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The Evolution of the Status of Women in Korea:

Colonial Times to the Present

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HISTORY

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The issue of women's status in Korea has been a steady and slow fight to equality; women in Korea suffered under a patriarchal society for centuries, and their status declined under the Japanese colonial rule, but has been slowly improving in the postwar era. With this said, Korean women's status today is not much better than it was seventy years ago. Korean women were treated as social inferiors by men; and today the Korean women's social or economic status still is not equal to a man's.

Korean women are treated as second rate citizens that have to depend on a man for their social status. With the passage of time, things are getting better for Korean women and the way society feels about women having significant authority in society is changing. The Japanese colonization of Korea (1910-1945) is at the foundation of postwar tensions between Japan and Korea. The Japanese mistreatment of Korean women is an important element in many of these disputes. Specifically, the Japanese government took advantage of the Korean women's low status within Korean society to erect a sexual military system. Since the occupation, the status of Korean women has steadily improved, but not by a great margin. This paper uses the comfort women to

show how the status of Korean women has gradually gotten better since colonial Korean times.

Background

Meiji Japan (1869-1912) sought to be an imperial power in order to keep pace with Europe and the United States; to this end, Japan colonized Korea in 1910. At the foundation of Japan's colonial policies was the effort to assimilate Koreans into the Japanese polity; conversely, this meant a suppression of the Korean identity. By extending this idea, we see that the Japanese viewed the Korean people as inferior and as a tool to be used and abused.

During the Second World War, the Japanese intensified their efforts to assimilate the Koreans by forcing Koreans to change their names, forcing Koreans to worship Shinto gods, and to participate in a Japan's war efforts. Throughout these war years, Japan committed atrocities that the Koreans have not forgotten. The Japanese people took thousands of Koreans from their home country and forced them to work in factories in Japan to help produce war time goods. The Japanese not only colonized Korea to exploit the labor force that was available in Korea. At its essence, the Korean people did not fight for their own country but a country that attempted to erase the Korean ethnicity. The

Japanese were asking Koreans to commit national suicide. It is within this historical context that prostitution gains such a prominent position in historical remembrance.

Traditional Korea was a strict patriarchal society. Korean women were subjected to their fathers, then their husbands, and then their eldest sons over the course of their life. This burden was not lifted during the colonial era. When the Japanese took control of Korea, a “woman’s life became doubly hard after the Japanese annexation. Women now labored outside their homes, while at the same time they were urged to retain traditional ‘virtue’ which came to be identified with “Korean way.”¹ Women had to do whatever they were told regardless of who told them.

Ancient Korea’s social structure was matrilineal but as Korea became more developed and colonized the status of women declined. It seems the more Korean men felt inferior to the Japanese the more Korean women suffered so that the men can feel superior to someone.² Sonia Ryang stated, “it is true that the women’s personal pain is ultimately attributable to colonial relations and Japanese imperialism.” The women of Korea suffered many ailments because of Japanese rule “widows who lost their husbands in Japanese military or economic service suffered not only from the loss of their husbands but also, and more

¹ Bonnie B. Oh, “From Three Obediences to Patriotism and Nationalism: Women’s status in Korea up to 1945,” *Korea Journal* Vol. 22 no. 7, (July 1982): 37-55.

² Bonnie B. Oh. 1982.

significantly, from oppression and abuse inside the home by their in-laws, who regarded the bride as a domestic laborer and tacitly blamed her for the loss of their son.”³ When a woman married a man the woman would go live with the man and his family and would have to take care of his family.

These women would not have an authority and would have to do whatever the mother-in-law wanted her to do. Japan’s colonial rule brought sexism and other forms of oppression. Women had to follow the rules of Korean men. In Confucian society there was a hierarchy in the family that women had to follow. The women had to first obey and respect their husbands then their first born son and then their mother-in-law. Women did not have the free will to act and do as they wanted in a Confucian Korean society.

Korean culture placed, and still places, a high value on female purity and chastity. If a Korean woman had sexual relations before marriage and it was discovered, she was considered unmarriageable.⁴ Many Koreans suppose the Japanese purposely picked Korean women as comfort women due to they were sexually inexperienced.⁵

³ Sonia Ryang, “Inscribed (Men’s) Bodies, Silent (Women’s) Words: Rethinking Colonial Displacement of Koreans in Japan,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (October 1998): 3-15.

⁴ Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, (Routledge: New York and London 1998).

⁵ Chung-Hee Soh, “Women’s Sexual Labor and State in Korean History,” *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 15 No. 4, (Winter 2004): 170-177.

Often, this meant that a young girl was expected to sacrifice her body, her virtue, her whole existence at her father's request. Some fathers sold their daughters into prostitution. Under the Japanese colonial rule, a modernized system of licensed prostitution was established. From this system, comfort stations were created throughout the Japanese wartime empire. Unfortunately, women could not fight being taken or sold into it; they had no choice in the matter. The number of Korean women that were comfort women ranges from 90,000 to 200,000 women.

As Charu Gupta said, speaking, of India, "The pure and chaste woman [Korea] is raped and violated by the greedy and evil man [Japan]."⁶ In other words Korea is represented by the woman's body and Japan is the evil man who rapes the woman. A woman's body, in this sense, is the country that is being demoralized, terrorized, and degraded. Japanese soldiers had no compassion for these women just as Japan had no compassion for what it was doing to the country of Korea.

⁶ Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, and Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

The Beginning of Institutional Prostitution

The Koreans blame prostitution in Korea on the Japanese. Koreans believe the Japanese brought prostitution into Korea.⁷ Koreans maintain that prostitution was not practiced in their country until prior to the Japanese colonization of their country. After the annexation of Korea into the Japanese political system, Koreans believed that the Japanese brought prostitution into Korean society. With this “introduction of prostitution there was a system of ranks in the prostitution system. Within this system, there were different services for each of these ranks. There were ‘hand girls,’ ‘kiss girls,’ ‘stick girls,’ and ‘street girls.’⁹

Many scholars disagree. John Lie and C. Sarah Soh are two such academics. Lie, for his part, stated that prostitution was in Korea before the Japanese supposedly introduced it to the innocent, naïve Koreans. He argues that prostitution had been in Korea during the Yi Dynasty. Lie does not deny that the Japanese had a role in sexualizing women. He also argues that Japan was not the only foreign country to use Korea as a resource area, including the use of women as sexual servants. The United States also participated in prostitution.

⁷ Chung-Hee Soh, 170-177.

⁹ Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang, *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2007): 15-36.

Lie stated that the United States also exercised their force over the Korean women.¹²

Soh maintains that following colonization, prostitution and sexualization became more popular. She discredits the arguments that most of the women were tricked into prostitution (specifically comfort women) by recruits; in most cases the process was open and straight forward. There were cases where women were tricked into prostitution, but usually Korean fathers sold their daughters because they could not support their families otherwise.¹³ Thus we see that Koreans ignore the role of Koreans in the recruitment process; Korean men sold other Koreans into prostitution. Most of the time this was for families to pay off debts that the family had acquired to make ends meet for their families.¹⁴

On another note, this system of exploitation is analogous to how Korean men were seen by the Japanese military. Korean men were considered feminine because they did not serve in the Japanese military. Thus, for the Japanese colonial apparatus judged Koreans based on what they could do for the Japanese military.

¹² John Lie, "The Transformation of Sexual Work in 20th-Century Korea," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (June 1995): 310-327.

¹³ C. Sarah Soh, "Gender, Class, Sexuality, and Labor Under Japanese Colonialism and Imperialist War," *The Comfort Women* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2008): 1-27.

¹⁴ Song Youn-ok, "Japanese Colonial Rule and State-Managed Prostitution: Korea's Licensed Prostitutes," *The Comfort Women: Colonialism, War, and Sex*, Vol. 5 No. 1, (Spring 1997): 169-203

In Korean historical remembrance, a comfort women's body symbolizes all that was wrong with the colonial era. This makes an unusual situation regarding the status of women in Korea. On the one hand, the low status of Korean women made them victims of Korean men who sold them in to prostitution and Japanese men who were largely the customers of the comfort stations. Koreans consider the comfort system to be the institutionalized rape of Korean women. This exploitation of Korean women by the Japanese is highlighted by the Korean nation to show the Japanese oppression of the Korean people; yet, the Korean on Korean exploitation is conveniently excluded from the historical narrative. That said, the issue is not as deeply entrenched in the Korean psyche as I had expected. I shall return to this point later in the essay.

Soh also argues that the colonization of Korea was not critical to the establishment of comfort stations, a euphemism for the brothels used by Japanese soldiers during World War II. Soh points to the Massacre of Nanking (1937) in China as the most critical factor in the recruitment of comfort women and the establishment of comfort stations.²⁰ The thousands of women taken from Korea as sex slaves from 1941 to 1945 have not been forgotten.²¹

²⁰ Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean "Comfort Women": Movement for Redress," *Asian Survey* 36, No. 12 (Dec. 1996): 1226-1240.

²¹ Michael Breen, "Korean Soldiers, Comfort Women Drafted for Japan's WWII Effort," *Korea Times*, (14 Mar. 2010).

The Life of a Comfort Woman

The Japanese soldiers unwittingly used comfort women to degrade Korea. The brothel system used by the Japanese military dehumanized those prostitutes; the soldiers may not have realized that they were doing this in the process of satisfying their sexual needs. The Japanese soldiers objectified Korean women and used them as objects of satisfaction and gratification. They were not worried about what it would do to the women in the long run. It was all about the human instinct and instant pleasure, not the consequences that these unfortunate women would have to face.²²

Many comfort women shared their experiences; some of these stories are believable, but others stretch the imagination. One comfort woman recounted an experience that she had “intercourse with about [dozens of] people a day continuously for [seventeen] hours. Even when I was eating, a soldier would come on top of me after a while, you can go without defecating. I urinated even when a soldier was on top of me.”²³ These women would go through horrific extremities because these Japanese men needed a sexual release “to be better soldiers” for the Japanese military.

These women did not live in good conditions while in the comfort stations.

Pyong Gap Min states:

²² John Lie, 310-327.

²³ John Lie, 310-327

Confined to filthy shanties, the sexual slaves were forced to have intercourse with Japanese soldiers, from 10 to 30 times per day. They were regularly subjected to torture, beating, burning, and sometimes stabbing. Some women died of venereal disease in military brothels, while other women committed suicide.²⁴

The Japanese recruited women and had them perform sexual acts that degraded them while they were in the brothel and subsequently, was a scarlet letter later in their life. The stigma attached to the Korean women tainted the status of Korean men by their association of nationality. This is why Koreans blame the Japanese for the low quality of life that they had during the war years. Korean men, in turn, took their frustrations out on Korean women. It became a vicious cycle in which Korean women lost at each turn.

Korean comfort women were valued less than comfort women from different nationalities: “Japanese women received 3 to 5 yen per intercourse, whereas Koreans received 1.5 to 2 yen.”²⁵ The Japanese took unmarried Korean women as comfort women camps by promising the women jobs in factories with salaries that could pay off their family’s debts. Song Youn-ok argues that “If there had not been the widespread network of traffic in women used in the

²⁴ Pyong Gap Min, “Korean “Comfort Women”: The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class,” *Gender and Society*. Vol. 17, no. 6 (Dec. 2006): 938-951.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 310-327.

state-managed prostitution system, the mobilization of Korean comfort women would have been a very different process.”²⁶

The chance of women having authority or respect in their households was eliminated after women were taken into comfort camps. This was because after being a comfort woman or prostitute the family was disgraced by what happened to the women. Most girls were basically disowned by their families, even if the father was the one that sold his daughter into the brothels. “That the pain of women who were the victims of sexual violence was exacerbated by their rejection on returning to their own communities. They were forced to suffer in shame and silence as a consequence of sexist attitudes that saw them as responsible for their own tragedies.” Their family members treated the former comfort women like it was the woman’s fault.

Postwar Issues

The Korean people use the comfort women issue to continue their hatred and animosity toward Japan. Koreans want an apology for the suffering that former comfort women experienced post World War II. If the Japanese would apologize to the Koreans then the comfort woman atrocity would no longer exist

²⁶ Song Youn-ok, 169-203.

and the Korean's would have one less reason to have a hatred for the Japanese. The comfort women would then have the freedom to voice what had happened to them without them feeling the shame that is usually associated with comfort women telling their stories.

Former comfort women faced a bleak life after the war. Many could not hold regular jobs. One of the reasons women had a hard time staying in the work force after World War II was because Confucianism still had roots in Korean culture. Confucianism promoted a patriarchal society, meaning the men were the breadwinners and had all the authority in society and in the household. In Confucianism the main goal of a woman was to "achieve the highest level of 'feminine' virtues. Women were to possess virtues of filial piety, loyalty, chastity, and fidelity. Women's filial piety was further defined as "her filial piety towards parents and parents-in-law, assistance to her husband and education of her children."²⁷

Kelly D. Askin argues that the former Korean comfort women should not have to face the discrimination because "the shame and dishonor belongs on the physical perpetrator(s) and others responsible for the crimes and to some extent on the legal, protective, and enforcement systems and global society which have ignored, silenced, or otherwise failed to respond appropriately to gender based

²⁷ Angella Son, "Confucianism and the Lack of Development of the Self Among Korean American Women," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 54. No. 4. (March 2006): 325-336

crimes.”²⁸ There were other reasons beyond shame why the comfort women did not voice their stories to their families. One was that the women felt that there was too much at stake for them to publicly accuse the people who raped them and murdered their comrades. They felt this way because Korean society is a patriarchal society, meaning that men decided the fate of how women would live their lives and they did not want to make it worse for themselves or future generations. Furthermore, any discussion of the comfort women was forbidden because “under the impact of the strong patriarchal milieu any sexual victim was associated with stigma and humiliation.”²⁹

Women’s Hardship in Postwar Society

Being a comfort woman had a stigma attached to it that gave the women a “red mark” on their worth. A red mark, a blemish on one’s status in society, in Asian societies means that there is something vile and untouchable about you. These red marks assigned to these women led their families and society in general to shun them. These women were potential brides for Korean men, but when the women were released from the comfort women camps they were

²⁸ Kelly D. Askin, “Comfort Women – Shifting Shame and Stigma from Victims to Victimizer,” *International Criminal Law Review*, (Kluwer Law International, Netherlands, 2001): 5-32.

²⁹ Pyong Gap Min, “Emergence of the “Comfort Women” Issue & Victims Breaking Silence in South Korea,” Paper submitted for Presentation at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Americans Sociological Association, Philadelphia, August 13-16.

ineligible for marriage because they were no longer chaste; they no longer possessed their strongest virtue: virginity.

Korean men oppressed Korean women after they were released from the comfort stations, because they were sexually exploited. The women who were forced into these camps under false pretenses were ashamed and afraid to admit to their families what had happened to them; so the women kept that part of their lives secret as a way to deal with the pain and embarrassment. No one could see the true desperation they felt in their life. It was another way that Korean society oppressed the Korean comfort women. The women felt they had nothing to offer Korean men who wanted chaste and pure women.⁵⁸ These women were looked down upon for the rest of their lives.

After World War II former comfort women had to work outside of their womanly duties to build up Korea's economy. Korea did not suffer directly from the bombings of World War II, but because they were a Japanese colony Korea suffered greatly. Korea was turned into a garrison state for Japan to extract cheap labor and soldiers. More men were conscripted into the military by Japan and that left women to do the work that they left behind. Since this time women have tried to stay in the work force even if it was frowned upon by Korean society.

⁵⁸ Chung-Hee Soh, 170-177.

Angela Son states that because of this, women lost their identity. As Miller argues above, in order to benefit men, the dominant job to support the man and their family first so there would be more harmony.⁵⁹ Because Korean women did not have a prominent status in society it was more difficult for them to get an important job. Chin Sung Chung argues that some Korean women who worked in the factories in Japan during World War II have wrongly suffered. His article points out that some of the women who were taken to work in factories, as part of the Chongsindae (Young Women's Volunteer Corps) have been incorrectly grouped with comfort women and have been stamped as comfort women. Chung states that there is indeed a difference between the women factory workers and comfort women. Comfort women actually performed the sexual acts and the women who were workers in the factories did not.⁶⁰

Women are trying today to advance in the economic and political scene by working in Korean society. Kyung Ae Park argued that even though women have a huge part in Korea's economy, it has not positively affected their status. Park also argued that women have political positions, but they did not have enough power to change anything in Korea. Park examines the pay wages for men and women, and from her research she said that there is the biggest difference

⁵⁹ Ibid., 325-336

⁶⁰ Yi Myonggu and William A. Douglas, "Korean Confucianism Today," *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 40, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer, 1967): 43-59.

among wages received from any other country that submitted data. One issue that Park discusses is how women hold political offices but they are not offices with substance or authority. Park's exact assessment was:

The women who have managed to rise in the power hierarchy, especially through the national constituency, have generally been confined to women's issues in their activities. They participated as functional representatives of women rather than as professional politicians. Thus, their participation was concentrated in an area which is given low priority in legislative activity. As a result, their power was insignificant.⁶¹

This becomes an issue with dealing with comfort women because the positions that women have are not powerful enough to resolve the issue. Even if the women thought that it was important, the men can still override their actions.

There is a point where Park's argument can be justified. I was actually a witness to this kind of discrimination while present in South Korea in May 2011. It was rare to see women in actual CEO positions. Women were in secretarial jobs for the men who ran the companies. The only time that there was a woman in an actual position of power was when I interviewed women about the comfort women issue. When these women were asked about the issue, their response was that they deal with prostitution and not comfort women. Their main goal was to end the current prostitution system. Even some of these women did not know

⁶¹ Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Development: The Case of South Korea," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 25, no. 2 (Jan., 1993): 127-145.

how to answer questions about comfort women and how they felt about how the ordeal affected their current life.

In 1959, The Korean Women's Association Council (KWAC) was founded. This organization was not a huge step in the Korean feminist movement because it lacked the influence to improve the voice of Korean women, but it was nevertheless a move toward equality among the people. Most of the work centralized around the KWAC was: "charity work, consumer protection, job training in feminized occupations, the promotion of friendship among members, and the offering of lectures and classes for housewives and brides-to-be."⁶²

A decade later a movement for young female factory workers emerged and demanded unpaid wages along with higher pay. These women were supported by Christian ministers and student activists. The movement did not get far because the Korean government reacted harshly to these women. This was because any labor movement was considered to be anti-state and communistic.⁶³ Moreover, it was undertaken by women so male-dominated unions did not come to their assistance.

The more ways that Korean women tried to empower themselves the more the Korean government and society rejected them. It seemed like neither

⁶² Seungsook Moon, "Carving Out Space: Civil Society and the Women's Movement in South Korea." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 61, no. 2 (May 2002): 473-500

⁶³ Ibid.

wanted women to be successful in the world around them. Women were not valued as contributing members of society, they were just there to make the men around them happy, give their husbands pleasure, and to bear children especially male children

Koreans Demand an Apology and Restitution

Philip Seaton states that Japanese citizens had mixed feelings about how to react to the comfort women telling their stories to the world. Some Japanese feel that Japan should give compensation and an apology to the women that were military sex slaves. On the other hand, there were Japanese who thought that these women were just trying to get attention and that Japan need not respond because all issues had been settled in the San Francisco Peace treaty that ended World War II.⁶⁴ In 1965 Japan and Korea met and signed the Normalization Treaty. The Japanese claimed that all the compensation that comfort women should have received was already allotted to them. Nevertheless in January 13, 1992 Japan issued an apology to Korea but still no compensation from the government.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Philip Seaton, "Reporting the 'Comfort Women' Issue, 1991-1992: Japan's Contested War Memories in the National Press," *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 26, no. 1 (May 2006): 99-112.

⁶⁵ C. Sarah Soh, "Japan's Responsibility Toward Comfort Women Survivors," *JPRI Working Paper No. 77* (May 2001).

The Korean women's movement caused the founding of the Asian Women's fund. The Asian Women's Fund was funded and controlled by the Japanese government. The purpose of this organization is not to give Korean the pretenses that Japan was apologizing or taking blame and responsibility for how the comfort women were being treated. The organization's purposes are:

1) to deliver two million yen (around US\$18,000 depending on the exchange rate used) to each survivor-applicant as "atonement money" raised from the Japanese people, accompanied by letters of apology from the Prime Minister and the AWF president; 2) to implement government programs for the survivors' welfare; 3) to compile materials on the comfort women for the historical record; and 4) to initiate and support activities that address contemporary issues of violence against women.⁶⁶

The Asian Women's Fund was not accepted by the comfort women. The Koreans do not want to accept money from the Japanese government because when the Japanese sent the money they sent a letter apologizing to the Korean comfort women, but they did not take responsibility in these letters. The Koreans want an official apology and for the Japanese to step up and admit what they did to Korea as a nation was wrong. The Korean people have asked for Japan to pay compensation for the abuses that the Japanese committed against the comfort women, but the Japanese government ignores such claims. Japan has given condolences regarding other hardships it caused in Korea but on this issue they will not sway.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Jung Sung-ki. "Tokyo Urged to Compensate for 'Comfort Women,'" Korea Times, 03 Mar. 2010

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Experiencing South Korea

While in South Korea in May 2011, I attended a weekly protest demanding an apology from Japan to the Comfort Women outside the Japanese embassy. This protest was attended by several hundred people. This protest was not violent; it was an informative meeting where former comfort women told their stories to the younger generations. While doing research there, I interviewed young women about the comfort women, or the *chongsindae*, and surprisingly the women did not truly understand what was being asked of them. Many Koreans do not fully understand the comfort women issue. In fact, the comfort women demonstration outside the embassy was hijacked by men demonstrating against Japan's territorial claim on Dokdo Isle (two rocky outcroppings that are claimed by Japan and Korea). Again, the women's issue was relegated to a subservient position.

While at the Independence Hall in Cheonan, South Korea I researched how the Hall portrayed the Comfort Women and women in general. The Independence Hall is a massive seven building museum that depicts Korea's history; I saw how South Korea portrayed their history and how much information they devoted to the comfort women. There were few exhibits about the comfort women; the Independence Hall had a wall that mapped the locations of comfort stations, a

small diorama of a woman being abducted, and a plaque that stated that the majority of the comfort women were Korean women. This limited space allotted to the comfort women issue is symbolic of how minor an issue this has become in Korean society. Fewer resources are devoted to the comfort women issue; Korean youth do not know a lot about comfort women and their sufferings.

From my understanding, the main purpose of the exhibits on the comfort women was to instill hatred for Japan into Koreans. The way that the curators worded and portrayed the exhibits was very accusatory. For instance, to describe what was done to the comfort women after the war a plaque inside Building 4 states: "After the end of the war, many of them were massacred or left where they had been irresponsibly and lose their lives. It was the most crime against humanity that the Japanese ever perpetrated systematically and on large scale." It did not seem that the main purpose of the exhibits on the comfort woman issue were to give knowledge to the Korean people, but to instill animosity towards Japan. The exhibits that focused on men were detailed, informative, and plentiful. The comfort women memorials were in had one small room with very few plaques. There was discrimination about what the curators thought had more importance in their eyes. A conclusion to this is that even though the women played an important role in Korea's history they are largely ignored when Korea's history is on display.

The Contemporary Thoughts of Korean Women

While in Korea, I interviewed over a dozen Korean women, mostly university students. I attempted to interview men, but once they learned that my interviews were about the comfort women, they excused themselves or suddenly lost their English skills. My brief foray into this issue taught me that the Korean youth do not comprehend the comfort women issue. Their main concern was prostitution in today's time and that they believed that the comfort women issue was not of importance.

I was curious as to how far the status of women had advanced since the end of World War II. Could women still be sold by their fathers? Could women live independently? I wanted answers. I interviewed several college-aged Korean women about how they felt entering the work force knowing that their work may not have as much as importance as a man's. The questions that were asked mainly pertained about how they felt about the work force towards women and the status that women in today's economic and social society. The questions that were asked were:

1. As a woman what are your plans for the future?
2. Do you see any gender differences in roles?
3. Do you feel you have equal opportunity in South Korea as men?

4. Do you believe that, if you were to marry, it would bother your husband if you worked?
5. Do you believe your husband would let you work in the same field as him?
6. Do you think that your significant other would have a problem with you having a higher status than him?
7. Do you see women as home makers or business people?
8. What kind of jobs do you believe a woman should have, and what is your view on women in politics?

After having multiple interviews with university educated women, I believe a woman's responses depended on how they were raised. The first girl, Joo Hyei, interviewed believed that having a man in her life would ruin her future plans of becoming a doctor. She said that she did not believe that there was a difference among status in her generation, but that it was noticeable in her parent's generation, that women should listen and not be heard. She said it was more difficult to get her parents to support her goal of becoming a doctor because they believe that to be a man's job and not a woman's. When asked about what jobs a woman should have she said that most people believed that women should do "delicate things and men should do labor."

Another girl, Jun, who was twenty-two, she had some of the same beliefs about future job aspects for when she graduated with a university level education. She planned to be a publisher. She was asked if she wanted to marry and have children she said she would like to but if the two got in her way of her career choice she would sacrifice both of those, because her career is more important. Jun said that she saw gender differences between men and women;

that women and men were educated differently socially, so that men would be stronger. She said she believed that this was true because she felt that men wanted women to be socially suppressed and discriminated against socially and in the work force. She also had the opinion that if she was to get married that she would not have the same opportunity to get an equal job as a man; that being married and a female that the man would get it first due to women being able to get pregnant. Korean businesses think women having children or having to go through pregnancy made them unreliable and unstable.

When Jun talked about her career choice she was hesitant about whether she would actually be able to become a publisher. I then asked her what type of job she believed a woman should have. Her answer was that: women should have jobs that give them independence, flexible hours and equal rights for pregnant women. On the subject of whether women should be involved in politics more, and whether women who were in office actually had power to change anything, she was adamant that women should have more power throughout Korea. Her reasoning behind this was that women are more sympathetic to people and that there would be more of a humanitarian aspect involved in a woman's decision making process.

From actually seeing women and how they are treated in society I came to the realization that it was not as much the issue of comfort women that lowered

women's status in modern time but the fact that Korea still practices beliefs that are Confucian or are beliefs from a Confucian society.

As I spoke to more women their answers did not change. They all believed that as a nation that Korea was becoming more accepting for women to enter the work force, but at the same time they were not as willing to give women equality and equal opportunities to succeed and to advance as men. Ye-Lu, a literature major used a wonderful metaphor that Korea sometimes had a glass ceiling were some spots did not get cleaned and that is where women were left out in the cold in the economics of Korea. As a past reference stated:

Some even point to sex discrimination as the 'catalyst' of the rapid industrialization of South Korea. Sex discrimination provides industries with cheap labor, and thus their superior competitive position in the international economic system. It is ironic that discriminatory measures contributed to the country's rapid economic growth and, in turn, growth itself deepened discrimination.⁷¹

With this said, a person that is not from Korea can see or understand why women feel like they should have more of a role in Korean society. As women steadily entered the workforce it seemed like they lost more influence and opportunity at the same time. Women helped the economy, but were forgotten and ignored. It was like they were put back in the same position as the comfort women before them. They were being used for what they could offer and were not getting the recognition or the pay that they deserved.

⁷¹ Park, 127-145.

Women typically have been ignored in Korean society. It seems that women are to be objects that are admired and kept silence and to have no authority. Korea has blamed Japan since 1945, but it was not addressed from 1945-1990 for the most part, for how women were treated in the comfort stations. If it is all Japan's fault for these women losing their chastity and innocence, why did Korea punish those women who went public and told their stories? These women should have been considered similar to prisoner of war survivors because in reality that is what they were. It was not their choice to become comfort women and if they did go with the recruiters freely, it was because they did not know the whole story of where they were going or that their families had sold them into prostitution. When they came home there was a stigma attached to them and they were treated like outcasts, some did not even return home afterward. Even after all this they still stood up and tried to help Korea even after Korea did not try to help them Now that times are changing, women are trying to climb that ladder along with men. It does not seem like they will stop until they have the same chance at equality as men. There does seem to be a weakening of Confucian heritage but it is still present in Korean society. The issue of is whether Korean women will ever have an equal status to that of a Korean man is hard to answer. In all honesty it probably will not be because their society is based upon the man having the authority and power.

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