU6ngDhrAA.

⁷⁵ Matija BEĆKOVIĆ, *Kosovo-Najskuplja Srpska Reč*, ("Kosovo- The Dearest Serbian Word"), *Književne Novine*, July 1 and 15, 1989, N°779-780, p. 1, cit. in KRIŽAN, op. cit., p. 62.

⁷⁶ STIGLMAYER, *The War in the Former Yugoslavia*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

of Serbian Krajina. One third of Croatia was soon seized by Serbs while in Slovenia, a minuscule country in close proximity to the West, with essentially no Serb minority and little coastline, the war lasted about ten days.⁷⁸

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, multi-party elections were held six months after elections in Slovenia and Croatia. Three nationally based (or religiously based) parties resulted victorious: the Muslim SDA (Stranka Demokratske Akcije, Party for Democratic Action) led by the future president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović; the Croat HDZ (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, Croatian Democratic Community), led by Stjepan Kljujić, an advocate for Bosnia's integrity; the Serb SDS (Srpska Demokratska Stranka, Serbian Democratic Party), led by Montenegrinian immigrant Radovan Karadžić, who initially promoted cooperation.⁷⁹

Despite the victory of these three nationally based parties (which marked the defeat of other left-leaning parties and of socialism in general), the aim was to preserve a multinational, multireligious Bosnia-Herzegovina; a sign of this was the adoption of king Tvrtko Kotromanić's coat of arms as the new flag: a symbol of Bosnia's centuries-old history of unity as an independent country, a shelter for all its citizens regardless of their religious affiliation.

Nevertheless, Serbia employed for Bosnia the same technique that it had used for Croatia, claiming that the Serb minority of the country was threatened by "Islamic fundamentalists" eager to committ "genocide".⁸⁰

In the beginning of 1991 Milošević stated that, if Yugoslavia was going to turn into loose confederation instead of a federative republic, the entire territories of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would be annexed to Serbia.⁸¹

In the meantime Bosnian Serb extremists increased disorders in their

⁷⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁹ VELIKONJA, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

⁸⁰ MALCOLM, op. cit., p. 374. STIGLMAYER, op. cit., p. 16.

⁸¹ MALCOLM, op. cit., p. 383.

territories, with the proclamation in November of the same year of the "autonomy" of the areas under their control.⁸²

The Bosnian authorities, also pressured by the European Union, organized a referendum on the country's independence on February 29 and March 1992. The question was: "Are you in favor of a sovereign and independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and others who live in it?"⁸³ Notwithstanding the boycott of the referendum by many Serbs, Bosnians voted "yes" almost unanimously.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was officially and internationally recognized on April 6, 1992. That same day war broke out, with Serb troops (consisting of JNA soldiers, Bosnian Serb volunteers, and an army of paramilitary troops directed by Belgrade)⁸⁴ attacking the newly-proclaimed country. On April 7, the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) of Bosnia-Herzegovina was proclaimed in the territories that Serb extremists had seized, with Radovan Karadžić as its president.

But Serbs weren't the only ones to have pretenses on Bosnia: in March 1991 Croatian president Tuđman and Milošević met to discuss a possible partitioning of Bosnia; other meetings were held in February 1992 between Karadžić, Milošević and Tuđman, and in May 1992 between Karadžić and the ultranationalist Bosnian Croat Mate Boban, who had replaced the moderate Ključić in the leadership of the HDZ.⁸⁵

⁸² STIGLMAYER, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁸³ VELIKONJA, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁸⁴ STIGLMAYER, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁸⁵ VELIKONJA, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN IN THE BOSNIAN WAR

2.1 Sociocide, urbicide, culturicide, eliticide, genocide during the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina

While the international press (and a significant part of the public opinion) stubbornly labelled what was happening in former Yugoslavia as “civil war”, it is undeniable that Serbia committed an act of aggression towards two internationally recognized and sovereign countries. As for the reasons which were given for the outbreak of the hostilities, generalization once again won in the form of Balkanism, with atrocities being attributed solely to the region’s infamous backwardness and hundred, if not thousand-year old conflicts and ethnic hatreds (a vision promoted, apart from journalists, even by certain politicians and scholars).¹

On the contrary, “ethnic cleansing took on its most abusive form in Bosnia not because there is a long-standing history of tribal hatred in Bosnia, but because there is a long standing history of tolerance and openness in Bosnia”.² Its neighbouring countries, Serbia and Croatia, were much more ethnically and religiously homogeneous and had been promoting this type of vision about “clean” and “pure” nations for quite a few centuries; thus, Bosnia, with its peculiar multi-religious history and relative lack of a strong national conscience (despite its ancient roots as an independent country), represented no less than a threat.³ The solution was to split this “strange beast” and annex it either to a “Greater Serbia” or a “Greater Croatia”, but in order to achieve this Bosnia-Herzegovina needed to be “cleansed” of Islam and any trace of multi-religious

¹ Rabia ALI and Lawrence LIFSCHULTZ, *Why Bosnia?*, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 15, N°3, September 1994, pp. 370-371. CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

² Keith DOUBT, *Understanding Evil: Lessons from Bosnia*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2006, p. 10.

³ DOUBT, op. cit., p. 23.

coexistence.

In other words, what many failed to recognize was that

at stake in Bosnia were two visions of society and democracy. Those who came under assault in the newly formed Bosnian state made clear that they stood for a society of equal citizens where the rights of all constituent nations would be secured and protected under law as a matter of constitutional right. This was a vision of a multi-ethnic society in the tradition of the European Enlightenment.[...] The opposing vision was the one promoted by the nationalist leaders of Serbia and Croatia. Insular, parochial, ethnocentric, this was a vision of purified nation-state in which there was no room for the 'Other'. The ingathering of a people into the bosom of the 'mother country' meant in this instance the acquisition of the territory on which they lived.⁴

Atrocities were committed, in various measures, by all sides. Nevertheless, aggression and genocide were not "reciprocal", since there wasn't a Bosnian policy (and neither a Croatian one, at least until 1993) of territorial expansion and of "ethnic cleansing" of Serbs and Croats.⁵

The stance of Serb nationalists on Bosnian Muslims was clearly expressed once again in the words of Biljana Plavšić, a Bosnian-Serb and former dean of the Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics of Sarajevo, who would succeed Karadžić as President of the Serb Republic of Bosnia from 1996 to 1998. In 1994 she stated that "it was genetically deformed material that embraced Islam. And now, of course, with each successive generation this gene simply becomes concentrated. It gets worse and worse. It simply expresses itself and dictates their style of thinking and behaving, which is rooted in their genes".⁶

⁴ ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-368.

⁵ Catharine A. MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide*, in STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rape*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁶ Biljana PLAVŠIĆ, *Svet*, Novi Sad, September 1993, cited and translated in Slobodan INIĆ, *Biljana Plavšić: Geneticist in the Service of a Great Crime*, available at www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk.

The fact that such darwinistically racist claims were made by a professor and scientist reveal that social degeneration and gross nationalism (incorporated in Christoslavism) had reached all levels of society.

In addition, Croats too had been infected by a poisonous nationalistic and anti-Islamic attitude, whose most evident proponent was president Tuđman himself. As it has been mentioned, Croats had no problem in negotiating with Serbs for a partition of Bosnia, while allying themselves with Bosnians when the situation got dire.

In the Croatian case too the propaganda focused on "Islamic fundamentalism" and the threat of the creation of an "Islamic State in Bosnia".⁷ Encouraged by the Vance-Owen plan (which had proposed a partition of Bosnia according to ethnic lines) the Croatian forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Croatian Defence Council, Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane, HVO) began leading a campaign of ethnic cleansing in the territories under their control in 1993.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was unarmed and unprepared to face the aggression, thus by late 1992 the Serb forces were controlling about the 70% of the Bosnian territory.⁸ Atrocities had already begun with the start of the hostilities and usually followed a very specific pattern.

First of all, Muslims were discriminated by being forced to display identification marks, such as white armbands and white sheets on the windows of their homes (this was the case in the Eastern Bosnian town of Prijedor)⁹.

Before the fall of a village or town, Serb inhabitants were usually informed, while Muslims weren't.¹⁰ After the town was seized, Serb forces proceeded to exterminate immediately those Muslims who were considered "suspicious", which meant those who were highly educated (religious authorities, leaders, professors

⁷ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

⁸ SELLS, op. cit., p. 20.

⁹ *Ivi*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ivi*, p. 20.

and teachers, lawyers, doctors, artists), or rich, or politically active.¹¹ This eliticide, a technique commonly used in genocidal operations, meant depriving the Muslim community of its leaders who could guide their people during or after the war. Those who were spared (mostly men, but also a significant portion of women, children and elderly) were taken to concentration camps, which served three main purposes:

First, they serve as collection points for the population before their final deportation; [...] Second, the population there is combed through one more time, and all those who could later be dangerous threats –able-bodied men who might plan revenge or potential leaders who could organize and incite the people- are killed. And third, they instill fear in everyone [...]. The purpose is to scare them to death so that they never get the idea of wanting to return to their homeland again.¹²

Thus, torture and murder weren't the only aims of the internment camps: after witnessing unspeakable horrors, those who survived lost any willingness to return to their hometown. Even when it didn't imply death and extermination in all cases, ethnic cleansing was carried out with other means.

To fully understand the extent of this monstrously nationalistic psychosis we can quote a Bosnian Muslim soldier who spied on Serb forces seizing villages and destroying Muslim and Croatian property; he recalls one of them saying "there's a dog; it's Muslim, kill it".¹³

The culmination of this policy of genocide would reach its peak in July 1995 when the city of Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave declared a "safe area" by the UN, was seized by Serb forces. About 8.000 Bosnian Muslims males would find their death in the following days in what is generally considered to be the worst

¹¹ Ivi, p. 20. Alexandra STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, in STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rape*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹² STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹³ MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography*, op. cit., p. 74.

massacre to have taken place on European soil since World War II. When he entered Srebrenica, Ratko Mladić (general of the Bosnian Serb forces) boasted about offering the town as a "gift" to the Serb people and that the time to get revenge against the Turks had finally come.¹⁴

However, physical extermination (which spared no one, regardless of gender and age) was just one of the steps to take in order to sweep an entire nation from the face of the earth: traces of its existence needed to be erased as well. Hence it is no wonder that genocide was also accompanied by culturicide: thousands of monuments that reminded of Bosnia's Islamic and Ottoman heritage (centuries-old mosques and other religious sites, but also non-religious monuments such as the Old Bridge in Mostar, deliberately bombed by the HVO in 1993), but also of Bosnia's history and pluralistic society (such as the National Library of Sarajevo and Christian churches) were destroyed.¹⁵ It is of utmost importance to highlight the fact that the vast majority of times the destruction of monuments wasn't the collateral damage resulted by hostilities, but rather the very goal of these attacks:

The exceptional defining feature of the devastation was the systematic and deliberate nature of the attacks. Thus, the greater part of the destruction occurred as the result of the intentional targeting of cultural property [...]. These premeditated attacks were a fundamental part of violent attempts to create mono-ethnic territories by the process known as ethnic cleansing, while in cities like Sarajevo and Mostar structures and institutions that symbolized or contained material proofs of Bosnia's historic pluralist identity were targeted. Thus the destruction could be seen as assaults on the physical evidence of co-existence and heterogeneity.¹⁶

¹⁴ The video filming Serb forces entering the enclave and Mladić speaking to the camera can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=QflnjINoT4Q.

¹⁵ ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., p. 386.

¹⁶ Helen WALASEK, *Destruction of the Cultural Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina: An Overview*, in Helen WALASEK (edited by), *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, Ashgate, 2015, p. 23.

Urbicide became also a vastly used term for what was being committed in Bosnia, exemplified in the tribulations of the capital Sarajevo, besieged by the Serb forces for 1,425 days in what would result as the longest siege in modern history. From 1992 to 1996 Sarajevans were exposed to snipers and daily shellings in addition to shortages of food, water and electricity, with children bearing the highest costs, especially during the long, frigid Bosnian winters.

All in all, what Serb but also Croat nationalists were striving to do was eliminating the conditions which would render future coexistence and confidence possible, thus eliminating the foundations of society through what is defined as "sociocide".¹⁷

Not even the dead were spared: death bodies were discarded in remote locations without proper burial; the aim of these mass graves was to deny to the families the right to at least bury their dead. Death and burial played, in fact, an important role in the policy of annihilation, with funerals being constantly targeted by snipers.¹⁸

Interestingly enough, what Serb propaganda before the outbreak of the war had accused Muslims of doing (rapes, torture, genocide, etc.) ended up being the techniques used by Serb military on the Muslims instead; the psychological mechanism is that of transference: "their description of the other is a description of themselves".¹⁹

The nationalist propaganda and the actions of military groups had a clear anti-Islamic character; however, the ultimate goal was not only to erase any trace of Islam and Muslims from Bosnia, but to deny the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, creating the foundations for the annihilation of the country and a possible partition between Serbia and Croatia.

Bosnian Muslims beared the highest cost of the conflict, stuck between

¹⁷ DOUBT, op. cit., pp. 121, 126.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 57.

Croat nationalists (who targeted Serbs too) and the Serbian ones (who aimed at eliminating Catholic Croats as well). That is not to say however that the newly-formed Bosnian Army (consisting by the majority of Muslims but also of members of other communities, hence not a "Muslim" army)²⁰ didn't commit crimes: retaliations became especially common around 1993, when radical Muslims elements "cleansed" central Bosnia of a few Croatian villages.²¹

In addition, when talking about the Bosnian war it is important to reject those which have been the schemes of the nationalists: Bosnian citizens of all religious extractions (when and if they had one, it is) fought together against jingoist to preserve the pluralistic, civil, cosmopolitan and democratic character of the Bosnian society which their counterparts were so passionately trying to destroy;²² to say that all Bosnian Catholics and all Bosnian Orthodox accepted and promoted the neighbouring countries' nationalisms would be a gross generalization.

Another, almost obvious target of the genocide carried out against Bosnian Muslims were those seen as the pillars of Bosnian traditional society: women.

2.2 Mass rapes and gynocide as means of genocide

In the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina everything was deliberate and planned; a genocide is, after all, a very precise process by definition. Nothing was a collateral damage or coincidental, and mass rapes weren't naturally an exception to this.

A proof of this is the document known as the Ram Plan (or Brana Plan), the first document to establish "ethnic cleansing" as an instrument of military policy, drafted in late 1991 in Belgrade by Serb army officers (General Blagoje Adžić,

²⁰ Beverly ALLEN, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996, p. 14.

²¹ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

²² ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., p. 372.

General Major Milan Guero, Major Čedo Knežević, Lieutenant Colonel Radenko Radinović, and General Aleksandar Vasiljević).²³ One of the minutes reads as follows:

Our analysis of the behaviour of the Muslim communities demonstrates that the morale, will, and bellicose nature of their groups can be undermined only if we aim our action at the point where the religious and social structure is most fragile. We refer to the women, especially adolescents, and to the children. Decisive intervention on these social figures would spread confusion among the communities, thus causing first of all fear and then panic, leading to a probable [Muslim] retreat from the territories involved in war activity. In this case, we must add a wide propaganda campaign to our well-organized, incisive actions so that panic will increase. We have determined that the coordination between decisive interventions and a well-planned information campaign can provoke the spontaneous flight of many communities.²⁴

Another significant document is a letter from the commander of the third battalion of the Serb army, Milan Dedić, to the chief of secret police in Belgrade, Mihajlo Kertes:

Sixteen hundred and eighty Muslim women of ages ranging from twelve to sixty years are now gathered in the centers for displaced persons within our territory. A large number of these are pregnant, especially those ranging in age from fifteen to thirty years. In the estimation of Boško Kelević and Smiljan Gerić, the psychological effect is strong, and therefore we must continue [the practice of genocidal rape].²⁵

According to these documents, the primary goal was not to provide "entertainment" to the soldiers (which was also a component) but rather to inflict a

²³ ALLEN, op. cit., p. 56.

²⁴ Giuseppe ZACCARIA, *Noi, Criminali di Guerra: Storie Vere Dalla Ex-Jugoslavia*, Baldini and Castoldi, Milan, 1994, pp. 127-129.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 130.

blow to the Muslim community as a whole.

Mass rapes started immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, with the first survivors giving accounts of their ordeals (usually in refugee camps) as early as 1991. The issue was brought to the world's attention for the first time in *Newsday's* correspondent Roy Gutman's programme *Mass Rape: Muslims Recall Serb Attacks*, aired on August 23, 1992. Here enlies one of the differences with the case of comfort women: in the case of genocidal rape in Bosnia, the issue emerged almost immediately; the 1990s were, after all, the decade in which mass media (Internet especially) boomed. In addition, ignoring what was occurring in an European country (whose distance from Vienna is one hour by plane) wasn't as feasible as ignoring what had occurred in remote areas of the Far East.

Refugee camps were usually provided with facilities for rape victims, so that survivors could be immediately assisted medically and psychologically.

According to Sells, the Serb and Croat nationalists beared two facts in mind when organizing and committing these rapes. First of all, Muslims (especially in rural areas, and in Kosovo) had generally a higher birth rate than Christians.²⁶ Nor was this obsession with breeding and birth rate hidden: Serbian artist Milić Stanković (also known as Milić od Mačve, "Milić of Mačva"), in addition to proposing a special government ministry to increase the Serb population, stated that every Serb woman had to give birth every nine months, and if she was unwilling she would be given to the Arab mujahedeens (another sign of deeply rooted orientalism in the minds of many Serbs);²⁷ Orthodox priests began rewarding women with medals according to the number of children they bore.²⁸

The second reason according to Sells lies in the notion that "in traditional, Mediterrean societies women who have been raped are often unable to find a

²⁶ SELLS, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁷ Interview in *Javnost* (Pristina, Kosovo), quoted in *Ljudi i Vreme, Vreme*, August 23 1993, p. 59, cit. In CIGAR, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁸ Ljubiša RAJIĆ, *Natalitet i Mortalitet: Koliko Naroda, Toliko Neba* (Natality and Mortality: The More People, The More Heaven), *Vreme*, May 31 1993, p. 32, cit. In CIGAR, op. cit., p. 80.

husband and have a family. Patriarchal traditions of shame and honor make it difficult and in some cases impossible for women who have been raped to be accepted as wives and mothers".²⁹ It is likely, in addition, that Serbs had a peculiar vision of Islam and women in Islam (a vision shared, as it shall be demonstrated, also by certain foreign scholars). Nevertheless, we will see in the following sections whether this proved to be true or not.

Not all rapes were carried out in the same way. After collecting testimonies and analyzing them, Allen has identified three categories of mass rape in Bosnia:

(1) Četniks or other irregular forces enter a Bosnian-Herzegovinian or Croatian village, take several women of varying ages from their homes, rape them in public view, and depart. The news of this atrocious event spreads rapidly throughout the village. Several days later, regular Bosnian Serb soldiers or Serbs from the Yugoslav Army arrive and offer the now-terrified residents safe passage out of the village on the condition that they never return. [...]

(2) Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian persons being held in Serb concentration camps are chosen at random to be raped, often as part of torture preceding death;

(3) Serb, Bosnian Serb, and Croatian Serb soldiers and the militias and irregular forces known as Četniks arrest Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian women, imprison them in a rape/death camp, and rape them systematically for extended periods of time.³⁰

Hence, the method of deception, so common among the recruitment of comfort women, here was lacking: the only method used was forcible seizure. In addition, while "comfort stations" were run as brothels, in Bosnia women were either raped in their homes, in concentration/rape camps or in empty apartments where they were imprisoned.

Many rapes were committed in front of the family, friends, or the village community to add further to the violence and humiliation. In many instances the

²⁹ SELLS, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁰ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

woman was killed after the rape. In other cases, even when she was spared, her baby was killed.³¹

As for the age of the victims, the range was anywhere between children and elderly women, with victims being as young as 4 years old.³² Testimonies speak also about handicapped girls being raped and then murdered.³³

Torture often accompanied the act of rape. Many survivors still carry the scars of cigarette burns all over their bodies. Bottle necks, broken bottles and even guns were forced into genitals.³⁴ Amputation was also a common practice, with males having their genitals and females their breasts cut off; another amputation widely performed was that of the ring finger and small finger of the victim's right hand, which would leave the hand in a perpetual Serb nationalistic salute.³⁵

Gang rapes were the norm, being used to assert power and establish a hierarchy.³⁶

Smuggling of girls and women was practiced between Serb soldiers but there were instances where prisoners were given back to their families in exchange for a large ransom (usually to be paid in Deutsche Marks).³⁷

As for the concentration and rape camps, they were usually set up in former schools, factories, and farms, so they could be dissolved easily once discovered.³⁸

³¹ See the testimony of a Bosnian-Croatian survivor, one of whose twins was decapitated in her arms. In MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography*, op. cit., p. 75.

³² See the case of little Samira, in Elena DONI and Chiara VALENTINI, *L'Arma dello Stupro: Voci di Donne della Bosnia*, La Luna, Palermo, 1993, p. 113.

³³ This was the case in Višegrad, when about 300 young girls were abducted from the hospital, raped and then murdered by forced to walk in a minefield. Ehlimana PAŠIĆ, *Violentate: Lo Stupro Etnico in Bosnia-Erzegovina*, Armando Editore, Rome, 1993, p. 59.

³⁴ See the testimony of Kadira, in STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 118.

³⁵ ALLEN, op. cit., p. 79.

³⁶ Vera FOLNEGOVIĆ-ŠMALC, *Psychiatric Aspects of the Rapes in the War against the Republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, in STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rape*, op. cit., p. 175.

³⁷ Testimonies are found in Irfan AJANOVIĆ (edited by), *Molila Sam ih da Me Ubiju: Zločin nad Ženom Bosne i Hercegovine* ("I Begged Them to Kill Me: Crimes Against Women of Bosnia-Herzegovina"), Savez logoraša Bosne i Hercegovine, Centar za istraživanje i dokumentaciju, Grin, Gračanica, 1999, p. 93.

³⁸ STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 115.

The living conditions were, unsurprisingly, horrid; hygienic facilities were absent, the environments were filthy, meals were scarce and most of the time consisted of water and bread. During the day women had to cook and serve the soldiers while during the night (when and if they managed to get some rest, sleeping on the floor) they were beaten, tortured and raped. Many of the prisoners committed suicide.

As regards the perpetrators, more often than not they were men that the victims knew personally: neighbours, former school mates, former colleagues, friends, friends' husbands (another element of novelty with regards to comfort women). In the words of Susan Brownmiller, "men who rape in war are ordinary Joes, made unordinary by entry into the most exclusive male-only club in the world. Victory in arms brings group power undreamed of in civilian life."³⁹ Soldiers often consumed alcohol in significant quantities before and during the rape. To understand more deeply the motivations behind their actions, testimonies of Serb soldiers will be analyzed in the next chapter.

In the case of Bosnian and Croatian women, attention has to be paid also to symbolic action which reveal the roots of hatred and rape itself. Of great importance was verbal abuse and the use of negative epithets during the rape, such as "Ustaša" for Catholic and Croatian women and "Turkish whore" (another expression of Christoslavism) for Muslim women. The Bosnian-Croatian survivor mentioned earlier recalls how Serb soldiers scorned and humiliated her: "You're half this and half that. You need to be crushed to the end. Because you're Croatian, you should be raped by five different men- and because you're a bula⁴⁰ you should be raped by five more".⁴¹

Bosnian Muslims were told that they "stank like Islam", that "God was

³⁹ Susan BROWNMILLER, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1975, p. 32.

⁴⁰ A "bula" is a religious Muslim woman in charge of several religious tasks. It is also used as a derogatory term for Muslim women.

⁴¹ MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography*, op. cit., p. 75.

Serb" and that they didn't deserve to be saved because Bosnia would be annexed to the Greater Serbia.

Other symbolic abuses weren't of physical nature but had the clear aim to denigrate women and their religion: thus women were forced to urinate on the Koran and sing Serbian nationalistic songs,⁴² or to kiss the Orthodox cross and cross themselves (one survivor recalls how she was told "Now you're changed religion, now you're a Serb").⁴³

Survivors have also spoken about the ritual of the so-called "bloody sheets", which consisted in raping women on the same rags that they had used during the day to mop up blood in the rooms where men had been tortured.⁴⁴

Rapes were sometimes filmed and the videos used for the soldiers' "entertainment", allowing them to boast about their experiences.⁴⁵ Some of these videos were shown on Serb television and dubbed, hence shown as a proof of Bosnian and Croatian rape against Serb women (this was the case of the evening news of Banja Luka, a Serb-occupied city in Bosnia).⁴⁶

Comfort women have of course endured all kinds of abuses as well; but in the case of Bosnia symbolic torture, abuse and rituals seem to have had an unprecedented level of consciousness. It is undeniable, judging from the very actions and words of Serb soldiers, that women were targeted because of their religious affiliation. Unlike the case of comfort women, provided to Japanese soldiers, according to the asinine theory of the "pressure cooker", to satisfy their needs, here the element of sexual satisfaction is much less highlighted: the goal was to humiliate the entire nation.

Another element that greatly differentiates the two cases is the attitude

⁴² See the testimony of Kadira in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁴³ See the testimony of Hasiba in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴⁴ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 84-86.

⁴⁵ Testimony found in AJANOVIĆ, op. cit., pp. 220-221.

⁴⁶ MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography*, op. cit., p. 76.

towards pregnancy: while comfort women, as it has been shown, were forced to have abortions, in Bosnia the contrary occurred, with women being forcefully and deliberately impregnated. The use of symbolic language used during the very act of rape must be stressed also in this case: Serb soldiers shouted how these women were going to have their Serb babies and how they would destroy all the "Turkish sperm"⁴⁷, how the Bosnian president would have to provide for a "Četnik baby", how they were going to inseminate them with "superior" Serb seed to breed "little heavenly heroes". Croat nationalists used a very similiar language in the camps that they ran, telling the women how they would make Croats out of them once they would kiss the cross (so that they could become "real people", a "real race"), how they would impregnate them to breed "little Ustašas".⁴⁸

Sometimes, but not in all cases, women were provided with a gynecologist once pregnant; they were also protected and controlled almost until the end of the pregnancy, when it was too late to have an abortion, so that the soldiers could be sure that she would give birth to "their" baby.⁴⁹

At a purely logical, superficial level, this might seem to contradict the policy of genocide that the Serb forces were carrying out against Muslims: why impregnating a Muslim woman when the goal is to annihilate her people? On the contrary, this practice is perfectly aligned with "ethnic cleansing", if the woman is considered to be nothing more but a mere "sexual container".⁵⁰ Forced insemination does work as a means of genocide when based on a biologically racist conception of genetics and human life, since it assumes that the child in question will be considered "polluted": the adoption by the Serbs of this view "is the ultimate achievement of the Nazi ideology that culture is genetic".⁵¹

⁴⁷ See the testimonies of Mirsada, Azra and Ifeta, in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 109 and 118. Countless other survivors have testified about this fact as well.

⁴⁸ Testimonies are found in AJANOVIĆ, op. cit., p. 260.

⁴⁹ See the testimony of Kadira in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 119.

⁵⁰ ALLEN, op. cit., p. 87.

⁵¹ Catharine A. MacKINNON, *Rape, Genocide and Women's Human Rights*, in STIGLMAYER

In addition, Serbs were aware of what a forced impregnation would imply in the woman's mind: by carrying the child of their rapists, their future wish for motherhood would disappear, replaced by a permanent trauma; the Serbs wanted them to be rejected by their communities and their families, and to carry the sign of her and her nation's umiliation forever. The greatest achievement wasn't to kill the woman physically but to kill her willingness to live, and to render her future life hell.

Being a Serb woman didn't shield from rapes if said woman had helped women of other nationalities to hide or run away: there were instances where Serb on Serb rape did indeed occur. A survivor recalled how she witnessed a young woman member of the Serb paramilitary being raped by her comrades in arms once they found that her father was a Muslim.⁵²

It can be therefore argued, as it has already been, that the motivation behind these mass rapes was a mix of misogyny and xenophobia: "In Bosnia-Herzegovina a war is being waged against women. Not because they are women, but because they are Muslim, Croatian, or Serbian women. Yet because they are women, men are using against them their most effective weapon: rape".⁵³ Reports by Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch of 1993 stressed that it was precisely because of their national affiliation that women were raped.⁵⁴ In UN reports, as will be shown in the next chapter, the same conclusion was reached.

After all, the words and the actions of Serb and Croat nationalists had spoken for themselves: that Muslim women were a target because of their ethnicity wasn't hidden. This, of course, was mixed with a fair amount of

(edited by), *Mass Rape*, op. cit., p. 192.

⁵² PAŠIĆ, op. cit., p. 26.

⁵³ STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 84. For a similiar conclusion see also ALLEN, op. cit., p. 177; MacKINNON, *Turning Rape Into Pornography*, op. cit., p. 75; Inger SKJELBAEK, *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies From Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Routledge, London and New York, 2012, p. 52.

⁵⁴ Amnesty International, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Rapes and Sexual Abuse by the Armed Forces*, January 1993, and Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Vol.2, New York, 1993, p. 21, cit. in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 85.

misogyny, and a general patriarchal view towards the women of their own nationalities.

But Serbs and Croat jingoists weren't the only ones to abuse Muslim women: UNPROFOR soldiers were seen in rape camps that Serb forces were running as brothels.⁵⁵ One survivor reported how, in order to see her young son again (children were often taken as hostages), she was pushed by Serb soldiers who had imprisoned her to repeatedly have intercourse with Canadian Major General Lewis MacKenzie, who in 1992 commanded the UN Protection Force in Sarajevo. She recalls how, the first time she saw him, MacKenzie brought her a bouquet of red roses while the room was locked from the outside by Serb soldiers on watch.⁵⁶

Many rapes committed by the Bosnian Army on Serb and Croat women were reported as well. Bosnia, however, was the only country in the conflict which didn't have claims on the territory of other sovereign states and which didn't pursue a policy of ethnic cleansing. The rapes committed by the Bosnian Army weren't part of the orders sent from the high ranks but rather the reprisals of extremists. Amnesty International has stressed that most of the victims were Muslims and the large majority of the perpetrators were Serbs,⁵⁷ a point also made in the UN Bassiouni Report of 1994:

148. Bosnian Government forces have also committed the same type of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions against Serbs and Croats, but not as a part of a policy of "ethnic cleansing". The number of these violations, as reported, is significantly less than the reported violations allegedly committed by the other warring factions. [...]

251. Rape has been reported to have been committed by all sides to the conflict. However, the largest number of reported victims have been Bosnian Muslims, and the largest number of alleged perpetrators have been Bosnian Serbs. There are few reports of rape and sexual assault between members of

⁵⁵ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

⁵⁶ Testimony found in AJANOVIĆ, op. cit., pp. 187-188.

⁵⁷ STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 85.

the same ethnic group.⁵⁸

We have concluded that misogyny was of course a significant element, together with religious hatred, of the genocidal policy, with the latter being the main objective of mass rape. The fact that nationalism transcended gender barriers can also be noticed by the presence, in Serb and Croat military and paramilitary forces, of women who ended up being the perpetrators of such crimes, or who at least collaborated with the soldiers.

In Brčko, another Serb-occupied town in Northern Bosnia, one of the most notorious prostitutes ran, together with her daughter, a brothel/rape house, indicating to the Serb soldiers the addresses of girls (usually teenage virgins) whom she wanted to be kidnapped.⁵⁹

In Mostar, sisters Marina and Gordana Grubišić worked as guards in a Croat concentration camp where they forced interned men to sexually abuse each other.⁶⁰

Rape survivors have reported about Serb women being members of the Četnik paramilitary group, boasting in front of prisoners how they had massacred Bosnian Muslim men, and others have witnessed Bosnian Muslims being murdered by women wearing JNA uniforms (survivors have recognized them as former teachers of their kids).⁶¹

There have been, therefore, cases of abuses of men on men, men on women, women on women and women on men. Also for this reason it would be a mistake to consider the case of mass rape in Bosnia only in terms of imposing male supremacy, and underestimate the strength of nationalism.

⁵⁸ Paragraphs 148 and 251 of the Bassiouni Report (S/1994/674), 27 May 1994, found at www.icty.org.

⁵⁹ DONI and VALENTINI, *L'arma dello Stupro*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁶⁰ *Ivi*, p. 53.

⁶¹ Testimonies can be found in AJANOVIĆ, op. cit., pp. 92 and 267.

2.3 Bosnian society and mass rape

The fate of many raped women after the war coincided for a significant amount of aspects with that of comfort women. Shackles of both physical and psychological nature were to be expected: post-traumatic stress disorder (entailing suicidal thoughts, anxiety, depression, etc.) was the most common consequence, even though its intensity depended on various factors, including "the victim's personality structure, her previous sexual experience, her sociocultural and religious character, the sort of rape, the victim's emotional relationship with her rapist, the consequences of the rape (e.g., pregnancy), the attitude of her family and those around her, and the therapy used".⁶²

Adversion to sex is present in a significant majority of survivors, with women who were already married before the war trying in all ways possible to avoid sex with husbands and women who hadn't had sexual experiences before afraid to even go on a date, or avoiding men (especially men in uniforms) altogether.⁶³

Dr. Dragica Kozarić-Kovačić, director of the psychiatry department at the Vrapče Hospital in Zagreb has spoken about polytrauma regarding the injuries that these women have sustained: apart from psychological shackles, their bodies bear scars of various types (genital infections, amputations, burns, incisions, throats damaged through oral rape, etc.).⁶⁴

Generally speaking, it can be said that in the case of Bosnian women we have more variety regarding the life that these women led afterwards.

The sense of guilt and shame was certainly widespread, hence we can notice that in many cases women considered suicide or murder more acceptable than rape; many survivors have stated how they still feel "dirty and filthy". While these are without doubt common reactions among rape victims of any kind and

⁶² FOLNEGOVIĆ-ŠMALC, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶³ See the testimonies of Ceca and Emila, SKJELSBÆK, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

⁶⁴ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

nationality, it is likely that for those women who came from rural, traditional, patriarchal milieus, this feeling of shame was tied to the concept of "dishonored woman". Many young survivors proudly stress in their testimonies how they were virgins before Serb soldiers laid their hands on them, showing the importance that chastity still holds in certain families. On the other hand, in other cases this might simply be the desire of a traumatized teenager to have had her first sexual experience in another way.

Since in a large amount of cases the victims knew their rapist, many of them decided not to testify (at least not until the war was over) for fear of reprisals.

A large amount of survivors didn't keep silent about the ordeals, unlike former comfort women; we have seen how testimonies began to be heard immediately at the beginning of the conflict. Some survivors refused to keep silent or feel ashamed, knowing that they weren't the ones to have something to feel ashamed about, but this wasn't the case with everybody:

My husband is very supportive. When we met for the first time, he said to me, 'Do not tell me. I know everything.' He knew when they took me to the concentration camp what would happen to me...[...] I know two women who do not talk about what happened to them because they are ashamed, and they have not told their husbands. [...] I am not ashamed. It did not happen from my will, and everybody knows it. [...]65

Regarding the husbands and the families of the survivors, we can interestingly notice that rejection and stigmatization wasn't common, although it did indeed happen in a few cases: "...when the victim positions herself as an ethnic subject, this also creates a possibility for a new-found solidarity between men and women of the same ethnic belonging, a solidarity that supersedes traditional patriarchal relationships within the family".66

⁶⁵ Danira's testimony, in SKJELSBÆK, op. cit., p. 32.

⁶⁶ *Ivi*, p. 34.

Bosnian men and women were both victims of genocidal policies, although these were carried out in different ways according to the victims' gender: extermination on the Bosnian Muslim seed and rape of Bosnian Muslim women were two facets of the same medal. In addition, we have already showed how abuses were of both intragender and intergender nature (another difference with regards to comfort women). Thus, many couples faced a common fate, with the woman being raped and the men being tortured (sometimes in the same concentration camp), or the woman being abused and the man injured while fighting at the front. The consequence was the solidification of national conscience.

In addition, Allen points out that "there is often no community reaction and no family reaction whatsoever because there is quite simply no more community and no more family to react. The towns have been destroyed. The families have been slaughtered. The rape survivors are 'going back' nowhere".⁶⁷

In this context the interest and the stance that the Islamic Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina has shown towards the issue has had significant impact. Apart from raising awareness even outside of Bosnia already in 1992, its fatwas were centered around the innocence and purity of raped women and children born of rape, underlining that these were honourable human beings worth of respect and care, that they weren't in any way "dishonored" but rather victims of a heinous crime, that they should be supported by the whole community and that rapists were the only ones to be guilty and to have something to be ashamed about.⁶⁸ The fact that the Islamic authorities of Bosnia have characterized women victims of rape as war-heroes has probably encouraged many families to protect them.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

⁶⁸ Muharem OMERDIĆ, *The Activities of the Islamic Community in Helping and Caring for Women Victims of Crime*, in Mirsad TOKAČA (edited by) *Griješ Šutnje-Rizik Govora* ("The Sin of Silence-The Risk of Speech"), collection of the reports from the international conference held in Sarajevo on 10th and 11th March 1999, titled "Violation of the Human Rights of Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the '92-'95 war", pp. 371-373.

⁶⁹ SKJELSBAEK, op. cit., p. 99.

In addition, Islamic authorities in Bosnia have openly encouraged women to speak about their ordeals and collaborate with the authorities in the prosecution of war criminals.

What of the children who were the result of rapes? The most common, immediate reaction of the women once they discovered they were pregnant was of rejection, with many trying to carry out an abortion after the third trimester or to commit suicide. Even when they gave birth to the child they usually rejected the offspring, who would end up being adopted. Psychiatrists have explained this rejection not only in terms of shame and dishonour within a specific community but rather with the adoption, from the woman's side, of her rapist's logic: believing that the offspring was actually a "little Četnik", a duplicate of the man who had slaughtered her family and abused her, not wanting to have anything to do with the child was almost a natural consequence.⁷⁰

A survivor named Melisa referred to the child that she was bearing as "the thing", stating that "Where I come from, everybody, my husband, my daughter, the whole town, everybody would think of the kid as filth. He [her husband]'d never take me back again if he knew what happened".⁷¹

Nevertheless, there were instances where the woman accepted without hesitation the offspring and raised it as a Muslim.⁷² In their cases, the genocidal policy that nationalists were pursuing failed.

Another reaction that could be found in Bosnian women but which was apparently lacking in the case of comfort women was the will to get revenge: the amount of women in the Bosnian Army was considerable, with some of them being survivors of rape. Such was the case of Hatidža, who left her daughter with her relatives, renounced to Slovenian citizenship and a secure job to volunteer in the army: "I had to go back and prove to them that we can't be driven off so

⁷⁰ ALLEN, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

⁷¹ STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 137.

⁷² See the testimony of a survivor whose identity is hidden, in AJANOVIĆ, op. cit., p. 341.

easily".⁷³ One of her comrades was another rape survivor name Razija, who also explained the reason of her decision: "We have to get even somehow, not in the same way, no, 'cause then we'd be no better than they are, but somehow".⁷⁴

The lives that these women are leading nowadays are not rosy. Even when they are married and with kids, even when they have jobs, their economical situation is not ideal. Many of them are living abroad as refugees, having lost all they had in their homeland, from property to family. Within Bosnia-Herzegovina, many survivors are living as internally displaced persons (IDPS). Support is provided through medical centres groups and associations, often set up by survivors themselves, such as the Sarajevo-based, non-governmental organization "Association of Women Victims of War" (Udruženje Žene Žrtve Rata) which also collaborates with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in raising awareness about former rapists still leaving in parts of the country as freemen.

What the practice of mass rape during the war has, a matter of fact, done, was raising awareness in the whole country about rape and women's sexuality as a general issue and not only when related to genocide, as one health worker has explained:

It is maybe the point that we are more aware of the rape as a crime. Before, the woman would have to keep her mouth shut. The background story is that she caused it in this way or another [...] by wearing specific clothes. Now, more and more people think that she should be allowed to wear what she wants. And now we talk about the issue for the first time in the history of this country. And many women are now aware that no one has the right to rape them. Most are aware that they should talk about it and make it visible.⁷⁵

The Bosnian war has caused thousands and thousands of people to be

⁷³ Quoted in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁷⁴ Quoted in STIGLMAYER, *Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., p. 99.

⁷⁵ Quoted in SKJELSBÆK, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

misplaced, usually from rural areas (where patriarchal traditions are stronger) to bigger towns and cities (characterized by a certain level of openness and cosmopolitanism): one of the challenges, therefore, is to fight not only for justice against the abuses committed during the aggression on Bosnia but also against the intrinsic patriarchal structures, which have sadly found a fertile ground thanks to the gradual ruralization of cities.

2.4 Feminist debates around genocidal rape

Notwithstanding the general consideration about the use of mass rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina (seen, as it has been specified, as a tactic of genocide saturated in misogyny), several authors, scholars, journalists and feminists have represented dissenting voices.

One of them was Susan Brownmiller herself. In 1992, albeit admitting that Serbs were indeed responsible for the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina, she stated that the mass rapes were a matter of "male identity" rather than religious and/or ethnic identity and that in the case of Bosnia nothing was unprecedented.⁷⁶ In her opinion, mass rape was a consequence of war, looting, and patriarchy. "How short is the memory of those who see warfare strictly in terms of national and religious pride",⁷⁷ she wrote.

Law professor Rhonda Copelon seems to have a similar stance, claiming that the term "genocidal rape" is dangerous since the risk is to render rape invisible.⁷⁸

Many authors, including Beverly Allen, have rejected these claims. What I personally find problematic is the apparent impossibility to think outside two strictly defined categories (gender and nationality) without admitting that they are

⁷⁶ Susan BROWNMILLER, *Making Female Bodies the Battlefield*, 1992, in STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rape*, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, p. 182.

⁷⁸ Rhonda COPELON, *Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualizing Crimes Against Women in Time of War*, in STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rape*, op. cit., p. 198.

often interwoven. As Catharine MacKinnon has written,

What is done to women is either too specific to women to be seen as human or too generic to human beings to be seen as specific to women. Atrocities committed against women are either too human to fit the notion of female or too female to fit the notion of human. "Human and female" are mutually exclusive by definition: you cannot be a woman and a human being at the same time.⁷⁹

If we consider how problematic religion, ethnicity and nationality have been in the history of the Balkans, if we observe the actions and the words of Serb and Croat nationalists, as we have done, we'll come to the conclusion that the aim was the annihilation of a whole nation. Ignoring the national dimension of mass rape in Bosnia would mean to ignore what Bosnian Muslim men have endured, sometimes even by the hands of women, including sexual abuse. Violences were of both intragender and intergender character, and acknowledging this does not entail by any means neglecting rape and misogyny.

Another point that I find worth of commentary is Brownmiller's statement that a war rape survivor represents, to her people, a "symbol's of her nation's defeat, a pariah, damaged property".⁸⁰ Here she appears to adopt, probably unconsciously, the schemes of Serb and Croat nationalists, who raped women with the precise goal of rendering them "untouchable"; but this, as it has been demonstrated, was not always the case. What her claim shows, all in all, is a certain ignorance of the wartime situation in Bosnia and the peculiar characteristics of Bosnian society. Raped women have indeed been considered historically as "damaged goods", but conflating various conflicts, geographical areas and historical moments is risky to say the least.

Brownmiller's stance is similiar to that of Serbian feminists, who during the

⁷⁹ MacKINNON, *Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights*, op. cit., p. 184.

⁸⁰ BROWNMILLER, *Making Female Bodies the Battlefield*, op. cit., p. 181.

war claimed that rape is a natural consequence of war, seen as the expression of masculinity and sexism, and that Bosnian and Croatian feminists (who, on the other hand, were highlighting the genocidal character of rapes) were being too nationalistic.⁸¹ This "blanket critique of nationalism", as MacKinnon labels it,⁸² has been used also in the debates surrounding comfort women, usually by Japanese feminists. But this critique of alleged "nationalism" from the part of members of the aggressor nations simply seems to be aimed at concealing the real nature of the war. Processes need to be called by their actual name: a genocide is a genocide, and pointing it out does not imply stigmatizing a whole nation.

MacKinnon has stressed the importance of pornography in pre-war Yugoslavia, a country which had one of the freest markets in the world regarding the matter. According to her, "the saturation of what was Yugoslavia with pornography upon the dissolution of communism –pornography that was largely controlled by Serbs, who had the power- has created a population of men prepared to experience sexual pleasure in torturing and killing women".⁸³ While on one hand this cannot be contested (and the proof lies in the soldiers' practice of filming rape and sharing the videos with their comrades), I personally find this vision of pornography as too generalizing: more than twenty years have passed since MacKinnon wrote these words, and pornography has become more free and available than ever, with a significant stratum of audience consisting of women.⁸⁴ This is not about moral considerations about pornography, but if pornography was indeed the "first step" in the road to committing a rape, wouldn't every male be a rapist? When, on the contrary, the man is already poisoned by misogyny (interwoven, as in the case of Serb soldiers, with ignorance and nationalism), then the lines become blurred, and pornography ceases to be only a fantasy.

⁸¹ STIGLMAYER, *Mass Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., pp. 162-163.

⁸² MacKINNON, *Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights*, op. cit., p. 190.

⁸³ *Ivi*, p. 192.

⁸⁴ Serina SANDHU, *One in Three Women Watch Porn at Least Once a Week, Survey Finds*, 21 October 2015, The Independent.

CHAPTER 3

DENIAL, REVISIONISM, NEGATIONISM AND A DIFFICULT QUEST FOR JUSTICE

3.1 Whose responsibility? Denial and support for the war

The aggression on Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was orchestrated and carried out by the Serb government, which actively supported the atrocities of the Serb minority in neighbouring countries against Bosnian Muslim and Croats. But how much support did Belgrade's policy receive? And what was, and what still is, the position on the matter of non-governmental authorities and of Serb citizens?

As it has been demonstrated, the jingoist, nationalist and anti-Islamic propaganda was prepared by the intellectuals and the intelligentsia, therefore it would be far too simple and superficial to only blame the government, when Milošević himself enjoyed huge support. This trend did not in fact cease during the war, when the Muslim community of Bosnia continued to be painted through orientalist stereotypes, as an aggressive, Asian ethnicity that didn't have anything in common with the "civilized West".¹ Little did it matter that Bosnian Muslims had never practiced polygamy, or that they didn't practice their religion altogether, that they were Caucasians, that they had always tolerated other cults and had led a Western lifestyle (with the consumption of alcohol and premarital sex being the norm, at least in bigger towns and cities). It is likely that the supporters of the propaganda were in fact aware of all these aspects but were simply in deep denial, poisoned by the general, nationalistic and autistic psychosis.

The Serb media also showed huge support for the war, distorting the truth in favour of the Serb cause, and representing the Muslims as aggressors and the Serb militias as the defenders (with the case of rape videos which we have already mentioned being just one of the examples). In other cases, it was claimed that

¹ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

Serbs didn't have anything to do with the atrocities whatsoever: thus, the siege of Sarajevo became, according to Belgrade's television, a case of Muslims shooting at their own fellow Muslims.²

A good portion of the responsibility must be beared also by the Serbian Orthodox Church, which embraced and exacerbated the anti-Muslim propaganda both before and during the war, depicting the conflict almost as a crusade against Muslims (who were allegedly threatening Western values through a jihad), with many clergymen blessing Serb soldiers at the front.³

Atrocities committed by the Serbs were either denied or justified, and sometimes both things according to the interests of the moment. Milošević, from his part, insisted that all three parties involved were equally guilty and the same atrocities were being committed by each of them.⁴ Even foreign reporters and officials were accused of unfairly targeting the Serbs, showing that the theory of an international conspiracy was holding.

Serb nationalists tried to even convince the West about the righteousness of the Serb cause, sometimes actively lobbying abroad. Thus Karadžić claimed that he was sure that the West would be grateful to Serbs since they were preventing the creation of an "Islamic State", which would spread like a "disease" in "civilized Europe".⁵

The nationalists' mindset has been summarized as follows:

In justifying the atrocities in Bosnia, Serb nationalists would point out to atrocities by Croatian army forces in World War II or in the 1991 Serb-Croat war. When it was pointed out that the largely Muslim population selected for extermination had nothing to do with the Croat army and indeed had been attacked by the Croat army in 1993, Serb nationalists would shift to blaming all Muslims for the acts of those who fought with Ustaše in World

² STIGLMAYER, *The War in the Former Yugoslavia*, op. cit., p. 20.

³ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 66-69.

⁴ *Ivi*, p. 95.

⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 99-101.

War II. When it was pointed out that many of the families who suffered worst in the Serb army onslaught in Bosnia were families of World War II partisans who fought against the Ustaše, Serb nationalists would shift to claims of Ottoman depravity and treat the Muslims as Turks. When it was pointed out that the Slavic Muslims were just as indigenous to the region as Orthodox Christians or Catholics, the discussion would then shift to allegations that the Bosnian Muslims were fundamentalists and that Serbia was defending the West against the fundamentalist threat of radical Islam. When it was pointed out that most Bosnian Muslims were antifundamentalist by tradition and character, the Serb nationalist would move to the final fallback position: that this was a civil war in which all sides were guilty [...].⁶

The result was the dehumanization of the victims: the crimes either didn't happen, or the responsible were the Muslims themselves, or the victims deserved it. The roles were switched, with the victims becoming the criminals and the Serb military the heroes.

As regards the rapes, Karadžić changed his mind several times. First he claimed that Serb soldiers didn't commit rapes as a matter of principle, but in October 1992 he stated for the BBC that rapes were committed by all sides and that he could not control every Serb soldier.⁷ After asserting once again that he allegedly wasn't aware that sexual violences were being committed at all, at a press conference in Belgrade his words were the following:

The lies about the organized rapes of Muslim women in prisons and other locations are shameful, lacking all basis in fact and going beyond all bounds of human decency. We challenge the whole world to prove the existence of a single prison for women or a single case of an organized rape or even the presence of a single female civilian in our prisons, which for that matter are all open to inspection by international organizations.⁸

⁶ SELLS, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

⁷ STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

But he wasn't the only one to deny the presence of rape camps. A Serb woman was reported saying:

Just let us get our hands on them. We'll show them what rape really is, their damn Turkmen mothers. They lie to the world about how our modest young men raped so many Muslim women, while the latter give birth to little black girls in European hospitals, having become pregnant by UNPROFOR personnel. Everyone is lying in order to denigrate our men, our Serbs.⁹

These were the words of another Serb woman: "Since the world glorified our menfolk for raping 120.000 Muslim women, why should we Serbian women not give birth to even more such heroes for the future? Real supermen".¹⁰

Mihajlo Marković, a philosopher recognized in pre-war Yugoslavia for his writing on humanism, social democracy and human rights, did not waste any time denying the practice of rapes (as well as denying the existence of concentration camps and attributing the atrocities to the Muslims): "The next story [...] was the one describing the systematic raping of Muslim women by Bosnian Serbs. [...] No one mentions any number any more. The entire story was based on hearsay. [...] What I firmly deny is that there was any deliberate systematic activity of this kind."¹¹ This is another case where being an academic didn't prevent someone from siding with the nationalists and from collaborating with war criminals.

It is difficult to imagine that Bosnian Serb civilians didn't know about the tribulations of their Muslim neighbours, since atrocities were happening right before their eyes. Still, the preferred solutions was to run away, or to divert their eyes, or to side with the perpetrators. Ed Vulliamy, the British journalist who first reported about the concentration camps for Bosnian Muslims, recalls what he

⁹ Interview by Milić od Mačve, in *Javnost*, Pristina, quoted in *Ljudi i Vreme* ("People and Time"), *Vreme*, August 23, 1993, p. 59, cit. in CIGAR, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Mihajlo MARKOVIĆ, Exchange with Joe Carens, *Times Literary Supplement* 4711, July 16, 1993, p. 16, cit. In DOUBT, op. cit., p. 42.

witnessed as he accompanied Muslim detainees who were driven out of their villages: "At a village called Vitovlje, Serbian women and children had come streaming towards us across fields that flanked the ragged road, screaming 'Zaklaćemo vas! Zaklaćemo vas!' ["we will slaughter you"], using a Serbo-Croat verb applied to animals, not humans".¹²

In Višegrad, a town in Eastern Bosnia where some of the worst atrocities were committed and which was "cleansed" of Muslims already in 1992, a local librarian told Vulliamy that they had so many books from the "Muslim houses" that they did not know what to do with them; when offering to the reporter a copy of *The Bridge on the Drina* (written by Bosnian Nobel prize Ivo Andrić, and set precisely in Višegrad) and noticing the dedication, she asked him: "Would you like me to cross out this Muslim name for you?"¹³

3.1.1 Denial and revisionism after the war: an impossible peace

The Dayton Agreement signed in December 1995 put an end to the hostilities in former Yugoslavia. Albeit ravaged, Bosnia-Herzegovina maintained her status as an independent, sovereign and internationally recognized state, her historical borders left untouched. Her constitution and internal organization, however, wasn't the one of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared only four years before: the country now comprised two autonomous entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (with a Muslim and Croat majority) and the Republika Srpska ("Serb Republic", RS), the latter making up 49% of the country and corresponding to the areas that the Serbs had occupied during the war. The name itself says quite a deal about the nature of the entity: it's a "republic" albeit being a part of a "republic", thus a mini-state that has more ties to Belgrade than

¹² Ed VULLIAMY, *Bosnia: the Crime of Appeasement*, International Affairs (<royal Institute of International Affairs), Vol. 74, N° 1, January 1998, p. 73.

¹³ *Ivi*, p. 87.

to the capital, Sarajevo;¹⁴ in addition, it is a "Serb" republic, meaning that is ethnically "pure" and belongs only to the Serb people.

Republika Srpska is, in other words, an award to Serb nationalists who perpetuated a genocidal policy, the sign that nationalism and "ethnic cleansing" were successful, albeit not in the measure that its creators had dreamed. Its leaders are continuously pushing for more autonomy and are even threatening with demanding full independence, with the latest trend regarding a referendum for the proclamation of the "Republika Srpska's Day" to be celebrated on January 9, the day when Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia proclaimed their autonomy and started with ethnic cleansing. The referendum, which was proclaimed illegal by the Bosnian Constitutional Court and the EU authorities in Bosnia (and that therefore lacked the presence of international observers), was held on 25 September 2015; more than one million Serbs voted, and the vote was almost unanimously (98%) in favour of establishing January 9 as the national day.¹⁵

The Rs is also an entity where war criminals are celebrated as heroes, examples including the naming of a student dormitory in Pale, near Sarajevo, after Karadžić,¹⁶ and neonazi groups in Četnik uniforms parading through cities that were immediately cleansed of Muslims during the war, like Višegrad.¹⁷

Still, it is the public opinion surveys commissioned by the Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during the 2000s and early 2010s that give us a more accurate picture about the perception of the war in former Yugoslavia.

One of the questions regarded the attitude towards the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), with the opinion about it

¹⁴ DOUBT, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁵ Monica PEROSINO, *Un Voto Divide la Bosnia: Torna la Paura nei Balcani*, La Stampa, 25 September 2016.

¹⁶ *Student Dorm Named After War Crimes Suspect Radovan Karadžić*, The Guardian, 21 March 2016.

¹⁷ *Četnici se Danas Okupili u Višegradu*, Al Jazeera Balkans, 13 March 2016.

being mostly negative in Serbia, Croatia and Republika Srpska, and mainly positive in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁸ In addition, as to the reasons for the answers, it is inferred that "Croats dislike the ICTY because they think the ICTY is biased against Croats, while Serbs dislike it because they think is biased against Serbs; [...] The only exception is the (mostly Bosniak) Federation respondents, where the main reason for negative attitudes toward the ICTY is that it is slow and does not do its work efficiently and well".¹⁹

As regards the opinion about victims and perpetrators, 74% of Serbs believe that Serbs were the greatest victims of the Yugoslav wars while 5% think that Serbs were the greatest perpetrators.²⁰ When we analyze the answers to the same question in Bosnia, 87% of the Federation responded that Serbs were the biggest perpetrators while in the RS most people believe that everybody is guilty and suffered equally.²¹ In addition, when asked about the Srebrenica genocide in 2012, only 59.2% of the respondents in the RS stated that they had heard of it, with only the 34.8% believing it to be true.²²

In the same year, regarding specific questions about the conflict in Bosnia, a very low percentage of the RS respondents acknowledged the crimes committed by Serbs, unlike the respondents in the Federation. Quite surprisingly, while the percentage skyrocketed when answering about the crimes committed by Muslims on Serbs, it was still lower than in the Federation:²³

This indicates a general desire within the Bosnian Serb population toward the suppression of collective memories –or the expression of those memories- regarding the conflict as a whole. It is also instructive to compare the RS results with the 2011 Serbia survey. In doing so, it can be observed

¹⁸ Marko MILANOVIĆ, *The Impact of the ICTY on the Former Yugoslavia: An Anticipatory Postmortem*, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 110, N°2, April 2016, p. 240.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 242.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 243.

²¹ *Ivi*, p. 244.

²² *Ivi*, p. 248.

²³ *Ivi*, pp. 249-250.

that the population of Serbia is both more knowledgeable of crimes and willing to accept that they happened than the population of the RS.²⁴

Hence, Bosnian Muslims not only have to share the same country with people who ravaged it, tried to dismember it and strove to exterminate them, but they also have to bear either the celebration of the war criminals or, at best, a desire to forget everything and thus conceal the horrendous truth.

Bosnian Serbs might be even more nationalistic than the population of Serbia itself, nevertheless Belgrade's government never came to terms with its responsibility. As to the prosecution of war criminals, "on the institutional level, Serbia prefers impunity. Or, at best, indifference".²⁵ An indicator of this is that Serbia is a "Mecca and a safe haven for suspects",²⁶ with for instance Biljana Plavšić, sentenced in 2005 before the ICTY to eleven years for prison for war crimes and released in 2009, finding shelter in the country. Another notorious example is Radovan Karadžić himself, who practiced as a doctor in a private clinic in Belgrade under the pseudonym of Dragan Dabić until 2008, when he was finally arrested.

Moreover, this is just one of the two facets of the medal. The other facet consists in arresting Bosnian personalities who defended their country's integrity during the aggression: thus Serbia arrested, among the others, Ejup Ganić, member of the War Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Jovan Divjak, a Serb who during the war served in the Bosnian Army as general. All cases fell due to the lack of evidence; the only thing that these manouvres achieved was deepening mistrust among neighbouring countries.²⁷

In 2015 Serb president Tomislav Nikolić urged Queen Elizabeth II, through

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 250.

²⁵ Tamara KALITERNA, *Ours and "Their" Perpetrators: The Past is the Reality of Serbia*, in Staša ZAJOVIĆ, Slavica STOJANOVIĆ and Miloš UROŠEVIĆ (edited by), *Women for Peace, Women in Black*, Belgrade, 2013, p. 212.

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 216.

²⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 217-218.

a letter addressed personally to her, to convince the British government to drop its UN Security Council resolution on Srebrenica (which aimed at condemning any denial that a genocide was committed, and which in the end was blocked due to Russia's veto), arguing that it would "open old wounds" about facts that "everyone wished to forget".²⁸ He also added that it was unfair not to mention the tribulations, among others, of the Armenians, the Jews and the American and Australian natives²⁹ (what these cases have to do with Bosnia and Bosnian Muslims, remains unknown).

The question therefore might be: what meaning do President Nikolić's and Prime Minister's Vučić's visits to Srebrenica have when the atrocities are not recognized as genocide, when their necessity is to forget, when their narrative remains that of Serbia as being ambushed by all sides?

One of the predominant narratives in the West is that the Balkans are proceeding well in their path toward the European Union, with Croatia already being a member, and that nationalism and conflicts belong to the past. But the bitter truth is that "denialism and revisionism are not just alive and well in the former Yugoslavia- they are thriving".³⁰

3.1.2 The testimonies of the perpetrators

Several former members of the Serb army and militia have testified about the rapes, which gives us more insight as to why and how these crimes were committed.

The most notorious case was that of Bosnian Serb Borislav Herak, who in 1993, at the age of twenty-two, was captured by the Bosnian Army; initially he was sentenced to death for genocide by the Bosnian court but the sentence was later

²⁸ *Serbian President Appeals to British Queen Over Srebrenica*, Balkan Transitional Justice, 7 July 2015.

²⁹ *Nikolić Moli Britansku Kraljicu da Povuče Rezoluciju iz UN*, N1 Srbija, 6 July 2015.

³⁰ MILANOVIĆ, op. cit., p. 235.

altered to 20 years of imprisonment.

The following are extracts of a 1993 interview by George Rodrigue of the Dallas Morning News with Herak, where the latter recalls how he raped and afterwards killed young Muslim girls:

B: We had an order to go to Restaurant Sonja in Vogošća. We were told that we were going to rape girls there.

G: Who told you this?

B: My captain. The commander of our unit. So as to increase the morale of our fighters.

G: What would have happened to you if you had not?

B: They would have sent me to the worst front line in Trebinje in Herzegovina, or sent me to jail.

[...]

B: They [the girls kept inside the restaurant] were young, twenty to twenty-five years. They were looking normal clothes on them. They hadn't any bruises on them.

G: Did they look well fed or hungry?

B: I didn't notice.

G: What happened next?

B: I know that they were killed afterward.

[...]

G: You were all in the room when she [Amara, the first girl] was raped?

B: Yes.

G: Didn't it seem strange to you?

B: Just a little bit.

[...]

G: Did you feel good about this, or guilty?

B: I felt guilty. But I didn't want to say anything or to show it to the others.

[...]

B: I thought that what they were going to do was bad.

[...]

G: When you killed this young girl [Sumbula, the third victim who was killed by Herak himself] you had just finished raping, what were you thinking?

B: I can't remember. It was a long time ago.

G: I'm sorry, but I cannot believe that you didn't remember. How many unarmed women have you shot in the back?

B: Three.

G: Do you remember what you were thinking while you shot any of them?

B: I knew that those were my orders. I knew I had to obey the orders.

[...]

G: Let me ask you this. You have heard a lot of propaganda about how the Serbs are in danger and the Muslims want to slaughter them. Did you believe this?

B: Yes, I believed it. I had been told that in Sarajevo terrible things are going on. That they have prisons and whorehouses. That they rape little girls from five to seven years. That they throw babies and women to the lions in the Sarajevo zoo.

G: Now you grew up here, right? You had Muslim friends.

B: Yes. My brother-in-law is a Muslim.

G: Now before the war started would you have ever believed that Muslims could do such things?

B: No.

G: Had a Muslim ever hurt you in any way?

B: No. No. They only helped me. They were helping me all the time. [...]

G: So how did you come to believe this propaganda about the Muslims?

B: I don't know.

[...]

G: What will happen to you now?

B: They will kill me.

G: Is that fair?

B: I guess so. Depends on the court.

G: Do you want to live?

B: I do not know. [...]³¹

Another 23-year-old Bosnian Serb named Cvijetin Maksimović, captured by Croat forces in 1992, testified how he was forced by Serb militiamen to kill and rape Bosnian civilians in Brčko in Northern Bosnia, more specifically in the Luka concentration camp. He explains how he was "unhappy to have to do it" but that militiamen directly threatened him ("If you don't butcher them, we'll butcher you"), insulting him for not being a "true Serb" and "man enough".³² Raping was, therefore, an assertion of masculinity and "Serbdom". In addition, Maksimović

³¹ The interview can be found in STIGLMAYER, *The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, op. cit., pp 148-150. For another interview with Herak, watch "Confessions of a Serbian Monster" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wukeupQk4eQ.

³² *Ivi*, pp. 156-157.

clearly stated that the purpose of the rapes was to install fear and make people flee, and for the Serb soldiers to "teach" to hate. He explained that he decided to testify because he believes in God and had to tell about it.³³

His friend Slobodan Panić, who was the same age, was captured with him. His account is quite similar to Maksimović's; he too was forced to cut the throat of prisoners and to rape while other soldiers watched and threatened to kill him if he didn't obey: "I didn't feel anything while I was doing it, it was only a little, each one [of the women] a little bit, I didn't come."³⁴ He also stated that he felt guilty and that he wished soldiers had killed him instead of forcing him to do such things³⁵ (one might ask why he didn't refuse to rape and let them kill him, like they had said they would do).

Their testimonies seem coherent with those of many survivors who saw young Serbs being forced to commit such atrocities. The "I was just following orders" excuse is unnervingly similar to what former Nazis had stated during the Nuremberg trials to defend themselves. These former perpetrators claim that they had felt guilty, and at the same time they did nothing to stop the soldiers, they didn't even utter a word. They assert that they felt "uneasy", but whether or not they were truly repulsed by what they did and saw doing, is likely to remain a mystery.

3.1.3 Dissident voices and women's organizations

While it is true that opposition in Serbia was, to say the least, very weak and silent, it would be unfair not to give credit to those who opposed Milošević's regime and condemned the actions of Serb nationalists', at the risk of retaliations and ostracism. Among them we remember Bosnian Serb Vladimir Srebrov, a former nationalist who had left Karadžić's party and condemned the atrocities committed by Serb militias, which costed him an arrest by Bosnian Serb

³³ *Ivi*, p. 158.

³⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 158-159.

³⁵ For the testimonies of Maksimović and Panić see also PAŠIĆ, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-54.

authorities in 1992 and the a sentence of five years in prison, the Montenegrinian poet Jevrem Brković and the Belgrade circle of the "Free Intellectuals";³⁶ Architect Bogdan Bogdanović, a former partisan and the former mayor of Belgrade, was prompted to an exile in Vienna due to his harsh words for Serbia's regime and nationalism in general.

Nevertheless, "the impact on events by such critics has been very limited in the absence of mainstream support in Serbian society and among the institutional elites".³⁷

What was by contrast significant was the strenght, and the impact of women's organizations: "...the war also made women aware that they have to rely on their own strenght to defend themselves. In fact, women outnumbered men in antiwar movements and in civic initiatives across the region".³⁸

The most vocal organization from this point of view was, and still is, that of the Women in Black (Žene u Crnom) of Belgrade, founded on 9 October 1991, whose mottos are: "not in our name", "we don't let ourselves be deceived by our own people", "always disobedient". It is a feminist organization not just because of its anti-nationalism and anti-militarism but also for its opposition to homophobia, sexism and patriarchy, and for its advocacy for secularism. The organization has always shown special dedication to Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its members silently commemorating the anniversary every year in front of Belgrade's parliament and regularly visiting the town.³⁹ Their aim is to encourage the authorities to come to terms with Serbia's past and prosecute war criminals, also as regards mass rape.

Notwithstanding their dedication and persistence, the members of this organization (made up of both women and men) have been the target of attacks

³⁶ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ Jasmina LUKIĆ, *Friendship and Caring: Women and Peace in the Former Yugoslav Countries*, Signs, Vol. 36, N° 3, March 2011, p. 538.

³⁹ For all the activities of the group, see zeneucnom.org.

(verbal and physical) by nationalistic groups several times. One example includes an episode from July 2014, when while marching toward Srebrenica to commemorate the genocide the Women in Black were attacked in Valjevo, not far from the border with Bosnia.⁴⁰ Perhaps the most unsettling element is the fact that most of these Četnik supporters were born between 1984 and 1994,⁴¹ which leads us to ask ourselves if there is any hope for the new generations.

3.2 The world's responsibility

The history of appeasement of the Serbs is the history of the entire war. There were countless moments when the Serbs were told not to cross a line, and that they faced dire consequences if they did; and every time the bluff was called, the West climbed down, and the handshakes resumed.⁴²

Milošević's responsibility for what happened in former Yugoslavia is indisputable. Innumerable, grave breaches of international law were committed during the conflict. But could the West have prevented the massacres and the ravaging of entire countries? It probably could have, but the mainstream choice was to look the other way, or to label the conflict as a "civil war" where every party bore equal responsibility, thus denying what clearly was an aggression.

As it has already been mentioned, the predominant narrative was that of "ancient hatreds", of an endemic tribal nature which the Balkans couldn't be cured of. Bosnia, in particular, was described, both in positive and negative light, as a concoction of peoples, ethnicities, nations and religions, hence the war was believed to be the country's inescapable destiny. But as Croatian feminist Rada Iveković has argued, the Western conception of what "multiculturalism" stands for (a conglomeration of "bricks" that have nothing to do with each other) is not applicable to Bosnia, a country which in fact has its own culture, which was

⁴⁰ One of the videos of the episode can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJKm5f_64RU.

⁴¹ *Valjevo: Privedeno 11 Osoba Zbog Napada na Aktiviste*, Al Jazeera Balkans, 9 July 2014.

⁴² VULLIAMY, op. cit., p. 80.

simply influenced by many other cultures: Bosnia wasn't created through the union of various elements, but it already contains said elements in its own unique character.⁴³

The West, in other words, adopted the "equivalence principle": in the media coverage and in the words of many politicians, it could be inferred that this was "a war in which there were no principles or ideals worth defending, or identifying with",⁴⁴ despite Bosnia's declared quest for a democratic, multicultural, religiously tolerant society.

The concept of "equivalence" was the main narrative, notwithstanding the actions and declarations of Serb politicians, among which we'll report the words of the aforementioned Vladimir Srebrov:

The plan was for a division of Bosnia into two spheres of influence, leading to a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia. The Muslims were to be subjected to a final solution- more than half were to be killed, a smaller segment converted to Orthodoxy while a smaller segment still, those with riches, could buy their lives and live. The goal was to cleanse Bosnia-Herzegovina completely of Muslim people.⁴⁵

It has been already mention multiple times that there were instances where the Bosnian Army itself committed atrocities. But a comparison with what the Serb and Croat forces were committing wouldn't be correct, since "the scale, extent, and ferocity of the killing are incomparable".⁴⁶ Furthermore, the Bosnian authorities didn't shy away from condemning, prosecuting and even executing Muslim soldiers.⁴⁷ Constitutionally, Bosnia-Herzegovina was defined as a

⁴³ Rada IVEKOVIĆ, *Autopsia dei Balcani* (translation of Rossella Prezzo of *L'Autopsie Yugoslave*), Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1999, pp. 148-150.

⁴⁴ ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., pp. 370-371.

⁴⁵ From an interview in *Vreme*, Belgrade, 30 October 1995, cit. In VULLIAMY, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁶ VULLIAMY, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁷ See the case of Muslim warlord Mušan Topalović, whose forces murdered hundreds of Serb civilians in the proximities of Sarajevo. In VULLIAMY, op. cit., p. 76.

multireligious state, thus it is no surprise that its authorities opposed any kind of religious expulsion.⁴⁸

The "denial of Bosnia", the refusal to accept Bosnia-Herzegovina's history and its legitimacy to exist as an unitary country, wasn't just a nationalistic Serb stance but the attitude of a significant portion of the West as well. Thus towards the end of the war, when NATO had started bombing Serb posts, Henry Kissinger stated during a TV interview that Bosnia was a "mythical country" that had never existed and didn't have a culture, adding that recognizing the country had been "foolish".⁴⁹

Even a certain sympathy for Serbs was present among diplomatic and political circles. A French diplomat was reported saying "Our interests are closer to the Serbs than you think. We worry more about the Muslims than about the Serbs".⁵⁰ The aforementioned General MacKenzie himself stated on multiple occasions that Muslims were to blame the most and that the level of violence had been "exaggerated" by reports.⁵¹ Russia was explicitly sympathetic to the Serb cause in the name of Slavic and Orthodox brotherhood,⁵² still it would be superficial to look at the world's policy towards the conflict in Bosnia in purely religious terms since Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein, leaders of two Muslim countries, had strong ties with Belgrade due to a long-standing arms sales relationship.⁵³

The situation in Bosnia also blurred the traditional lines between "Left" and "Right". Hence, there were communists with pro-Serb positions;⁵⁴ conversely, one

⁴⁸ SELLS, op. cit., p. 101.

⁴⁹ Interview with Charlie Rose, 14 September 1995. Watch the segment on Bosnia at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCNxXET2gZs.

⁵⁰ John NEWHOUSE, *The Diplomatic Round: Dodging the Problem*, New Yorker, 24 August 1992, cit. In ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., p. 396.

⁵¹ CIGAR, op. cit., pp. 114-116.

⁵² ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., p. 396. CIGAR, op. cit., 113.

⁵³ CIGAR, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵⁴ See the case of Thomas Deichmann and his article in *Living Marxism*, in VULLIAMY, op. cit., p. 83.

of the most vocal supporters of Bosnia in the Western world was Margaret Thatcher.⁵⁵

Furthermore the West (which prides itself in its "enlightenment" and "tolerance") has shown its willingness to side with the Serbs by adopting, albeit indirectly, the nationalists' ideology of ethnically homogenous states (thus betraying the ideals of enlightenment, which Bosnia stood for, in the name of "realism"), usually through the proposals to end the war which would divide the country ethnically awarding the Serb and Croat armies and their practice of religious expulsion. An example was the Owen-Stotelberg Plan of 1993.⁵⁶ The Bosnians were pressured by all sides to accept these plans, and were labelled as sore losers when they didn't comply or even blackmailed.⁵⁷

At the root of this policy of non-involvement and containment there were stereotypes which "helped to construct a notion of Bosnia as both in the heart of Europe and culturally foreign and backward, a frame that helped Western European bystanders both indulge their sense of moral concern while remaining detached from the conflict as a European war".⁵⁸

The total disregard for the ordeals of Bosnians was shown by the fact that UN peacekeepers were seen as habitual visitors at Sonja's restaurant in Vogošća near Sarajevo (the rape camp which Borislav Herak also talked about).⁵⁹ Thus not only these soldiers failed at protecting Bosnian women, as their task should have been: they were also active accomplices of the Serb perpetrators. Potential defenders turned into rapists.

Still, the move which most favoured the Serb was the UN Security Council

⁵⁵ See for example Margaret THATCHER, *Stop the Serbs. Now. For Good.*, 4 May 1994, The New York Times.

⁵⁶ For details about the Vance-Owen and the Owen-Stotelberg plans, see SELLS, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁷ CIGAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-155.

⁵⁸ Charli CARPENTER, *Feminism, Nationalism, and Globalism: Representations of Bosnian "War Babies" in the Western Print Media, 1991-2006*, in Laura SJOBORG and Sandra VIA (edited by), *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara, 2010, p. 204.

⁵⁹ *Ivi*, p. 132.

Resolution 713 which proclaimed an arms embargo on the territories of former Yugoslavia, "locking into place a radical arms disparity between the Serb army and Bosnian army; in effect, it armed the Serb militants".⁶⁰ Serbia had as a matter of fact practically inherited all the arsenal of the JNA.⁶¹

Resolution 713 (whose biggest supporters were France and Great Britain) violated the very UN Charter, preventing a fully recognized and independent country to defend itself, as was its right according to Article 51.⁶² This didn't go unnoticed: the General Assembly voted by an overwhelming majority to lift the embargo and preserve Bosnia's integrity but the request was ignored by the Security Council; the explanation given was that lifting the embargo would "prolong the war"- meaning that Bosnians could fight back and regain their territories quickly.⁶³

For his part UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali dismissed the Bosnian conflict as a "rich people's war".⁶⁴ When he visited besieged Sarajevo for six hours on 31 December 1992, he appalled the public opinion with his words directed to the Bosnian citizens: "You have a situation which is better than ten other places all over the world. I can give you a list of ten places where you have more problems than Sarajevo".⁶⁵ Secretary-General deemed the war in Bosnia to be nothing more than a nuisance which diverted attention from what he saw as more pressing conflicts in Africa, to the point that he wrote that the United Nations were also a "victim" of the conflict.⁶⁶

The general opinion among many scholars, experts, journalists, reporters,

⁶⁰ SELLS, op. cit., p. 117.

⁶¹ ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., p. 380.

⁶² *Ibidem.* SELLS, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶³ ALI and LIFSCHULTZ, op. cit., pp. 380, 394.

⁶⁴ Adam LeBOR, *"Complicity with Evil": The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006, p. 28.

⁶⁵ *Ivi*, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Aida HODŽIĆ, *The Origins of "Post-Conflict"*, in Chip GAGNON, Keith BROWN (edited by), *Post-Conflict Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014, p. 29.

writers and opinionists (as well as of Bosnians themselves) is that the behaviour of the West and its attitude toward Bosnia would have been different hadn't it been for the fact that most of the victims were Muslim.

As regards mass rape, the UN were completely aware about this practice and about its genocidal nature. In October 1992 Boutros-Ghali appointed a Commission of Experts to investigate about violations of international law in former Yugoslavia; the result was the compilation of the Bassiouni Report, whose findings about mass rape and "ethnic cleansing" have already been discussed in Chapter 2 of this section.

But UN reports regarding mass rape in Bosnia had been available prior to the Bassiouni Report, thanks to the work of the team of Special Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki (former prime minister of Poland): "Rape and abuse of women in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" (E/CN.4/1994/5), dated 30 June 1993, and the "Fifth periodic report on the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" (E/CN.4/1994/47), dated 17 November 1993.

1.Rape of women, including minors, has been increasingly documented as an outrageous practice occurring on a large scale during the conflicts in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such practices are being carried out in the context of ethnic cleansing...

[...]

13.Regarding the gathering of testimony from rape victims, the Special Rapporteur pointed out in his February report that many women are reluctant to speak about their experiences for a variety of reasons: severe traumatizations, feelings of shame, lack of trust, fear of awakening bad memories as well as fear of reprisals against themselves and their families.

[...]67

Paragraphs 20-28 of E/CN.4/1994/47 were focused on the practice of rape and detention of women.68

⁶⁷ E/CN.4/1994/5, paragraphs 1 and 13, available at documents-dds-ny.un.org.

⁶⁸ documents-dds-ny.un.org.

Mazowiecki would resign in protest from his UN mandate in 1995, asserting that he wanted to "make the leaders of the United Nations think".⁶⁹

3.3 Prosecuting war criminals

Legal action was undertaken quickly, especially thanks to the dedication of the Bosnian state and the survivors themselves: "...Until Bosnia-Herzegovina went to the International Court of Justice and sued Serbia for genocide, including rape, no one did a thing. In doing so, Bosnia-Herzegovina is standing up for women in a way that no state ever has".⁷⁰

Of significant impact, for example, was the speech of Muhamed Sacirbey, ambassador and permanent representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the United Nations on 30 August 1993:

The last time I spoke before this Council, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was told [...] that its right to obtain defensive weapons and fully exercise self defense would pose a threat to the UN forces in my country and would prolong the war. [...] The legal absurdity and moral degradation of this argument can only be compared to a policeman being instructed not to interpret a gang rape because, after resisting, the victim is finally ready to coolly submit to the inevitable. Under this theory, the most heinous of crimes, a gang rape, becomes an act of seduction. Excellencies, Bosnia and Herzegovina is being gang raped. [...] I do not lightly apply the analogy of a gang rape to the plight of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As we know, systematic rape has been one of the weapons of this aggression against the Bosnian women in particular.⁷¹

The metaphor about Bosnia and rape reminds of the "rape of Belgium" of WWI and is not by any means casual. Rape of Bosnian Muslim women was

⁶⁹ Fouad AJAMI, *The Mark of Bosnia: Boutros-Ghali's Reign of Indifference*, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, N° 3, May/June 1996, available at www.foreignaffairs.com.

⁷⁰ MacKINNON, *Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights*, op. cit., p. 194

⁷¹ Quoted in Stjepan G. MEŠTROVIĆ, *The Balkanization of the West: the Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. XI.

intended by all levels of Bosnian society, therefore, as an attack against the nation and the country.

When talking about the prosecution of rape perpetrators (and war criminals in general), the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, commonly referred as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), holds indisputable predominance. On May 1993, Resolution 827 of the UN Security Council was passed, establishing the Court in Den Haag (Netherlands).

As of September 2016, the Tribunal has indicted 161 persons, mostly Serbs;⁷² among the the most iconic cases are the following:

- Slobodan Milošević, who after a five-year-long trial died in 2006 before the verdict was announced;
- Radovan Karadžić, brought before the court in 2008 (21 years after he was indicted), convicted of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and sentenced to 40 years in prison on 24 March 2016;⁷³
- Ratko Mladić, general of the Army of Republika Srpska, brought before the Court in 2011 after evading arrest for 16 years (the proceeding is ongoing);
- aforementioned Biljana Plavšić, president of Republika Srpska from 1996 to 1998, sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2003 after she pleaded guilty and released in 2009.⁷⁴

⁷² www.icty.org.

⁷³ Marlise SIMONS, *Radovan Karadžić, a Bosnian Serb, Is Convicted of Genocide*, The New York Times, 24 March 2016.

⁷⁴ In an interview for Swedish magazine *Vi* with Margaretha Nordgren, Plavšić stated that she had pleaded guilty only in the hope of a bargain and that she hadn't done anything wrong; she also complained about the fact that "all prisoners were treated equally" and that she had to live with uneducated women in the Swedish prison where she was serving the sentence. In Daniel UGGELBERG GOLDBERG, *Bosnian War Criminal: 'I Did Nothing Wrong'*, The Local, 26 January 2009 (available at www.thelocal.se).

- Vojislav Šešelj, a Serb from Sarajevo, founder of the Serb Radical Party and a leading proponent of ethnic cleansing, acquitted in March 2016;⁷⁵ upon his return in Serbia, which was greeted with huge support, he's been elected as member of the parliament.⁷⁶

The importance of ICTY lies also in its unprecedented nature:

[...] the Tribunal was among the first courts of its kind to bring explicit charges of wartime sexual violence, and to define gender crimes such as rape and sexual enslavement under customary law. The ICTY was also the first international criminal tribunal to enter convictions for rape as a form of torture and for sexual enslavement as a crime against humanity, as well as the first international tribunal based in Europe to pass convictions for rape as a crime against humanity [...]⁷⁷

Moreover, "beyond precedent, the voices of the victims have been heard in the structuring of the new tribunal. [...] The issue of accountability to victims has been raised here formally for the first time".⁷⁸

As of September 2016, 78 individuals, 48% of the 161 accused, had charges of sexual violence included in their indictments, with 32 individuals (including Biljana Plavšić) having been convicted.⁷⁹ The trials commonly deemed to be the most significant ones are the following:

- The trial of Duško Tadić: it was the first international war crimes trial since WWII, the first international war crimes trial involving charges of sexual violence, and the first-ever (but not last) trial for sexual violence against men;⁸⁰ in 2000 Tadić was sentenced to 20

⁷⁵ *Trial Judgement in the Case of Vojislav Šešelj delivered*, Tribunal Press release, The Hague, 31 March 2016.

⁷⁶ Denis DŽINIĆ, *Hague Prosecution Challenges Vojislav Šešelj's Acquittal*, Balkan Insight, 30 August 2016.

⁷⁷ www.icty.org/en/in-focus/crimes-sexual-violence.

⁷⁸ MacKINNON, *Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights*, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

⁷⁹ www.icty.org/en/in-focus/crimes-sexual-violence/in-numbers.

⁸⁰ www.icty.org/en/in-focus/crimes-sexual-violence/landmark-cases.

years in prison.

- Mucić et al., where rape was recognized as torture.
- The trial of Anto Furundžija, which was the first case at the ICTY to focus completely on sexual violence; in addition, it was stated that rape is not only a crime against humanity but also a violation of the laws and customs of war, and that it can serve as a tool of genocide.⁸¹
- Kunarac et al., where sexual enslavement was included in the definition of enslavement as crime against humanity.
- The trial of Radislav Krstić, which established a link between rape and ethnic cleansing.

Aside from the work of the ICTY, another case worth of mention is the precedent-setting lawsuit of Muslim and Croat women who had survived rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina against Radovan Karadžić for rape as genocide in a United States' court (*Kadić v. Karadžić* 70 F.3d 232). \$745 million in damages were awarded to the women who were found to be victims of genocidal rape, with Karadžić being convicted in absentia.⁸²

Trials for war crimes have been taking place also in Bosnian courts, with the inauguration in 2005 of the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2015, Bosnia's war crimes court has granted for the first time compensation for a wartime rape survivor; the recognition and the support of the state for the survivors had until then been blocked by Bosnian Serb leaders.⁸³ One of the issues, however, is who will compensate the survivors in the case that the perpetrator is unable to, a real problem for a country like Bosnia-Herzegovina

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² Laura SJOBERG and Caron. E. GENTRY, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2007, pp. 143-144.

⁸³ *Bosnian Court Grants Wartime Rape Victim Compensation in Landmark Ruling*, The Guardian, 24 June 2015.

whose economic situation is dire.⁸⁴ As of September 2016, the cases where compensation was ordered have been three, but the survivors have yet to receive any money, since the perpetrators are unable to pay high sums of money. Only two survivors have managed to get compensation in cantonal and district courts.⁸⁵

The situation therefore is far from being ideal, with rape survivors sometimes having to wait for years and years before seeing their rapist in front of a court; in the meantime, perpetrators are free to live a normal life.⁸⁶ In many instances, especially in small towns and villages, survivors see and confront their rapist everyday.

Justice is certainly slow and imperfect, with only a small percentage of Bosnian victims receiving satisfaction. Still, it is probably more than former comfort women are to ever receive.

⁸⁴ Julian BORGES, *Bosnia Rape Victims May Claim Compensation for the First Time*, The Guardian, 30 June 2015.

⁸⁵ *Bosnian War Rape Victims Struggle for Compensation*, Balkan Insight, 9 September 2016.

⁸⁶ See the documentary by Amnesty International, *Still on the Frontline*, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWwNITPX2vk.

CONCLUSIONS

When I decided to write my dissertation about these two case studies, I had in mind to point out the differences and similarities between them, and to analyze the instances of revisionism and deligitimisation. As I wrote it, however, it gradually evolved into something more: by adding legal matters, and a part of the debates surrounding the two cases, I discovered a larger picture, realizing how many other elements could represent food for thought. As I view it, it's not only a dissertation about rape, war, machism and misogyny, but also about the poisonous nature of nationalism and ignorance, and about the perception that not just scholars, but all of us have about these elements. Through my research I became more familiar not only with the historical facts, but also about peculiar social realities, and about feminism in general.

It is interesting how countries so distant in space, and how historical happenings so distant in time, have had so much in common. Asian "comfort women" and Bosnian women have endured very similiar ordeals, albeit the reasons they were committed were remarkaby different: comfort stations were established mainly to avoid mass rape of civilians and prevent the spread of STDs among the troops, while mass rape of Bosnians was committed as a part of the process of annihilation of a nation. This is not to say that ethnicity didn't play a role in the case of comfort women (with its importance still being debated among scholars), but as inhumane as Japanese colonization and occupation of other Asian countries was (especially in Korea, where a process of denationalization was carried out), it wasn't aimed at exterminating entire nations and the traces of their existence. The Serb aggression of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, had precisely this goal: to "cleanse" Bosnia of any trace of Islam, Muslims, pluralism and Bosnian culture in general, and split the country between a Great Serbia and a Great Croatia.

Different was also the aftermath, with "comfort women" keeping silent for five decades, and Bosnian women becoming vocal from the start of the atrocities

and testifying against war criminals. The members of the Japanese military and government responsible for setting up "comfort stations" never paid for their actions; a significant amount of Serb war criminals have been prosecuted and incarcerated, but many of them continue to live their lives as free men, often in the same villages and towns when they raped and slaughtered civilians.

In both cases raped women (and all other civilian victims) have been pawns in a bigger chess game, their ordeals ignored by great Western powers during wartime, and modern-day politicians (including the survivors' countrymen) recognizing them only when pushed by their own interests.

In both cases raped women have endured a double violence: as rape wasn't enough, receiving proper satisfaction is still almost impossible due to an ever-present revisionism. This revisionism can take various forms, from aggressive nationalism to a "softer" bigotry: victims might be scorned, ignored, while other times they might be pitied and begged not to be "nationalistic". Victims are asked to forgive and forget without them getting a proper apology or justice first: thus the concealing of the crime paves the way for future rapes, mass rapes, wars, aggressions and genocides. Calling historical facts by their names is not by any means nationalistic, nor is it aimed at stigmatizing an entire nation: there was no Korean aggression of Japan, nor a Bosnian aggression of Serbia or Croatia, therefore claiming that all parties involved were equally responsible and have suffered equally is not only factually incorrect, but also dishonest.

The testimonies of former perpetrators have also shown a psychological aspect of the negation mechanism: whereas there can usually be the willingness to deliberately inflict violence during a rape, in other instances the violence is simply not "registered" or, at least, the rape is not registered as a violation or neither as something negative. In either case, the inviolability of a woman's body is not recognized.

This brings us to the next point: is it too easy to label rapists and war criminals as "monsters", because in fact they are no such thing. While their actions are indeed monstrous, and while their minds are often those of ignorant,

aggressive, nationalist, or misogynous individuals, the scariest aspect, at least in my humble opinion, is that they are usually average people. Most of the Japanese and Serb soldiers who violated and tortured women (as well as male civilians) had wives, mothers and sisters, and often children whose head they would affectionately tap once they came home from the front. I am not a student of psychology, therefore I am not by any means qualified to discuss the psychological aspects of these matters. However, I deem that this might be the right place to state that indignation and anger, while certainly positive, are not enough: preemptive action needs to be taken.

I refuse to see these issues as a matter of women versus men, also because, as it has been shown, certain women sided with the perpetrators or ignored the atrocities in the name of a higher force, namely nationalism. I do not see this in terms of a specific nationality versus another, either: in my opinion this is about cosmopolitanism, education, empathy, democracy, gender equality and peace versus ignorance, jingoism, patriarchy, religious fundamentalism, primitivism, misogyny and war.

It is exactly who I am, and the layered nature of my personality, that brings me to look at the bigger picture. Being Bosnian, I feel the need to expose the truth, and to expose the ordeals that my people had to endure too many times. As a Bosnian in Italy, I try to fight against xenophobia and prejudices against immigrants. Coming from a (totally secular) Muslim family, I have to combat islamophobia almost on a daily basis. As a woman, I experience sexism and misogyny as well (which become even more evident when directed towards Eastern European women like me). This dissertation has been, in a way, a part of my struggle.

I didn't write this thesis with the purpose of making us First World dwellers feeling accomplished and better about ourselves. Surely I am thankful that I don't live in Saudi Arabia, and that I come from a part of the world where my rights are, at least nominally, recognized and protected. But we must remember that the situation for women even in the developed, Western world is not that rosy as we

are made to believe: the levels of femicide and uxoricide in Italy are only one of the indicators. Moreover, while we are frightened of rapes committed on "our women" by "Muslim gangs" of immigrants (which extreme right-wing groups are delighted to expose, despite their traditional disinterest for women's rights), we forget too easily what happened to Muslim women only twenty years ago, in a country so close to us, at the hands of their Christian neighbours. Those responsible for Cologne's rapes must pay, that is unquestionable; by the same token, white, Western rapist must be prosecuted as well and their actions exposed with the same persistence.

In addition, even though I dedicated my dissertation to two particular cases, I want to remind that mass rape has been practiced universally (from South American to Rwanda, from South Africa to WWII Europe) and that while those which occurred more recently are certainly better documented, every victim deserves to be remembered.

PHOTOS

Photo 1: A Group of comfort women liberated at the end of the war.



Source: www.softrevolutionzine.org

Photo 2: Memorial statue for comfort women in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul.



Source: www.softrevolutionzine.org

Photo 3: Former comfort women hold a manifestation in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul.



Source: latimesblogs.latimes.com

Photo 4: Kobayashi Yoshinori's work about comfort women, where sex slaves are depicted as prostitutes.



Source: yellowpeep.blogspot.it

Photo 5: Bosnian soldiers try to communicate with a raped Muslim woman.



Source: acelebrationofwomen.org

Photo 6: Raped Bosnian women in a refugee centre.



Source: www.mwcnews.net

Photo 7: The Vilina Vlas Hotel near Višegrad in Eastern Bosnia, one of the most infamous rape camps during the 1992-1995 war.



Source: www.vilina-vlas.com

Photo 8: Bakira Hasečić, a wartime rape survivor, President of the 'Women Victims of War' association.



Source: www.nap.ba

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fouad AJAMI, The Mark of Bosnia: Boutros-Ghali's Reign of Indifference, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, N° 3, May/June 1996.

Irfan AJANOVIĆ (edited by), *Molila Sam ih da Me Ubiju: Zločin nad Ženom Bosne i Hercegovine* (" 'I Begged Them to Kill Me': Crimes Against Women of Bosnia-Herzegovina"), *Savez logoraša Bosne i Hercegovine, Centar za istraživanje i dokumentaciju*, Grin, Gračanica, 1999.

Rabia ALI and Lawrence LIFSCHULTZ, *Why Bosnia?*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, N°3, September 1994.

Beverly ALLEN, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996.

Roy L. BROOKS, *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1999.

Susan BROWNMILLER, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1975.

Christine M. CHINKIN, *Women's International Tribunal on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery*, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 95, N°2, 2001.

Norman L. CIGAR, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing"*, Texas A&M University Press, 1995.

Husejn ef. ČAJLAKOVIĆ, *Širenje Islama u Bosni i Hercegovini Za Vrijeme Osmanlija*, Zenica, 2006.

Uistinia DOLGOPOL and Snehal PARANJAPE, *Comfort Women: an Unfinished Ordeal*, Report of a Mission, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, 1993.

Elena DONI and Chiara VALENTINI, *L'Arma dello Stupro: Voci di Donne della Bosnia*, La Luna, Palermo, 1993.

Keith DOUBT, *Understanding Evil: Lessons from Bosnia*, Fordham University Press,

New York, 2006.

John W. DOWER, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York, W.W Norton & Co., 1999.

John V.A. FINE, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation. A Study of the Bosnian Church and Its Place in State and Society from the 13th to the 15th Centuries*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1975.

Madoka FUTAMURA, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nureberg Legacy*, Routledge, London, 2008.

Chip GAGNON, Keith BROWN (edited by), *Post-Conflict Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014.

Hirofumi HAYASHI, *Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System and Its Perception in History*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 617, 2008.

George HICKS, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, W.W Norton & Company, New York, 1997.

Rada IVEKOVIĆ, *Autopsia dei Balcani* (translation of Rossella Prezzo of *L'Autopsie Yugoslave*), Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1999.

Dai Sil KIM-GIBSON, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women*, Parkersburg, Mid-prairie Books.

Maki KIMURA, *Unfolding the 'Comfort Women' Debates: Modernity, Violence, Women's Voices*, Palgrave & MacMillan, 2015.

Mojmir KRIŽAN, *New Serbian Nationalism and the Third Balkan War*, *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 46, N°1/2, Nationalism and Social Science, 1994.

Adam LeBOR, *"Complicity with Evil": The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006.

Alexander LOPASIĆ, *Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia*, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5:2, 1994.

Jasmina LUKIĆ, Friendship and Caring: Women and Peace in the Former Yugoslav Countries, *Signs*, Vol. 36, N° 3, March 2011.

David Bruce MacDONALD, *Balkan Holocaust? Serbian and Croatian Victim-Centered Propaganda*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2002.

Noel MALCOLM, *Bosna: Kratka Povijest*, Buybook, Sarajevo, 2011 (translation by Zlatko Crnković of *Bosnia: A Short History*, Macmillan, London).

Koichi MERA, *Comfort Women not "Sex Slaves": Rectifying the Myriad of Perspectives*, Xlibris, 2015.

Stjepan G. MEŠTROVIĆ, *The Balkanization of the West: the Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005.

Marko MILANOVIĆ, The Impact of the ICTY on the Former Yugoslavia: An Anticipatory Postmortem, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 110, N°2, April 2016.

William MILLER, *Bosnia Before the Turkish Conquest*, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 13, N°52, 1898.

Shigeru ODA, *The Normalization of Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea*, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 61, N°1, January 1967.

Maria Amelia ODETTI, *Jugun Ianfu (Comfort Women): La Schiavitù Sessuale nel Sud-Est Asiatico Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale e la Memoria Femminile*, DEP (Deportate, esule, profughe), 4 March 2006.

Ehlimana PAŠIĆ, *Violentate: Lo Stupro Etnico in Bosnia-Erzegovina*, Armando Editore, Rome, 1993.

Mark PINSON (edited by), *I Musulmani di Bosnia: dal Medioevo alla Dissoluzione della Jugoslavia*, Donzelli Editore, Roma, 1995, (translation by Camilla Miglio of *The Muslims Of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, Harvard University Press).

Gap Min PYONG, *Korean "Comfort Women": The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class*, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17, N°6, December 2003.

Jordan SAND, *Historians and Public Memory in Japan: The "Comfort Women" Controversy*, *History and Memory*, Vol.11, N°2, 1999.

Claudia SCHNEIDER, *The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 617, *The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective*, 2008.

Michael Anthony SELLS, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, University of California Press, 1998.

Laura SJOBERG and Caron. E. GENTRY, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2007.

Laura SJOBORG and Sandra VIA (edited by), *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara, 2010.

Inger SKJELSBAEK, *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies From Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Routledge, London and New York, 2012.

Chungee Sarah SOH, *The Korean "Comfort Women": Movement for Redress*, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, N° 12, December 1996.

Cunghee Sarah SOH, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2008.

Alexandra STIGLMAYER (edit by), *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1994 (translation by Marion Faber of *Massenvergewaltung – Krieg Gegen die Frauen*).

Yuki TANAKA, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation*, Routledge, 2001.

Mirsad TOKAČA (edited by) Grijeh Šutnje-Rizik Govora ("The Sin of Silence-The Risk of Speech"), collection of the reports from the international conference held in Sarajevo on 10th and 11th March 1999, titled "Violation of the Human Rights of Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the '92-'95 war".

Chizuko UENO, *The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self*, translation by Jordan Sand, *History and Memory*, Vol. 11, N°2, 1999.

Mitja VELIKONJA, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Eastern European Studies, N°20, Texas A&M University Press, 2003 (translation by Rang'ichi Ng'inja of *Bosanski Religijski Mozaiki: Religije in Nacionalne Mitologije v Zgodovini Bosne in Hercegovine*, Ljubljana, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 1998).

Ed VULLIAMY, *Bosnia: the Crime of Appeasement*, International Affairs (royal Institute of International Affairs), Vol. 74, N° 1, January 1998.

Helen WALASEK (edited by), *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, Ashgate, 2015.

Lina VUŠKOVIĆ and Zorica TRIFUNOVIĆ, *Ženska Strana Rata* ("The Women's Side of War"), Women in Black, Belgrade, 2007.

Stephanie WOLFE, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies*, Springer, New York, 2014.

Yoshiaki YOSHIMI, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, translated by Suzanne O'Brien, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995.

Giuseppe ZACCARIA, *Noi, Criminali di Guerra: Storie Vere Dalla Ex-Jugoslavia*, Baldini and Castoldi, Milan, 1994.

Staša ZAJOVIĆ, Slavica STOJANOVIĆ and Miloš UROŠEVIĆ (edited by), *Women for Peace*, Women in Black, Belgrade, 2013.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Jake ADELSTEIN and Angela KUBO, 'Gesture of Healing': South Korea and Japan reconcile on World War II sex slaves, The Los Angeles Times, 28 December 2015.

Julian BORGER, Bosnia Rape Victims May Claim Compensation for the First Time, The Guardian, 30 June 2015.

Denis DŽINIĆ, Hague Prosecution Challenges Vojislav Šešelj's Acquittal, Balkan Insight, 30 August 2016.

Iris C. GONZALES, In Philippines, 'Comfort Women' Have a Special Demand, Womens News, 29 February 2016.

Justin McCURRY, Former sex slaves reject Japan and South Korea's 'Comfort Women' Accord, The Guardian, 26 January 2016.

Kentaro NAKAJIMA, Foundation Set Up in ROK for 'Comfort Women', The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun, 28 July 2016.

Monica PEROSINO, Un Voto Divide la Bosnia: Torna la Paura nei Balcani, La Stampa, 25 September 2016.

Mina POLLMANN, Will Taiwan's 'Comfort Women' Get an Apology From Japan?, The Diplomat, 4 March 2016.

Serina SANDHU, One in Three Women Watch Porn at Least Once a Week, Survey Finds, The Independent, 21 October 2015.

David E. SANGER, History Scholar in Japan Exposes a Brutal Chapter, The New York Times International, January 27, 1992.

Marlise SIMONS, Radovan Karadžić, a Bosnian Serb, Is Convicted of Genocide, The New York Times, 24 March 2016.

Vasudevan SRIDHARAN, North Korea Derides Japan-South Korea Agreement Over "Comfort Women", International Business Times, 29 December 2015.

Margaret THATCHER, Stop the Serbs. Now. For Good., The New York Times, 4 May 1994.

Shannon TIEZZI, China, Taiwan Apply Pressure to Japan Over 'Comfort Women' Issue, The Diplomat, 6 January 2016.

Daniel UGGELBERG GOLDBERG, Bosnian War Criminal: 'I Did Nothing Wrong', The Local, 26 January 2009.

WEBSITES

www.awf.or.jp

www.balkaninsight.com

balkans.aljazeera.net

www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk

www.bbc.com

www.childtrafficking.com

www.foreignaffairs.com

hrlibrary.umn.edu

www.ibtimes.com

www.icrc.org

www.icty.org

www.independent.co.uk

www.japantimes.co.jp

losangelestimes.com

www.mofa.go.jp

www.nytimes.com

thediplomat.com

www.theguardian.com

the-japan-news.com

www.thelocal.se

www.popis2013.ba

www.ohchr.org

rs.n1info.com

www.womenandwar.net

womensnews.org

www.zeneucnom.org

VIDEOS

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdU6ngDhrAA, Slobodan Milošević's speech at Kosovo Polje (1989).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wukeupQk4eQ, interview with Borislav Herak (1993).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QflnjlnOT4Q, Ratko Mladić and his forces entering Srebrenica (1995).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCNxXET2gZs, Charlie Rose interviews with Henry Kissinger (1995).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8rd1kXMUM8, Yamamoto Kumiko speaks about "comfort women" (2014).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJKm5f_64RU, Serb nationalists attack the Women in Black (2015).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWwNITPX2vk, "Still at the Frontline": Amnesty International documentary about Bosnian women victim of rape.