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# Korean "Comfort Women" and Military Sexual Slavery in World War II

by  
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# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1	Historical Background	9
1.2	Setting up Comfort Stations	12
1.3	Activism	16
1.4	Silence	17
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Nationalist Approaches</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1.1	Japanese Nationalist Approach	22
2.1.2	Korean Nationalist Approach.	25
<b>2.2</b>	<b>‘Objective Historian’ Approach</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Feminist Approaches</b>	<b>32</b>
2.3.1	‘Gender Emphasising’ Approach	32
2.3.2	Feminist Political Action Approach	35
<b>2.4</b>	<b>My Research Questions and Concepts</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>‘Integrated Feminist’ Approach: Sexuality, Subjectivity, War and Colonialism</b>	<b>44</b>
2.5.1	Sexuality and Colonialism	44
2.5.2	Sexual Scripts and Femininity	48
2.5.3	Sexual Violence and War	50
2.5.4	Masculinity and Militarism	53
2.5.5	Victimisation and Resistance	54
<b>3</b>	<b>RESEARCHING MILITARY SEXUAL SLAVERY</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>58</b>
3.1.1	Narrative Resources and Written Resources	58
3.1.2	Why Personal Narrative Method?	60
3.1.3	What are Testimony and Oral History?	62
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>67</b>
3.2.1	Collecting Material	67
3.2.2	Finding Informants	70
3.2.3	Preparing and Conducting Interviews	74
<b>3.3</b>	<b>The Relationship between a Narrator and a Researcher</b>	<b>78</b>
3.3.1	Power Relationship between a Narrator and a Researcher	78
3.3.2	Commonality	83
3.3.3	Tension	84
3.3.4	Language Barrier	88
3.3.5	Differences from Orthodox Ethnography	90
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Epistemology</b>	<b>91</b>
3.4.1	Reliability of Experience and Memory	91
3.4.2	Women’s Experience	94

<b>4</b>	<b>STORIES OF THE "COMFORT WOMEN"</b>	<b>99</b>
4.1	Recruitment and Transportation	100
4.2	Family Background	105
4.3	Sexual Initiation	107
4.4	Aspects of Daily Life	109
4.4.1	Routinisation of Sexual Violence	109
4.4.2	Rhythms of Daily Life: the Weekends	110
4.4.3	An Ostensible Form of Prostitution (Prostitutionalisation)	111
4.4.4	Rhythms of War, Rhythms of Violence	114
4.5	Woman as Body	116
4.6	Relationships between the Soldiers and the "Comfort Women"	120
4.7	Contestation and Resistance	123
4.8	The End of the War, and its Aftermath	130
4.8.1	Being Deserted or Killed	130
4.8.2	Diseases, Barrenness or Hysterectomy	132
4.8.3	Stigmatisation: 'Damaged Goods'	132
4.8.4	Anti- Japanese Reaction	135
<b>5</b>	<b>STORIES OF THE SOLDIERS</b>	<b>138</b>
5.1	Personal Relationships	139
5.2	Motivations	142
5.2.1	Motivations to Go to Comfort Stations	142
5.2.2	Motivations Not to Go to Comfort Stations	145
5.3	Regulations and Disciplines of Military Life	146
5.3.1	Hierarchy	146
5.3.2	Regulation and Control of Soldiers	148
5.3.3	Regulation of the Comfort Stations	151
5.4	Violence	152
5.5	Legitimation	154
<b>6</b>	<b>MILITARY MASCULINITY</b>	<b>161</b>
6.1	Characteristics of Military Masculinity	165
6.2	Re/construction of Military Masculinity through Practices	168
6.2.1	Creating Stratification among the Men	169
6.2.2	Use of Violence	172
6.2.3	Sexual Conquest	174
6.2.4	Using Military Vernacular including Sexual Language	178
6.2.5	Drinking Alcohol	179
6.3	Contributions to War	180



<b>7</b>	<b>ENSLAVED SEXUALISED FEMININITY</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Enforced Feminine Subject Positioning</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Established Femininities in Korea and Japan</b>	<b>190</b>
7.2.1	Femininity in Korean Confucianism	191
7.2.2	Japanese Femininity	196
7.2.3	Femininity in Korean Nationalism	201
<b>7.3</b>	<b>‘Re-socialisation’: Using and Transforming Traditional Femininities</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>How Successful was the Process and with What Effects?</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>NATIONAL IDENTITIES</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Characteristics of National identities of the Japanese Military Men and the "Comfort Women"</b>	<b>214</b>
8.1.1	Characteristics of National Identity of the Japanese Military Men	214
8.1.2	The Japanese Construction of Korean Identity of the "Comfort Women"	220
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Practices for Establishment of National Identities</b>	<b>222</b>
8.2.1	Practices in Reconstructing National Identity of the Japanese Military Men	222
8.2.2	The ‘Pseudo Japanese’ Subjugated Identity of the Korean "Comfort Women"	228
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Identity Reformation as a Political Weapon</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Conformity: Internalised Femininities</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Resistance in the Comfort Stations</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>9.3</b>	<b>Reconstitution of Identities After the War</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>9.4</b>	<b>Breaking the Silence: The "Comfort Women" Campaign</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>275</b>

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the way in which sexualities and identities are involved in the creation of patriarchal relations, ethnic hierarchies and colonial power in the context of "Comfort Women". The women were considered sexual slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II. I attempt to show the ways in which masculinity, femininity, and national identity were re/constructed through the enforcement of the subject-positionings of gender, colonialism and nationalism.

The questions I raise and attempt to answer are: What kinds of masculinity and femininity of the Japanese soldiers and Korean "Comfort Women" respectively, and the national identities of both, were re/constructed through the comfort station system? How were the positionings of the "Comfort Women" enacted through daily practices and ideology, and what were the consequences of the re/construction of their identity? Finally, how did the "Comfort Women" position themselves in the face of the imposition of gender and national identities, by Japanese colonial and Korean nationalist power?

I use personal narratives, including testimonies and life histories of the former Korean "Comfort Women" and Japanese veterans obtained from my interviews with them as well as from testimonies already released. I interviewed thirteen former Korean "Comfort Women" and seventeen Japanese veterans. Thirteen out of the veterans were 'rehabilitated' in China after World War II, the remaining four were not. I also occasionally use official documents on the comfort station system, which were issued by the Japanese military and the Western Allies.

I argue that the development of gender and national identities contributed to the construction of Japanese colonialism, and that the "Comfort Women" system helped to produce and reproduce Japan as an imperial state with power over the lives and human resources of the colonies. In particular, the maintenance of the military system depended on the circulation of these concepts of masculinity and femininity. The regulation of masculine and feminine sexuality and national identities through the military comfort station system was a crucial means through which Japan expanded its colonies by military means.



## **Note on Names**

Korean names and Japanese names are presented in East Asian order: family name first and given name last in this thesis. The exception is my own name, Yonson Ahn, which I write in western order for the purpose of this thesis.

## **Note on Proof-reading**

This thesis has been proof-read for English language.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Historical Background

To understand the "Comfort Women" issue it is necessary to have an insight into the historical and social background of Korea, particularly in the years after Korea became a Japanese colony. The relation between Korea and Japan has been quite ambivalent. There has been tension and alliance between the two countries through the colonial period (1910-1945) and the post-war and post-colonial years. The world wide colonial expansionism affected Korea at the turn of the century. After the 1868 restoration in Japan, the *seikanron*<sup>1</sup> took place over the question of conquering Korea. With the exception of the expedition to Taiwan (1874), the annexation of the Ryukyu islands and the colonisation of Hokkaido, and the stationing of Japanese troops in Korea after 1885, it was not until 1894 that Japan actually went to war (Lehmann, 1982, 300). As a result of the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), Korea was made a protectorate of Japan, and Japan presented the *Ulsa* treaty, a five-articled 'agreement' which moved all of Korea's international relations to Japanese hands in 1905. Finally, Korea was officially declared a Japanese colony in 1910; under the treaty of annexation the Korean Emperor ceded all sovereign power over Korea to the Japanese Emperor. This treaty stated that henceforth Koreans were to be Japanese subjects (Dolgopol, 1994, 21).

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<sup>1</sup> *Seikanron* is the debate over whether Japan should send a punitive expedition to Korea, an issue that divided the Japanese government in 1893 (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia* Vol. II, 1993, 1336).



The Japanese seizure of Korean sovereignty impacted on everyday life, most notably by means of land survey projects, so called *tojijosasaop*<sup>2</sup>, as Japan took possession of up to forty percent of Korean land. As a consequence, many farmers lost their economic base and a large number of them were driven into poverty with severe consequences for their families.

Thereafter, Korea was assigned, firstly the role of a food supplier for Japan especially in 1920s when there were severe food shortages in Japan; secondly as a market for the goods made in Japan. A plan to increase Korea's rice production was instituted and a fixed quantity of rice had to be sent to Japan every year, while the supply of rice in Korea dwindled in proportion<sup>3</sup> (Kim, 1976, 192; Shin, 1981, 177). Another important role of Korea was that of a source of raw materials like cotton and metals. This typical colonial policy was switched in the 1930s to the policy of industrialisation focusing on heavy industry<sup>4</sup> (Cha, 1985; Chun, 1989). This served as preparation for future expansionist wars, where the development of heavy industry was crucial. The impact of that shift in economic policy on female labourers, who used to work in light industries, in textile factories, in mills, in tobacco and rubber factories, and who lost employment as a result, was severe (Ahn, 1988, 55-57). Demand for male labourers increased, and women's employment prospects deteriorated.

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<sup>2</sup> Land surveys were carried out from 1910 to 1918 to establish property rights; land that was not reported or whose ownership was undocumented was nationalised and the tillers made tenants farmers (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia* Vol. I, 1993, 828). For more details about the land survey projects, see Shin (1991).

<sup>3</sup> In 1919, 22 percent of the rice produced in Korea was shipped to Japan, but by 1931 exported rice amounted to 57 percent of the total crop (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia* Vol. 1, 1993, 828).

<sup>4</sup> Hoh (1983) is critical of this industrialisation policy by Japan in Korea during the thirties and forties, at the height of Japanese militarism. He argues that Korean industrialisation by the Japanese colonial power increased economic imbalance among industrial sectors and economic dependency on others.

A further important step was Japan's decision to turn Korea into a base for Japanese domination in Asia. The invasion of China in 1937, and the subsequent takeover of Manchuria with the installation of a puppet regime depended upon the use of Korea as a giant logistic base. With the intensification of militarism in Japan the oppression of Korea increased. A series of military conquests began, including the attack on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, which marked the entrance of Japan into the Second World War (WWII)<sup>5</sup>. The daily increasing requirements of Japan's war economy intensified unbalanced economic development in Korea. The production of goods relevant to war like rice and any kind of metal, which had to be exported to Japan, increased continuously. Not only material but also human resources were marshalled. Korea was regarded as a potential source of manpower for Japan's industry and for its armed forces. Many Koreans were taken to Japan, Sakhalin, Southeast Asia, and South Pacific Islands to work in mines, factories, agriculture, and in the Japanese military.

More and more farmers faced food shortages especially during the 1930s and 1940s, at the height of Japanese militarism, as a natural consequence, because there had been little consideration for the needs of the Korean population. The impoverishment of the farmers, still the largest population group, caused the dissolution of families. The women in farming villages were forced to seek work in the cities. However, only a fairly small number of them found work in factories, many of them were targeted by procurers for the operation of the prostitution industry in pubs, bars, and the pleasure quarters<sup>6</sup> (Song, 1997, 181) or by recruiters

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<sup>5</sup> I mainly cover comfort stations from the Japan-China War beginning in 1937 till the Pacific War (1941-1945) in my thesis.

<sup>6</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 19, December, 1932, cited in Song, 1997, 202. See also *Hanguk yosong*, 1992, 47-71, and Son Chong-mok, 1988.



of "Comfort Women". A series of colonial policies in Korea, increased destitution and debt among farmers, which led to trafficking of daughters, early marriage or forced marriage of young teenage girls, and female infanticide (Mun, 1988, 121-124).

## 1.2 Setting up Comfort Stations

It seems that from the beginning of the 1930s comfort stations, mainly private, were set up in Manchuria, China. For example, Choe Chong-lye, reported she was taken forcibly to China in 1932 as a "Comfort Woman" (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 11). A plan to set up comfort stations on a large scale, however, was laid after the Nanjing Massacre in December 1937, where 115,000 Chinese civilians were killed.

The first military comfort stations were set up in Shanghai in 1932, according to a written document (Yoshimi, 1995, 14). It should be noted here, that there have been two different kinds of comfort stations: 'military' and 'industrial'. The first mainly served troops at or near the war zone, the latter were exploited in mining towns, construction sites, or military factories (Yun, 1991, 7-13). In this thesis, I focus on the military comfort stations.

An extensive deployment of comfort stations for the exclusive use of the military started in 1937 (Kako, 1992, cited in Chai, 1993, 69). After the invasion and occupation of large areas by Japan, especially after August 1942, the Ministry of War began to systematise the policy regarding the comfort stations. The ministry also regularly sent condoms<sup>7</sup> to 'military brothels' in areas where soldiers were stationed and supported 'the brothels' financially<sup>8</sup> (*Senso*, 1993, 34, cited in Chung, 1997,

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<sup>7</sup> Hayashi reports distribution of condoms by the Japanese military government in Malaysia during WWII (Hayashi, 1993, 75-76).

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Japanese military involvement in the "Comfort Women" system, see Yoshimi, 1996.

224). According to a 1944 report by the U.S. Office of War Information, the 'comfort girls' were found wherever it was necessary for the Japanese Army to fight<sup>9</sup>. So far, evidence of comfort stations has been confirmed in China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, British-colonised Borneo, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, New Guinea, Okinawa, Korea, Vietnam, and the southern Pacific islands (see Yoshimi, 1995-a).

According to testimony and archive records, the military comfort stations were managed in three principal ways: one type was built and run by the Japanese military. Early 'military brothels' were initially managed by the Japanese Imperial Army's recreation division. A second type was built by the military but run by civilians; and in the third, an already existing brothel was turned into a comfort station exclusively designated for soldiers and military personnel. Due to the negative reaction of the public, many were later handed over to private firms under the direct supervision of the military (Kako, 1992, cited in Chai, 1993, 69). Regardless of the type, however, as revealed by testimonies and military documents, the Japanese military authorities supervised and administrated station management and organised inspection of the women's hygiene, security and sanitation (Chung, 1993, 23 cited in Yang 1997, 58).

The Japanese Imperial Army first recruited military prostitutes during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) (Chai, 1993, 69), but systematic establishment of comfort stations did not begin until 1937. "Comfort Women" came from Japan and from Japanese colonies in Korea and Taiwan, as well as from Japanese occupied territories toward the end of the war, such

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<sup>9</sup> Inter-Ministerial Group on the "Comfort Women" Issue, Republic of Korea, *Military "Comfort Women" Under Japanese Colonial Rule*, Interim Report, July 1992, Seoul, Korea, cited in Chung, 1994, 182.



as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma. Dutch women were also used as "Comfort Women" in Indonesia (Yoshimi, 1995-a, 81). In occupied areas such as south east Asia and the Pacific Islands numerous women were taken and raped before the comfort stations were set up, or where there were no comfort stations.<sup>10</sup>

The Japanese soldiers euphemistically called them "Comfort Women". The women's ages ranged from 12 to the 20s. They were forced, kidnapped, lured, deceived, or sold to service the sexual needs of the Japanese military in their occupied regions and fields of war before and during WWII. The precise number of women forced to engage in the "Comfort Women" system is not easy to estimate because substantial military documents containing this information were destroyed or not released (Chung, 1997, 251). Japanese soldiers referred to the comfort station as *nigyuichi* (29 to 1), a reference to the number of men each woman was expected to service each day; this may also be a reference to the ratio of the number of "Comfort Women" needed relative to the number of Japanese soldiers. Based on this, the total number of "Comfort Women" is estimated at between 80,000 and 200,000<sup>11</sup> (*Hanguk chongsindae munje*, 1992, 11-12, cited in Yang, 1997, 57). It is generally accepted that Korean women comprised 80 to 90 percent of the total number of "Comfort Women". The reason that the vast majority of these women came from Japanese colonies like Korea is because of the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children which Japan ratified in 1925. The Convention excluded women in a country's colonies from its provisions. That is why most

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<sup>10</sup> Kawada and Kimura have visited and written articles on victims of sexual violence by Japanese military in Indonesia (Kawada, 1996; Kimura, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Im (1981), Chung (1994), and the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan estimate the number of "Comfort Women" at between 80,00 to 200,000.

"Comfort Women" were taken from Korea which was Japan's colony. In 1927 Japan withdrew its reservation about age of 18 and accepted the age of 21 set out in the Convention (Dolgopol, 1994, 11).

In Korea, the term *chongsindae* has generally been used to refer to the military "Comfort Women". *Chongsindae*, literally 'the body-offering corps', were the Korean girls mobilised during the Pacific War under Imperial Japan's Manpower Mobilisation Act. Promulgated in 1939 in Korea, the Manpower Mobilisation Act sent tens of thousands of Korean girls to Japan and other parts of Asia as a 'voluntary' labour force working in various sectors of the war industry. Under the disguised name of *chongsindae*, another ordinance concerning women's 'voluntary' labour, *Yojachongsindaeryong*, was promulgated in August 1944. Women between the ages of 14 and 45 were to participate in the 'volunteer' corps for a period of one to two years (Lee, 1997, 84-49). Young Korean women who were recruited officially to the women's labour corps and the Patriotic Women's Service Corps were forced to 'comfort' the 'divine' imperial troops at the battlefield (Yun, 1991, cited in Choi, 1992, 99). These women were generally divided into two groups, one for labour, especially for war industries, and the other for the sexual gratification of the Japanese soldiers. The latter were the so-called military "Comfort Women". Testimonies, and a report by the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reveal that some of the women were transferred from the former group of labourers to the latter as "Comfort Women" (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993; Chongsindae Task, 1992, 10).

Usage of the euphemistic term military "Comfort Women", *jongkun wianbu* in Korean, *jugunianfu* in Japanese, which means "Comfort Women" who followed the



military, has been discussed<sup>12</sup>. Some scholars and activists point out the inappropriate nature of the term *jongkun*, 'following' the military like war reporters or nurses (see Takaki, 1992, 3). For example, Yoon argues that the term needs to be replaced with military 'sexual slavery', which is more brutally accurate since the ideology behind the term "Comfort Women" is perpetrator-centred and patriarchal. She concludes that for the denial of freedom, forced captivity accompanied by physical sanctions and coercive regulations, no words better fit than the term sexual slavery (Yoon, 1996, 87). As a compromise, international women's organisations have suggested the use of the term '*kangje jongkun wianbu*', 'forced military "Comfort Women"'. The South Korean government uses the term 'military "Comfort Women"' in an official report in July 1992 (Chung, 1992, 221-222). In this thesis, I use the term "Comfort Women" as it was used during the war by Japan, in order to record the euphemistic and subtle implications in the term, and to preserve the linguistic history of colonialism.

### **1.3 Activism**

Non-governmental organisations have been of crucial importance in drawing attention to and handling the issue of "Comfort Women". When it began to receive public attention in Korea and Japan in 1990, the Japanese government denied any responsibility at that time, thereby angering the Korean women's movement and giving it further impetus for activism. It enraged a former "Comfort Woman" Kim Haksun who first came forward publicly in August 1991 in Korea. A lawsuit was filed by her and others against Japan, in the Tokyo District Court, for damages and other compensation.

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<sup>12</sup> This usage of the term "Comfort Women" was discussed at the First Asian Women's Solidarity Forum on Military Sexual Slavery by Japan held in Seoul, Korea in August 1992.

After hot lines were set up in Korea and Japan in 1991 and in 1992, more former "Comfort Women" and witnesses to what happened in comfort stations reported their experiences. Increasing awareness of sexual violence was a consequence of the women's movement in Korea and in Japan, and the issue of "Comfort Women" was highlighted. The "Comfort Women" campaign was galvanised in Korea and Japan and later spread to the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, North Korea, and other parts of the Asia/Pacific region. Activist groups include *Hanguk chongsindae munje taechek hyopuihoe* (the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan) (1990), *Jugunianfu Mondai Uri Yosong Network* (Military "Comfort Women" Issue Network of We, Japanese Korean Women) (1991), The Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women (1992), Lila-Pilipina (1994), Washington Coalition for "Comfort Women" Issues (1992), and Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation. These non-governmental organisations in these various countries have worked together closely and promoted solidarity. Public pressure to clear the issue has increased in these countries and the UN. The "Comfort Women" issue has been raised at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1992, 1993), the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (1992, 1993), the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1992, 1993), and the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995).

## **1.4 Silence**

The institution of the comfort stations is characterised not only by the massive number of "Comfort Women" and the degree of violence sanctioned, but also by the fact that the women were silenced for fifty years after the war. This issue has been dealt with by neither the Western Allies nor post-war Japanese and Korean



governments. The Western Allies were well aware of the magnitude of the Japanese use of "Comfort Women" throughout Asia. Numerous US military documents from 1944 also deal with 'Japanese Army Brothels' and 'Korean comfort girls'. In 1948, thirteen Japanese soldiers were punished (three were executed) by the Batavia Court for forcing about 35 Dutch women to become "Comfort Women" in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies<sup>13</sup> (Dolgopol, 1994, 12). However, no charge was ever brought to the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, formally called the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (1946-1948), for the sexual enslavement of Asian women (Choi, 1997, vi). The US Military administration which was in charge of South Korea at the end of WWII could have brought the issue for investigation and trial (Yoon, 1996, 90).

Clearly the Japanese government had no interest in exposure, but also neither Korea nor other nations whose citizens had been subjected to such brutal treatment had brought this issue forward until non-governmental organisations made it public at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1965, the South Korean government signed the Diplomatic Normalisation Treaty with Japan, the first official diplomatic contract between political leaders of the two nations in the post-war era. There has been considerable public unrest and opposition to the treaty in South Korea. Included in the bilateral treaty was Japan's compensation for colonialism in monetary terms<sup>14</sup>. However, the "Comfort Women" issue was not even included in the negotiation agenda. Neither the Japanese nor the Korean government raised the issue during the drafting of the 1965 treaty. The Park Chung-hee regime (1962-1979) in Korea then

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<sup>13</sup> However, the local Indonesian women, who had also been raped by the Japanese soldiers, were ignored at the Batavia Trial.

<sup>14</sup> Japan paid South Korea a total of US Dollars 500 million (300 millions Dollars in reparations and 200 million Dollars for economic aid (Yoon, 1996, 94).

launched an ambitious industrialisation plan, and the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Japan was an important tool for financing the industrialisation projects (Yoon, 1996, 90).

The Japanese government announced in 1990 that the "Comfort Women" system was the work of neither the Japanese government nor the military, but rather that of private entrepreneurs. The Japanese government declared in 1990 that there was no evidence of the forced drafting of Koreans as "Comfort Women", and thus that there could be no question of any apology, memorial or disclosures by the Japanese government (Dolgopol, 1994, 12-13). A Japanese historian, Yoshimi Yoshiyaki, a professor at Chuo University in Japan has subsequently obtained wartime correspondence which unequivocally shows the direct role of the Japanese military in the "Comfort Women" system. The former Japanese Prime Minister, Miyajawa, admitted for the first time that the Japanese Imperial Army was in some way involved in the running of "Comfort Women" facilities in 1992 (Lee Hyo-jea, 1997, 316).

The campaign of "Comfort Women" launched by women's groups has brought the issue to public notice. The long silence over the fate of these women was not broken until the beginning of the 1990s. My approach here allows us to address the question of how it was possible to maintain this silence for so long, even in Korea itself. In addition I will offer an interpretation of the significance of the "Comfort Women" system in the maintenance of Japanese colonialism.



## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There has been some work done since the 1970s on the issue of "Comfort Women" by scholars, activists and journalists who are Korean, Japanese, Korean Japanese, Korean American, and Australian. The overwhelming part of the literature on "Comfort Women" has been published in the 1990s. Research on this topic has proliferated after the campaigns to resolve this question, which have been launched in Korea and Japan. The research was influenced by the appearance of former "Comfort Women" in public to testify.

It seems difficult to assume that there is a dichotomy between theory and activism in the issue of "Comfort Women". Substantial numbers of the authors who wrote about the issue in the 1990s have been involved in the campaign: for example, Lee Hyo-jea and Yun Chong-ok<sup>15</sup>, Chung Chin Sung, Kim Pu Ja, Yang Jingja, Kawada Humiko, Suzuki Yuko, Yamashida Youngae, Park Won Soon and Totsuka Etsuro<sup>16</sup>. To some extent, research topics have matched current debates, issues or questions in the process of the campaigns. On the other hand, research has influenced and fuelled the campaign, for example, finding historical facts on the "Comfort Women" programme especially by Japanese historian Yoshimi (1995-a, 1995-b), and looking for legal grounds to obtain compensation/reparation for the victims in accordance with international laws (Park, 1997; Dolgopol, 1994; Totsuka, 1993;

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<sup>15</sup> Lee Hyo-jea and Yun Chong-ok have played a pioneering role in launching the "Comfort Women" campaign and they are co-representatives of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan.

<sup>16</sup> Park Won Soon and Totsuka Etsuro have been involved in the "Comfort Women" campaign as lawyers to deal with legal matters.

Takaki, 1992). The themes which have often been dealt with in the previous work are involvement of the Japanese state and the Imperial Army, nationalism and sexual violence and Japanese colonialism. Additionally, testimonials or oral narratives<sup>17</sup>, collection of official documents (Yoshimi, 1992) and pamphlets by activists groups on the topic have been released or retrieved. Recent research seems to be focused on more analytic and/or discursive questions, such as gender and nation issues (Yang, 1998; Yamashida, 1996; Chung, 1995), the trauma of the survivors (Lee Sangwha, 1997; Kawada, 1997), and the history of the campaign of the issue of "Comfort Women" (Lee Hyo-jea, 1997; Shin, 1997). In contrast with these works which have exposed the scandal of the "Comfort Women", there has been work which attempts to legitimate or defend what happened by Japanese apologists (Fujioka, 1996; Hosaka, 1996).

This chapter draws on different approaches in explanation of the "Comfort Women" episode in the previous research published by different authors so far. In order to map a reading of the previous studies, I delineate three approaches: the nationalist approaches, the 'objective historian' approach, and the feminist approaches. I divide these approaches primarily according to the different points of view on the issues of gender and colonialism. In the later part of this chapter, I will review previous theoretical work on sexuality, colonialism, militarism and war which

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<sup>17</sup> There are published books of testimonies of Korean "Comfort Women" (*Hanguk chongsindae yeonguhwe* [The Korean Researchers for Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan], 1993, 1995, 1997; Ahn, 1996; Kawada, 1987; Yang, 1996; Morigawa, 1996), stories of Japanese "Comfort Women" (Shirota, 1971, Senda, 1981; Kawada, 1987), story of Philippine "Comfort Women" (Henson, 1995; Panel of Lawyers, 1993). There are also testimonials of Japanese who witnessed or were involved in the system of "Comfort Women" (*Jugun Ianfu Hyaktoban*, 1992; Nishino, 1992; Sone, 1993). Yoshida Seiji, a former chief of the National Service Labour Recruitment branch office in the southern Japanese port of Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi Prefecture, has written two books on his experience involving the recruitment of Korean "Comfort Women" (Yoshida, 1992; 1983).



are not specifically related to "Comfort Women", but to central concepts I have used to look at the history of the "Comfort Women".

## 2.1 Nationalist Approaches

### 2.1.1 *Japanese Nationalist Approach*

More work from the Japanese nationalist approach has been recently released in reaction to the campaign for the "Comfort Women". Authors working within this framework are, for example, Fujioka Nobukatsu (1996), Nakamura Akira (1996), Hosaka Masayasu (1996), Nishioka Tsutomu (1997), and Kusaka Kiminido (1996). This approach is basically characterised by a defensive view of Japanese expansionism. The use of force in the procedure of recruitment of "Comfort Women", and involvement of the state in the comfort station project have been denied in these works. For example, Kusaka assumes that:

The military only supervised brothel keepers or provided conveniences for them. That does not mean there was militarily regulated prostitution by the Japanese army.... If the Japanese state did [organise to take the "Comfort Women" by force], there should have been official documents remaining (Kusaka, 1996, 76-77 - my translation).

The women are represented as prostitutes who earned high incomes by working in military brothels (Fujioka, 1996; Kusaka, 1996). Nakamura alleges that the women earned 250 Yen a month, drawing on a statement by a former Japanese civil servant in Korea during Japanese colonial period (1910-1945)<sup>18</sup> (Nakamura, 1996, 70). Hata estimates women's monthly income as up to 1,000-2,000 Yen based

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<sup>18</sup> According to Nakamura (1996), the first month's salary for a university graduate military officer was 70 Yen during the war.

on a hearing report by the American military (Hata, 1996-a). However, this is not supported from the women's side. In relation to this allegation, Hata (1996-a) and Fujioka (1996) assert that there was nothing wrong about the "Comfort Women" system since prostitution was legal in those days in Japan. They continue that the military authority gave permission for a prostitution business and protected the "Comfort Women". The comfort stations system is viewed simply as prostitution like other military brothels.

Secondly, the universality of the existence of military brothels is emphasised. The apologists claim it is a normal aspect of military life in wartime. There is nothing special in the case of the Japanese military (Fujioka, 1996; Hosaka, 1996, 65; Kusaka, 1996; Hata, 1996-a). Hosaka (1996) assumes an inevitable relation between the military and sex. On top of this, some have even gone so far as to rationalise rape in a situation of war. Hata (1996-b) asserts that rape is bound to follow war, due to the necessity of a sexual outlet which is natural for young soldiers. This approach employs biological determinism to explain male sexuality especially, in war; this reductionism results in the legitimisation of the "Comfort Women" system and rape against local women in Japanese occupied territories.

On the other hand, in contrast with the assertion of the universality and 'ordinariness' of the military brothels, this approach also draws attention to the exceptional situation of war time: 'nobody knows the ardently sweet taste in an encounter with flesh and affection in a situation of imminent death' (Hosaka, 1996, 70 - my translation). Hosaka asserts that it is the insolence of the contemporary to force the past into a present point of view. He especially opposes 'viewing wartime with a measure from peacetime' (*ibid.*, 65-66). Charges of 'violation of human rights and crime' made in launching the "Comfort Women" campaign are not justified in



his view, since these events happened 'in wartime'. He makes an excuse that the soldiers should be deemed as human beings who need sexual outlets instead (*ibid.*, 66-67). There is no concept of the human rights of the victim in his view. The particular wartime situation in which rape is considered as natural is used to legitimate violations of human rights.

Thirdly, the validity of the testimony of the "Comfort Women" is questioned. If there is no official written documentation to support it, it is discounted as historical truth. This allows allegations of the use of force in recruitment, and of the direct involvement of the Japanese state to be denied (Hosaka, 1996, 72; Nakamura, 1996, 72-73). Checking the reliability of testimonials of the "Comfort Women" with official documents is emphasised (Nakamura, 1996; Hosaka, 1996). However, testimony is selectively allowed as evidence. Some of the testimonies by former Japanese government officers which deny the responsibility of the state for this "Comfort Women" system is selected as crucial evidence (Nakamura, 1996, 70), while the testimonies of "Comfort Women" are not recognised as authentic. The state evidence is held to be more reliable and valid than that of the victims - that means written documents are regarded as more valid than oral testimonies. Evidence used is selective. It leads to self-contradiction. Checking on the reliability of the testimonials of the women with documents is stressed in order to exclude the narratives. Furthermore, in this approach, collaboration of Koreans in the procedure of recruitment or running comfort stations is underlined (*ibid.*, 69-70).

This approach sees the system from an ethnocentric point of view, from that of Japanese colonialism. Women's experiences is understood through the masculine and colonial discourses. This approach does not recognise the power and coercion involved in colonialism and its effects on gender. Issues of gender and colonialism

have remained untouched in this approach. This whole approach is firmly based on the binary metaphor of the coloniser as the enlightened versus the colonised as the uncivilised, and the opposition of masculine versus feminine. Essentialist constructions of racial and gender superiority have been maintained rather than challenged in this perspective to justify and naturalise the imperialist endeavour.

### **2.1.2 Korean Nationalist Approach.**

In contrast to the Japanese nationalist approach, the Korean counterpart places great weight upon the issue of colonialism, especially in the work of Kim Il-myun (1977) and Im Jong-kuk (1981). The Korean Nationalist Approach places a special weight on the genocidal aspect of the comfort station project. Kim and Im argue that Japanese colonial policies in Korea were basically genocidal, by using as examples the drafting of Korean men as soldiers for the Japanese army or labour for ammunition factories, and the use of Korean women as "Comfort Women", so the comfort station project is considered as part of the genocidal policy (Kim, 1977, 70; Im 1981, 23-25, 59-64).

There is no clear definition of genocide in this literature, but it could be presumed that the meaning of genocide is that of the superexploitation of Koreans to carry on war, and of their use as disposable labour. This approach extends the concept to cover indirect and slow procedures of genocide, for example, through destroying identity, and the destruction or control of women's reproductive ability<sup>19</sup>. To define the sophisticated and calculated contemporary forms of genocide, the definition of genocide needs to cover a broader range from physical extermination to

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<sup>19</sup> Robert G. Weisbord (1975) sees birth control policies in relation to Afro-Americans as genocidal in his book titled, *Genocide? Birth Control and the Black American*, London: Greenwood Press.



destroying national/ethnic/racial identity.<sup>20</sup> For example, the stripping of colonised people of their national and cultural identity is viewed as another form of genocide.

Another aspect of the discussion of the "Comfort Women" system in this approach is its representation of the violated Korean woman's body as a symbol of the violation of the nation. Women's body is figured as national property and a symbol of national identity in this context. The fact that the women were virgins, not prostitutes, who were taken to the comfort station (Kang Man-gil, 1997, 24-25) is seen as a particularly reprehensible aspect of the "Comfort Women" project. The patriarchal sexual ideology of chastity is embedded in their criticism of the 'extortion of Korean women's chastity by Japanese Imperialism' (Im, 1981, 17 - my translation).

The connection between the "Comfort Women" system and exploitative Japanese colonial policies towards Koreans is well explored, but the ties of the system to the existing patriarchal structure remains untouched in the Korean nationalist approach. For example, in Lee Man-yeol's article (1997) about the historical background of the comfort station system, the question of the established patriarchal system and ideology in which women's body or sexuality is treated as a property of a man is not addressed. He displays only the political and economic background of the "Comfort Women" project:

Destitutionalisation of peasants and systematic organisation and mobilisation of the human resources of Korean women became a major background for the launching and enforcing of the "Comfort Women" system (Lee Man-yeol, 1997, 97 - my translation).

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<sup>20</sup> Horowitz (1982) defines genocide as the 'structural and systematic destruction of innocent people by a state bureaucratic apparatus' - administering the deaths in a large-scale and impersonal way.

This approach does not engage with the question why women of the colonised were exploited in gender-specific way, or doubly, their labour power and their sexuality. This analysis appears to neglect the particularity of women's experience in a colonial context. It universalises the experiences of the colonised regardless of gender, leaving the question of why women's sexuality was used for imperial purposes unanswered. As a result of this neglect of gender and patriarchy, the multifaceted background of the "Comfort Women" system is left unexplored.

In contrast with the Japanese apologists, emphasis is placed in the Korean nationalist approach on the particularity of the Japanese Imperial Army in terms of its cruelty: the "Comfort Women" system is deemed as unique through world history, rather than as an instance of a universal phenomenon, that of military brothels around military bases. The system is seen in this approach, rather, as a contemporary form of sexual slavery rather than prostitution: 'The "Comfort Women" system, which was a contemporary form of sexual slavery, is a proof of the 'inhuman, cruel and unique nature of the Japanese Imperial Army' (Kang Man-gil, 1997, 36 - my translation). However, the claim of the uniqueness of the "Comfort Women" project created by the Japanese Imperial Army needs to be supported with comparative evidence - what makes the Japanese case unique in comparison with others, such as institutionalised prostitution for the British army in India and in Nazi Germany, and mass rape in Bosnia? This argument appears to be descriptive, sketchy, and unsupported by systematic comparative analysis.

Even though women are deemed as sexual slaves, however, this approach neglects to examine the sexual objectification of women in the Japanese patriarchal system. For example, Kim Il-myon has undertaken pioneering studies in which he traces the background of the "Comfort Women" project back to a series of traditions



of trafficking women since Japan's feudal era (Kim Il-myon, 1997). However, his study does not appear to be engaged with discussions of the objectification of women's body and sexuality in this tradition, since gender as an analytic category is not employed. Thus, this approach remains limited, failing to adequately incorporate gender and colonialism in its analysis. Additionally, some of authors holding this approach, especially historians such as Kang Man-gil (1997) and Lee Man-yeol (1997), share a positivist methodology which relies heavily on official written records.

Parallels can, paradoxically, be found in the two nationalist approaches. The Korean nationalist approach and the Japanese share a blindness to gender issues. These two nationalist approaches ignore the gendered nature of colonialism and national identity. They stand on the same line of a double standard of sexuality which is at the core of patriarchal sexual norms. Colonialist culture has been examined without due consideration of how that culture may itself be gendered (in the Korean nationalist approach). These works exclude a consideration of gender as a set of power relations. Another parallel can be drawn in that these two nationalist approaches tend to overly totalise the dichotomy between the colonising and the colonised since both approaches are ethnocentric. The two nationalist approaches have clear political aims to achieve - to resolve the issue either with apology and reparation, or with the legitimisation of Japanese colonialism.

## **2.2 'Objective Historian' Approach**

The 'objective historian' approach is important politically and theoretically, and is distinguished from both the two nationalist approaches and from the feminist approaches. This is a kind of dissident anti-colonialist, anti-militarist perspective

which, however, like those already considered, does not focus on gender. This approach pursues historical factual findings on the "Comfort Women" system primarily based on official written material: for example, previous work by dissident historians such as Yoshimi Yoshiyaki (1995-a, 1995-b, 1997-a), Yoshida Yutaka (1997), Kurahashi Masanao (1994), Yun Myungsook (1997). Yoshimi, a Japanese historian, has retrieved and published Japanese archive material on the direct role of the Japanese military in establishing and maintaining a huge network of comfort stations. In addition this approach has documented what the system was like and how it was recorded. This approach provides a good entrance point to open up investigations in relation to Japanese military and state involvement into the comfort station system. Its findings support the view of the "Comfort Women" system as a state crime, the violation of human rights by the state. The contribution of this work has been to establish unequivocally the involvement of the Japanese military, from the recruitment of the women to the setting up and running of the comfort stations, using official military documents. It talks about the "Comfort Women" system as a political strategy of colonialism and it recognises the system as a form of state rape. War crimes by the state are presented through evidence of the involvement of the agents of the state (Yoshimi, 1995-a, 232-233; Yun Myungsook, 1997, 65). It was important for this approach to use official written documents in order successfully to challenge the Japanese nationalist approach. This appears to be a progressive approach with an institutional method.

Another contribution of this approach is that it understands the "Comfort Women" issue in the context of Japanese military history. Within this perspective, a link is drawn between the structure of the military and the existence of the "Comfort Women" system (Yoshimi, 1995-b, 222). For example, it exposes the exploitative



nature of the military, and describes the comfort station system as an economical way to maintain an army which had an insufficient budget to offer leave or breaks to the soldiers (Yoshimi, 1995-b, 94, 136; Kurahashi, 1994, 15-16). This explanation allows the positioning of the "Comfort Women" issue as an integral part of the military system, demonstrating that the existence of the comfort station system is a self-evident consequence of the Japanese military and imperial system. On top of the more common emphasis on the political aspects, it is valuable for its examination of the economic factors which led to the launching of the "Comfort Women" project. This approach constitutes a political economy of the comfort station system.

Kurahashi distinguishes the two types of "Comfort Women", sexual slaves and prostitutes, according to the way they were recruited - by force or by their own decision to make money (Kurahashi, 1994, 68-72). This differentiation draws a line between Japanese "Comfort Women" who were professional prostitutes and the Korean counterparts who were mostly taken without knowing what was going to happen to them. Thus, he distinguishes the pre-existing licensed prostitution in Japan from the type of sexual slavery found in the "Comfort Women" system (*ibid.*, 37-38). This analysis provides a more complex picture and comprehensive historical background in understanding variation in categories of the "Comfort Women". However, despite this achievement, the differentiation of the two types does not seem to consider that there could be some continuity or overlap between the two categories. His concept of prostitution is problematic. He seems to consider prostitution as a choice through voluntary involvement for economic reasons. However, even though economic motives are involved, it cannot always be said to be a free choice. Economic pressures such as poverty should be taken into account also as forces driving women into prostitution. The idea of 'force' needs re-thinking,

where extreme economic pressures are involved. I emphasize that instead of concentrating on the question whether or not the "Comfort Women" might properly be described as prostitutes, we might ask what the effects were of so classifying them.

The research methodology of the 'objective historian' approach has advantages and disadvantages. This work basically relies on written official documents. Because there was a great deal of dispute over the facts of the "Comfort Women" system, and because of the lengthy period of silence after the war, the weight of emphasis in the two nationalist approaches initially fell upon the task of establishing 'what happened' (or disavowing and denying it) and 'what the role of the Japanese Imperial state was'. This leads to this particular historical approach which privileges documentary evidence rather than the personal testimony of survivors. The pursuit of the objective truth is a powerful tool to rectify the official discourse of the Japanese state, which said as recently as 1991 that there is no evidence of the forced drafting of Korean women as "Comfort Women", and thus there is no question of any apology.

On the other hand, the need for critical reading of the documents is not adequately discussed. The narratives of the women are being used only as additional evidence in this approach. It shows lack of interest in qualitative data: testimonies are selected only where they can support already established facts in the written materials. When there is tension between documentary evidence and narratives, the latter tends to be discounted as 'less reliable'. The heavy reliance on the written documents leads to the marginalisation of the oral narratives. Attention should have been paid to the fact that documents do not always present the 'objective' truth. This work could be challenged for being overly-totalising, that is, for presenting a 'documented' picture of the formation of the comfort station system. Ironically, this



methodology is shared by the Japanese apologists, who stand on the opposing side. Even though the approach has attempted to identify the colonial aspects of the "Comfort Women" system, the issues of nationalism and colonialism are addressed only within the boundaries of the written documents. For instance, Yoshimi sees the genocidal aspect as a side effect that was positively valued, rather than an initially well developed strategy<sup>21</sup> - that is because of lack of written evidence to prove the genocidal purpose of the "Comfort Women" project (Yoshimi, 1995-a, 161). Thus, positivism in the research method limits the content of the research itself.

This insight of the 'objective historian' approach is sensitive to issues of ethnicity and gender, but the absence of a theory of ethnic and gender domination weakens its arguments. There are brief references to gender issues, but these are not handled at an analytical level. For example, biological determinism, drawn upon in explanation of motives for launching the comfort stations system, remains unexamined (Yoshimi, 1997-b, 35).

## **2.3 Feminist Approaches**

The feminist approaches among which I distinguish the 'gender emphasising' approach and the feminist political action approach, offer distinctive perspectives which rectify some of the weak points of the previous approaches.

### **2.3.1 'Gender Emphasising' Approach**

The 'gender emphasising' approach places gender firmly at the head of the agenda, bringing out the shared experience of oppression of women, especially, in the practice of patriarchal norms of sexuality. In this approach, the "Comfort

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<sup>21</sup> Yoshimi said this at a panel discussion session at a Korean and Japanese cooperative conference on the issue of "Comfort Women", on the 18th - 19th December, 1993.

Women" issue is placed on a continuum of sexual violence or discrimination against women in everyday life (Ueno, 1996-a, 1998; Hiromi, 1995, Oetsu 1997, Kang and Yamashida 1993). The issue of sexual violence against women is considered as stemming from unequal power relationships between the sexes, regardless of whether it is in peacetime or in wartime. Sexual violence against women is regarded as endemic in all societies in this approach.

There is a contrast between the nationalist approaches and the 'gender emphasising' approach. The former heavily puts weight on the characteristics and boundaries of ethnicity and nation in order to re-establish an exclusionary self in relation to others. The latter attempts to transcend cultural and geographic boundaries in relation to gender issues. This view places the spotlight on the universality of women's experiences in patriarchal society. For instance, Hiromi Yamazaki identifies the Japanese "Comfort Women" as the same 'victims of sexual enslavement' as other "Comfort Women" from the colonies (Hiromi, 1995, 51). The approach considers the comfort station system as a crime by the state primarily against women rather than the colonies (Oetsu, 1997, 152). Thus, priority is placed in this approach on gender issues. Consequently, Hiromi strongly proposes a 'common understanding' amongst women around the "Comfort Women" issue:

Japan's military sexual slavery issues should not be reduced to a mere negotiation lever for states. Beyond state boundaries, women need to create common understanding of each other's history (sic.) (Hiromi, 1995, 54).

This approach has merit in challenging the patriarchal polarisation between the 'virtuous' woman and the 'defiled' prostitute by locating the Japanese "Comfort Women", the vast majority of whom were previously prostitutes, in a similar position to those from other, nationalities, the colonised. On a practical level, this view could



contribute to the provision of common ground to promote solidarity amongst Asian women, including Japanese women. Secondly, this analysis makes a contribution in addressing gender issues such as the pervasiveness of sexual violence implicit in patriarchal society, and in drawing attention to the shared experience of women.

However, the weakness of this perspective is exposed in investigations of variations in the forms of masculine domination across ethnic, national, other boundaries and the implications in everyday lives. There could be complexities in the experiences and perceptions amongst women in terms of nationality, ethnicity, class, despite the sharing of some experiences as women. Sara Ahmed critiques this universalising tendency in feminism:

A consideration of cultural intersections between gender, race and colonialism is important for two main reasons. First, it demands that feminism reject any approach which isolates the production of gender from race and colonialism. As a result, it also requires us to consider how certain feminisms may themselves function as part of colonialist culture (Ahmed, 1996, 138).

Ahmed draws on Chandra Mohanty in discussion of how feminist attempts to account for the universality of gender oppression have led to the production of the category of the 'third world woman' within feminist analysis (Ahmed, 1996, 137). Mohanty (1991) argues that western feminism's universalist models can reinforce the colonial relationship.

As a consequence, this approach engages only weakly with questions of Japanese colonialism/imperialism, and the Japanese Emperor system, implicit in the "Comfort Women" project - for example, the relationship between sexual violence and colonial power. Thus, it leaves the "Comfort Women" system as a specifically colonial project unexplored. Sexual control in the interests of the conduct of an imperial war, especially interethnic sexual violence, and the colonisation of

indigenous peoples remains unexamined or at best secondary in this analysis. Different relations of power along the lines of ethnicity are understood at most as simply adding to the gender domination. Rather than simply focusing on monolithic notions of male domination especially sexual violence, this approach needs to account for the production of divergent, often contradictory, forms of masculine domination in specific cultural contexts. Sexual violence, particularly in the context of the "Comfort Women" does not exist independently of ethnic relations.

### **2.3.2 *Feminist Political Action Approach***

Beyond either ethnic or gender oriented perspectives, the feminist political action approach addresses issues of gender together with colonialism. Suzuki Yuko rightly outlines the two issues involved in the "Comfort Women" question: the "Comfort Women" system is designed for the sexual exploitation and national exploitation of the colonies (Suzuki, 1992-a, 47). This approach investigates the multifaceted relationship of the "Comfort Women" project to the Japanese Emperor system of domination. Gender domination and ethnic domination were combined in Japanese colonialism, and in the sexual politics of the Japanese system of licensed prostitution, and the Japanese patriarchal family system called the *ie* system (Suzuki, 1992-a, 32; Kawada, 1995, 7, 115). It looks at what was specific about Japanese culture and society that made the "Comfort Women" system a special case. Suzuki, like the Korean nationalist approach and the 'objective historian' approach, emphasises Japanese 'exceptionalism', particularly in the exploitative aspect of the Japanese Emperor system. It points out that, typically, militarism is accompanied by prostitution, but that it is rare for the military to actually 'organise' prostitution in other countries - emphasising the uniqueness in the Japanese Imperial Army. This



'exceptionalism' is considered to be exemplified also in Japan's mode of governing and controlling the colonised (Suzuki, 1993; Kurahashi, 1994; Yoshimi, 1990). On the other hand, Ueno Chizuko (1998), using the 'gender emphasising' approach, criticises this point of view as overvaluation of the particularity of the Emperor system.

Bringing these internal factors in Japanese society into play in explanation of the comfort station system is valuable in illuminating the particularity of the system. The examination of the Japanese-style social structures in patriarchy and imperialism which led to the idea of introducing comfort stations provides a more comprehensive insight to the contours the "Comfort Women" project on a map of Japanese colonialism and patriarchy.

Sexuality has become an important aspect of the feminist political action approach. There is a slight differentiation in this approach from the view of the "Comfort Women" system as established licensed prostitution. For example, Kawada distinguishes the system of 'sexual slavery' from the state-regulated 'prostitution' in modern Japan, even though she maintains the long tradition of licensed prostitution was a background to the "Comfort Women" system (Kawada, 1995, 6). However, Suzuki sees the "Comfort Women" system in continuity with licensed prostitution in Japan:

The background to the introduction of the "Comfort Women" system is the existing system of licensed prostitution (in Japanese society). The "Comfort Women" system was licensed prostitution for the Emperor's Army (Suzuki, 1992-a, 53 - my translation)

Prostitution and rape would not be incompatible in this approach, since continuities between military brothels and rape, especially in wartime, could be

found. Thus, it might be controversial to draw a clear-cut line between the two. A more important question which needs to be raised is how the two concepts of rape and prostitution converged in the introduction of the comfort station system. A further point to make clear is that the search for the background of the system, and assessment of the character of the system itself, should be considered as different matters.

In relation to questions of prostitution and rape, there is a variation in the views on Japanese "Comfort Women". Nishino Ryumiko differentiates the Japanese women from those from her colonies in terms of patriotic motivation in devoting themselves to their nation. Secondly, the recruitment and treatment of "Comfort Women" were different depending on nationality. For example, the Japanese women were recruited under the law of licensed prostitution while knowing what was going to happen to them (Nishino, 1995, 22-25). However, this is not very clear in Suzuki's work. In her paper presented at the Asian Conference for Solidarity in 1992, she points to the double aspects of the matter of Japanese women as victims of Japanese patriarchal society, and on the other hand, as collaborators of colonial expansionism against other Asian people (Suzuki, 1992-b, 35). But in her other work, she presents the Japanese women as victims of the state crime of sexual violence, thus drawing attention to the continuity between Japanese prostitutes and the other "Comfort Women" (Suzuki, 1992-a, 45-46). She sees the two sides of Japanese "Comfort Women", but does not present the complexity of the case. On the question of colonialism, the Japanese "Comfort Women" could be positioned in a different place, while, on the other hand, in the matter of gender issues, the Japanese women could be seen as positioned in the same boat as colonised women. My thesis primarily focuses on Korean "Comfort Women", but it would be worth investigating both



differences and commonalities between the Japanese "Comfort Women" and their Korean counterparts. In doing this, the complexities in the issues of gender and colonialism could be highlighted.

Chung Chin Sung (1995) engages with a debate on the gender and nation issue, arguing for the separation of the two. She argues that it is overly defensive to identify a consideration of the question of nation as a dilution of the importance of the gender issue - she argues that this assumption is based on confusion between the concept of nation and that of nationalism. In my opinion, overemphasis of either the gender issue or the nation related issue, neglects the compatibility of the two categories. The first assumes that raising the gender question could cause a split within the nation, the second that raising nation-related questions could cause tension among women. There are complexities within the nation along the line of gender, and there is diversity among women along the line of nation as well. In addition, consideration of the nation as gendered, and gender as always having a specific ethnic/national identity is needed. It is worth pointing out and accepting the existence of complexities in both difference and commonality, rather than emphasising one at the expense of the other.

This feminist political action approach rightly attempts to show the interwoven interaction between gender, colonialism, and the Emperor system, through linking the introduction of the "Comfort Women" system to characteristics of the Emperor system, Japanese imperialism, and sexual politics in Japan such as the licensed prostitution system. This perspective rightly shows that sexual politics in modern Japan had been anchored in the use of sexuality, especially women's sexuality, to promote colonialism as an expression of imperialistic power. Thus, this feminist political action approach and 'objective historian' approach share the consideration

of the system as state crime or rape policy by the state, - a state sanctioned system of coercive sexuality (Yun Chong-ok, 1997, 276; Suzuki, 1993, 235).

The feminist political action approach shares some insights with the Korean nationalist approach: some authors in the feminist political action approach discuss the "Comfort Women" project in terms of genocide, seeing it as a strategy for destroying Korea (Kawada, 1995, 12), taking away the reproductive ability of the colonised women, or an extreme form of ruling the colony (Suzuki, 1993, 78, 196; Suzuki, 1992, 47; Chung 1993, 29). Yun Chong-ok, sees it as a systematic programme of genocide: 'The Korean case of enforcement of the comfort station system was a genocide policy. In that sense, the case is different from that of other Asians' (Yun, 1997, 275 - my translation).

However, Yun, too, fails to address adequately what genocide consists of in the case of comfort station system. Ueno Chizuko insists that identifying the "Comfort Women" system as genocide is a reflection of Korean nationalism (Ueno, 1996, 38). But, ethnicity and nationality, which may be under attack in genocide policies, should not be conflated with issues of nationalism.

The feminist political action approach stems from an interaction between theorising the "Comfort Women" issue and the political campaign: most of the authors holding the approach have been involved in women's action groups for the campaign in a direct or indirect way. Additionally, the experiences and perspectives of the "Comfort Women" are seriously engaged with in this work. Despite their efforts to incorporate the issues of gender and colonialism, however, analysis of gender issues, such as the ideology of chastity, and biological determinism in male sexuality still remains sketchy. Kim Pu Ja and Suzuki mention the allegation which often shows up in explanation of the motives for the introduction of comfort stations:



uncontrollable male sexuality, or the use of the women as 'a necessary evil' (Kim, 1995, 88; Suzuki, 1993, 226). Suzuki recognises that 'the biological explanation is a lie', but does not discuss her grounds. The argument concerning the patriarchal myths of male sexuality needs to be more fully developed. This approach is engaged with questions of both gender and colonialism. However, she limits herself to asserting that both questions are implicated in the "Comfort Women" issue, without in depth analysis of the ways in which both gender and colonialism served to reproduce 'power relations that intersect with each other in contradictory ways' as Ahmed argues in her discussion of Orientalism (Ahmed, 1996, 140).

## **2.4 My Research Questions and Concepts**

There are many studies of constructs of wifhood and motherhood and how they impact on war, nationalism and colonialism, but there is not so much available on male and female sexuality and sexual identities, and how these constructions help to create patriarchal relations, ethnic hierarchies and colonial power within a military context. It can be said that male and female sexuality have been problematic sites of colonial and military power from historical experiences in the previous section. Although considerable research has been devoted to the investigation and analysis of the issue of "Comfort Women", rather less attention has been paid in this literature to questions of gender and national identity, sexual regulation as an imperial endeavour, and the argument over the victimisation of the women. I shall ask the question how and why women's sexuality and identity have been used for the achievement of its political strategy by the colonial powers of a military state. In my analysis of systematic sexual violence by the agents of the state, I will examine several

influential concepts to show that sexual control served colonialist or militaristic as well as patriarchal purposes, such as:

- feminisation and masculinisation in the military,
- biological determinism in male sexuality,
- the respectable and the fallen in femininity,
- sexual scripts in rape or prostitution,
- women as the embodiment of national purity
- victimisation and resistance in subject positioning.

With these concepts pulled out of the work reviewed in this chapter, I propose the 'integrated feminist approach' to deal with the multiple and complex aspects of the issue of the "Comfort Women". I will attempt to show the complex interaction of gender, colonialism, militarism and war in the context of the Japanese Emperor system which have been insufficiently addressed, through what I term the 'integrated feminist approach'. For this I focus on the women's own narratives which have been trivialised in some previous work. The marginalisation of women's experiences is challenged in this approach.

With these concepts and this approach, I strive to answer four questions. My first is what were the enforced subject-positionings in terms of feminine identity, masculine identity, and national identity, put into place through the "Comfort Women" system and instigated by Japanese colonialism, and how these are challenged, but partly reinforced in Korean nationalism. I investigate the way in which colonialism together with nationalism position women in the context of "Comfort Women" system.

My second question is: how were these positionings enacted through daily practices and ideologies? I explicate these positionalities through sexuality, the



binary concepts of the respectable and the defiled femininities, and the re-socialisation process of the Japanese soldiers for feminisation and masculinisation, simultaneously, in the military. In doing this, firstly, I will explore questions of identity to show the ways in which the women's national or cultural subjectivities and gender identities have been dissolved, especially through sexual violence. In addition to examining the women's identity, I will also discuss the ways in which the national and masculine identities of Japanese military men were reformulated through the comfort station project. In answering this question I attempt to map out configurations of sexuality of men and women, in the imperial context.

My third question is: what were the consequences of the identity re/construction of the "Comfort Women", especially in terms of assisting the Japanese war project? In most of the previous approaches to the issue of "Comfort Women", the question of either sexual slavery or prostitution has occasioned debate. However, instead of concentrating on the dichotomised question of whether or not the women might properly be described as prostitutes, I will raise the question of what the effects of so classifying and controlling the women are in relation to the colonial interests and patriarchal social structure.

My final question is: what were the self-positionings of the women in the face of these compulsions and positionings? The way the women cope with the imposition of gendered and colonised subjectivity will be explicated. Little attention has been paid to this question in previous work while exploitative aspects in the "Comfort Women" system have been more fully explored. I will argue against the representation of the women as passive or defenceless victims, by the presentation of various forms of resistance from the women. I shall draw on the idea of plural identities or multiple subjectivities of the female colonised subjects.

These questions emerge as unanswered or neglected by the previous approaches, or as questions which have been raised but have been answered in a different way. My approach in answering these questions is the one I have termed the 'integrated feminist approach'. It arises out of my analysis of the weak points of previous approaches that only recognise certain oppressions, whilst downplaying others. The unquestioned dualism in terms of ethnicity/nationality in the two nationalist approaches, and in terms of gender in the 'gender emphasising' approach is transcended in what I call my 'integrated feminist approach' since issues of both gender and ethnicity are implicated in my analytical framework. The dichotomy of colonialism and gender issues should be deconstructed to untangle the interweaving of oppressions of colonised women, so a fuller picture of the "Comfort Women" issue could be developed. I strive to unpick the texture of ideology and practices in patriarchy, colonialism and nationalism from the view point of women and the colonised. Gender, colonialism, and militarism should not only be 'added in' to the study of the "Comfort Women" issue, they should be brought together in a thoroughly integrated fashion in the analysis of the creation of militarised subjectivities. I attempt to carve out a space for a discussion of the intersection of sexuality, identity and colonialism from the view point of women and the colonised. I will look at the issue of "Comfort Women" from the experiences of both the "Comfort Women" and the Japanese military men, to draw a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the "Comfort Women" system in the context of colonialism and patriarchy.

I attempt to show how and why masculinity, femininity, and national identity were constructed or reproduced through the enforcement of subject-positioning in the particular context of colonialism and patriarchy, by Japanese colonialism and Korean



nationalism. To do this, I will discuss the ways in which male and female sexuality both construct and are constructed by colonial state power, war and violence.

## **2.5 'Integrated Feminist' Approach: Sexuality, Subjectivity, War and Colonialism**

The first three sections reviewed the literature specifically dealing with the issue of the "Comfort Women". In this section I examine the additional theoretical resources on which this thesis will draw, which have been developed in other contexts. I will explore how such themes as sexual violence and femininity/masculinity in colonialism, militarism, war, and nationalism, and contestation, victimisation and resistance, have been located and discussed in feminist literature. I shall pull out these ideas to set out my conceptual framework. I build on previous work to set up my position, the 'integrated feminist approach', in order to deal with gendered colonialism and nationalism in the issue of "Comfort Women".

### **2.5.1 *Sexuality and Colonialism***

Some feminists, especially radical feminists, have argued that sexuality reflects the power relationship between men and women, and that male control of women's sexuality is a key factor in women's oppression (MacKinnon, 1987; Dworkin, 1976). In addition to power relationships between the sexes, however, sexuality is also situated in a complex structure of power relations involving race, ethnicity, and class, especially in a colonial context. The politics of sexuality and identity under colonialism is an important theme in this thesis.

There has been some work on gender and colonialism in feminist literature. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi's work shed light on the inextricable connection of

gender and the colonial system in relation to India. They argue that 'gender divisions helped to maintain colonialism, and colonialism helped to preserve gender' (Liddle and Joshi, 1986, 240). This work is valuable in taking account of gender in colonial politics. Colonial power surely preserves or fosters pre-existing patriarchal practice. An example is the use of the dichotomy between respectable and defiled femininity employed in Japanese colonial policy. However, on the other hand, there might sometimes be an uncomfortable alliance among indigenous patriarchal practices and colonial power in other contexts. The colonial state, in pursuit of its own interests, may reinforce and/or alter established gender and ethnic hierarchies. Colonial politics could be designed to mobilise women's labour and sexuality in ways that transgress indigenous gender divisions, while simultaneously seeking to reinforce femininity and the traditional role of the women. War, most notably, pulls women out of their supposed place, the home, and into public life, for example, to mobilise women for ammunition work. There may be a tension between the interests of colonialism and patriarchy - in relation to Korea, Japanese colonial policy attempted to redefine existing gender divisions, to some extent, in order to mobilise women for war. The colonial structure re-codes and is itself re-coded by, established gender relationships.

I draw attention to the fact that colonial policy has been implicated with sexual control in a complex and multi-levelled process. There has been some work on how images of sexuality and femininity have been developed and utilised in a colonial context (hooks, 1982; Mehdid, 1993; Price and Shildrick, 1995; Ballhatchet, 1980). These studies show that sexual images of women have been used to define the contours of colonial sexual politics. Women as producers, reproducers and sexual objects have been crucial to the maintenance of colonial systems. Through fabricating negative discourses of women's sexuality in colonial contexts,



colonialists have legitimised their sexual control over or exploitation of, the colonised women. The most blatant example can be found in the context of black slavery. In bell hooks' work, black women's sexuality has been constructed into many offensive definitions throughout the nineteenth century in America through slavery, and in Africa through colonialism. One purpose of the construction is in order to justify racial or colonial domination and the sexual and reproductive exploitation of black women by white men (hooks, 1982). Another example can be seen in the British Indian context. The image of Indian women's sexuality is constructed as 'lascivious' and 'untamed' in order to legitimise the control of women's sexuality by the more 'moral' British<sup>22</sup> (Price and Shildrick, 1995, 87-97; Ballhatchet, 1980, 5-7). These negative discourses of women's sexuality rely on racial prejudice and vice-versa. Further work on women's sexuality in the Arabian context, as constructed by Western colonisers was undertaken by Malika Mehdid. As to the sexual image that was given by the Western coloniser, she points out that:

the sexual message of the harem is promiscuity and the sexual availability of its inmates.... In this respect, the sexualised Oriental female was conceived in accordance with the image of the 'bad' woman endowed with bewitching harmful powers, and therefore it stood as the signifier for dark, magical and irrational femininity... (Mehdid, 1993, 25, 46)

The negative images imposed on the colonised women play a crucial role in rationalising colonial sexual politics.

In contrast, Ronald Hyam (1990) assumes male sexuality and sexual domination to be the driving forces behind colonial expansion and rule. In tracing the

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<sup>22</sup> Another example can be seen in Ballhatchet's (1980) interesting work on sexual control through the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864 and 1869 under the Raj. The colonised women as sexual objects were used to maintain the British army in India.

way sexuality influenced the lives of the imperial elite as well as the subjects of empire, he suggests that sexual energy was a factor in imperial expansion. In his ambitious study on the British empire and sexuality, he asserts that sex may explain how expansionist enterprises were sustained:

In the erotic field, as in administration and commerce, some degree of 'collaboration' from the indigenous communities was helpful to the maintenance of imperial systems (Hyam, 1990, 1).

In fact, inter-ethnic or inter-racial sexual relationships, marriage or concubinage has been found facilitating alliances between the colony and the colonised throughout colonial history (Kirk, 1980; Brown, 1980). There seem to be two different interpretations on these interracial relationships. Cynthia Enloe understands this relationship between the colony and the colonised as a sexual objectification; she proposes, 'colonized women have served as sex objects for foreign men' (Enloe, 1989, 44). On the other hand, Hyam contrarily considers the 'collaboration' through sexual relations as a means for sustaining a colonial society as shown above. In no case does he provide enough examination of interracial sexual violence and unequal power structures which has been used as a crucial means to control the colonised. Sexual objectification of the colonised is not caught within the scope of his account of the relationship of colonialism to sexuality. He alleges that sex could be an act of racial conciliation (Hyam, 1990, 214-215). There is no recognition of unequal power in terms of coloniser/colonised. This allegation disguises the reality of domination. It romanticises colonisation and neglects its exploitative nature. Sex could be used to camouflage the harshness of relations with indigenous people and to facilitate 'alliances' to the advantage of colonial political purposes. In the interests of the coloniser, interracial sexual relations have sometimes



been promoted, sometimes banned, either promoting assimilation or racial exclusiveness<sup>23</sup>.

I argue that if an unequal power relationship exists between the two, it is inappropriate to speak of 'collaboration' through sex; these events are better understood as more delicate or clandestine form of camouflage of the ways colonial states regulate women's and men's sexuality. Sexual appropriation of women could be one of the essential politics of colonialism. The colonised women's experiences and their own point of view should be taken into account. If their experiences are not covered, the colonial and patriarchal messages, inscribed on the women's body as a booty which is expendable and exploitable, could be obscured. Hyam's work could be criticised for being overly-totalising, that is, for presenting a too simple and one sided picture of the production of colonialism. I will discuss the way colonial and masculine power use sexuality to impose subject-positioning on the colonised in chapters 6, 7 and 8 in this thesis.

### **2.5.2 *Sexual Scripts and Femininity***

The binary concepts of national purity/impurity and the respectable/the defiled superimposed on women's body are core concepts I am using in analysing the construction of feminine and national identities. First of all, I sketch femininities in the frame of nationalisms. Castoriadis points out that nationalism has historically functioned as one of the most powerful weapons for resisting colonialism and for

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the colonial policy of assimilation and centralisation may lead to a favourable view of 'concubinage encouraged by French empire-builders as the easiest, pleasantest and surest means of gallicising West Africa in 1902' (Director of African Affairs, Colonial Ministry). In contrast, the British authorities considered concubinage as an 'injurious and dangerous evil' (Hyam, 1990, 157), because the principle of the British colonial policy was 'a racial exclusiveness' (Clapham, 1985, 22). But, it is noted that British policy changed over time, the policy of segregation developing only later when the British were more established, the policy of segregation developed. Even though the two policies, assimilation and segregation, look contradictory, both served the interests of the colonialists.



establishing the space of a postcolonial identity (Castroriadis, 1987, 148). In this emergence of nationalism, nationalist politics may become gendered. For example, Catherine Nash underlines in the Irish context that the use of women as signifier of moral purity and sexual innocence is pervasive (Nash, 1994, 235). Women's sexuality, especially women's chastity, conceptualised as the property of the masculine nation, is a recurrent theme in nationalisms. Suzanne Gibson (1993) maintains that violence against women is transformed into an assault on men's and national honour. Woman's body becomes a sexualised metaphor of the nation in these masculinist nationalisms. Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger draw attention to the image of the woman's body as homeland: the metaphor of rape by foreigners is represented as national humiliation (Parker *et.al.*, 1992, 9). We will see this trope in Korean nationalist claims that the "Comfort Women" episode is one of national humiliation and shame.

Beverley Skeggs' study on respectability as a key ideal in British middle class femininity shows how women become respectable subjects, and how they are produced through 'disindentification' (Skeggs, 1997, 12-13)<sup>24</sup>. She argues that the text of class, femininity, sexuality and race combine to produce 'the respectable body' in her examination of the concept of respectability among the British working class. The opposed division between the feminine and the sexual is charted in her work: if you are too overtly sexual, you lose your respectability. Respectable femininity can be dissolved by being positioned into the sexual script of a prostitute, which I am going to show from the "Comfort Women" case. I examine how these

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<sup>24</sup> Skeggs claims that 'respectability was organised around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance; these operated as both social rules and moral codes... While middle-class femininity was defined as the ideal, but also as the most passive and dependent of femininities, it was always coded as respectable' (Skeggs, 1997, 46).



ideas around respectability, sexuality, race, and class are articulated in Korean and Japanese culture in chapter 7.

I shall draw on the idea of 'sexual script'. Gagnon and Simon (1973) propose the idea of sexual behaviour as something that is scripted: a 'sexual script' - a bit like the text of a play. Wendy Hollway (1984) brings the concept together with Foucault's theoretical approach, in her analysis of the 'sexual scripts' that people use in their sexual interactions with one another. The idea of the scripts suggests that in order to play your part according to your chosen script, you require a partner/co-actor who plays the appropriate kind of supporting role. This idea also suggests the possibility of disrupting the script by not acting 'appropriately'. Sharon Marcus (1992) offers a contentious analysis of rape and anti-rape strategies by applying the concept of the sexual script to the context of rape. She argues strategies such as verbal self-defence, physical retaliation or refusal to accept the rapist's body as overwhelmingly powerful, are able to disrupt the rape script. However, she clearly does not have in mind the kind of rape situation in which the victim has to act out the rapist's scenario line by line, as in the "Comfort Women" case. I shall flesh out the confined situation in which women were forced to act out the part allocated to them in another's script, and to be categorised as prostitutes by colonial power.

### **2.5.3 *Sexual Violence and War***

Violence, most notably sexual violence, and war is another concept I engage with in the 'integrated feminist approach' to analyse the issue of "Comfort Women". Violence is sanctioned by state power especially under circumstances of war or militarism. The state is in fact the major instituter of violence, as Franzway stresses (Franzway, 1989, 53). Connell and Mohanty suggest the state as the primary

organiser of the power relations of gender and race (Connell, 1987, 125-132; Mohanty, 1991, 21-22). The violence over subjugated populations produced by the state becomes 'legitimate' force: the agent of military states systematically purveyed violence on a large scale for political purposes. States claim a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, and thus are able to deny that their own use of force constitutes violence. I investigate the use of sexual violence as sanctioned in wartime, in order to aid the prosecution of war. Elaine Scarry also powerfully argues the way rape engages both the physical and the symbolic battlefields of war. Her understanding of the rape of enemy women as a device for quick and effective injuring of the enemy to destroy them shifts the meaning of rape as an efficient and terrible tactic (Scarry 1985, 63-81)<sup>25</sup>.

A pioneering study on rape in warfare has been undertaken by Susan Brownmiller (1975). This classic work shows sexualised violence unleashed on women of the losing side of war. She rightly points out that women are liable to be controlled in their sexuality as subjugated people and as women. Her argument has its strong point in showing for what political purposes rape has been used in wars. Thus, her work contributes to the task of pulling sexual violence out of the cupboard of privacy to make it a political issue. Despite the merit of Brownmiller's work, however, I would like to draw attention to what I would consider as weak points in her work. In spite of her insight into politically motivated rape in warfare, she seems to resort to biological arguments in which male sexuality is conceived as determined

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<sup>25</sup> Dietmar Felber argues against the uniqueness of 'genocidal rape' because to do so means to invite the marginalisation of 'ordinary rape' (Felber, 1995, 77). However, in my opinion, genocidal rape has a different aspect as a more systematic and political way of presenting ethnic hostility against other ethnic groups, nation or races on a large scale. On the other hand, it shares commonality with 'ordinary rape' in terms of sexual violence against women. It does not seem to be a binary matter that emphasising one implies trivialising the other.



by biological drives, to explain the mass psychology of rape. She assumes that 'male structural capacity to rape and woman's corresponding structural vulnerability are basic to the physiology of both our sexes' (*ibid.*, 13). Such assumptions of biological determinism are likely to end up supporting the myth of an inherently uncontrollable male sexual drive. There is an ironic echo here of the Japanese apologists: her explanation of male and female anatomy as a key cause of rape appears ironically, to rely on assumptions similar to those which inform the legitimisation of wartime rape offered by the Japanese apologists.

As a result, she is in danger of undermining her feminist position. Her work does not seem to provide a frame which can adequately incorporate a biological factor and a political one in her analysis of the mass psychology of rape. If rape is solely caused by biological vulnerability how can we explicate why more rapes happen in certain political circumstances, for instance in war? Male and female biology provides necessary but not sufficient conditions for the phenomenon of rape, but to explain why rape occurs and also the variations in the rates of rape, we have to go beyond biological and psychological factors, to consider political motivations and incitements to rape. For this, historical change and cultural variation must be taken into account.

A different angle for investigating the motives of rape can be found in work on the mass rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Ruth Seifert and Vera Folnegovic-Smalc. They propose that 'in the perpetrator's psyche it [rape] serves no sexual purpose but is the expression of rage, violence, and dominance over a woman' (Seifert, 1994, 55) or 'the demonstration of power' (Folnegovic-Smalc, 1994, 175). Seifert underlines that rape stems from unequal power relationships between the sexes (Seifert, 1994, 55). However, it is important to address the unequal relationships between races or

ethnic groups in addition to differences between the sexes to fully understand rape in war between nations or ethnicities. Seifert denies the sexual nature of rape. In contrast with this, Diane Scully (1993) points out that 'rape is a violent act, but it is also sexual act'. In my 'integrated feminist approach', both the political purpose and the sexual purpose of rape will be included in investigating sexual violence in the context of war or colonialism.

#### **2.5.4 *Masculinity and Militarism***

I will move next onto the mutual construction of masculinity and militarism. Concerning the relation between masculinity and sexual violence, Enloe argues that wartime rape provides soldiers with 'masculinity-reinforcing incentives to endure all the hardships of soldiering' (Enloe, 1988, 214). She has also produced significant work on militarism and gender which analyses military sexual politics: she highlights that military policy makers have used women by revealing both how military forces had depended on patriarchy and had tried to cover up that dependence in the US case (Enloe, 1988). She provides a new insight with her findings on the vulnerability of the military in terms of its dependency on women. She also recognises the importance of ethnicity and imperialism in her examination of sexual violence against women.

In contrast to Enloe, however, there is little consideration of racism or colonialism in war or in the military, in some feminist studies, for example, those of Andrea Dworkin, and in Virginia Woolf's descriptions of war or the military. They emphasise patriarchal factors in examining war or the military. War is basically considered a male activity in these studies - not only because men make war, but



because war is a direct extension of masculine values and behaviour (Woolf, 1984; Dworkin, 1976, 1981).

Male domination is found in many military organisations. In many cases, masculinity finds its ultimate expression in rape. However, the ways in which masculinity is thus consolidated and released have not been sufficiently explored. Furthermore, in addition to masculinisation, feminisation in the military needs to be considered. Jan Jindy Pettman mentions feminisation, drawing on Ross Poole (1985) and Jean Elshtain (1987). They hint at the feminisation of men in war. Elshtain draws parallels between the good soldier and the good mother in terms of caring, courage and self-sacrifice (Elshtain, 1987, cited in Pettman, 1996, 188). Their insight could have been more developed into searching for the way in which this feminisation is enacted in army life. Kazuko Tsurumi (1970) discusses infantilisation in the Japanese Imperial Army before WWII. Carolyn Steedman (1988) discusses feminisation in the British context in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, none of them adequately engage with the paradox between masculinisation and feminisation, and the ways this paradox is reconciled in the military. I shall attempt to develop the contrasting but interdependent concepts of masculinisation and feminisation in re-socialisation in the military. The exercise of power as a man and as a dominating race or ethnicity, and the confirmation of masculinity through aggressive sexual behaviours will be explored in the contexts of colonialism, militarism, and patriarchy.

### **2.5.5 *Victimisation and Resistance***

Finally, I will move onto a discussion of women as victims and as agents. In much of the work on war, militarism and women, women are depicted as defenceless victims of male violence particularly in terms of their sexuality. For example,



Brownmiller appears to consider a woman only as booty or 'a tangible reward' of war (Brownmiller, 1975, 35). On top of this, she assumes women's 'structural vulnerability to be raped' (*ibid.*, 13). Similarly, Janna Thompson (1991) also appears to conceive women only as the victims of war, pointing out women's vulnerability to the violence of armed men. Millett also describes women as victims (Millett, 1969). In Millett's explanation of how a man uses his sexuality as a way of controlling and degrading women, women are identified as 'sexual comfort stations', or as 'legitimate victims'<sup>26</sup>. These studies do not sufficiently expand their insight to catch women's multiple self-positioning under the harsh circumstances such as colonialism or militarism within which human rights are severely suppressed. There would be conformity of domination and resistance or survival strategies in active or passive ways: for example, fasting, or even committing suicide. bell hooks (1984) also maintains this point in her elegant work - in reality, women who face exploitation daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control over their lives<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, the dichotomy between agency and victim is problematic in the consideration of women's own experience of oppression and resistance in daily life. Thus, I will examine multiple self-positioning in between agency and victims against/of patriarchy and colonialism especially in facing routinised sexual coercion in the concluding chapter, chapter 9.

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<sup>26</sup> Some feminist research has criticised the focus on victimisation of women, especially research on sexual violence. As Carol Vance points, 'women who stress sexuality as a form of social control have also been criticised for neglecting its pleasure' (Vance, 1984). I am aware that there is an aspect of pleasure in women's sexuality, but in the context of this thesis, this is of little relevance.

<sup>27</sup> In criticising feminist work on sexuality, Hyam alleges that 'feminist hysterics' on pervasive male violence against women seem not be able to advance understanding of the past. He continues that 'their[feminists'] quintessential historical assumption and tendency are to represent women as mere victims, in many cases unwilling and exploited victims, of circumstances beyond their control' (Hyam, 1990). But his view is male and coloniser-oriented: for example, he deems a relationship between a coloniser man and a colonised woman to be a means of racial reconciliation, (but interestingly, not sexual relations between a colonial woman and a colonised man).



On men's positionality in war, some work outlines men also as victims, for example, Connel and Tylee. Connel proposes that 'men have been the main actors of war as well as the primary victims' (Connel, 1992, 176). Both men and women are depersonalised by a militaristic society (Tylee, 1988, 205-209). Their view seems convincing in pointing out one side of men's experience in war. However, they do not appear to pay attention to the point that the men have not only been victimised, they have received benefits, tangible or intangible rewards, especially in the case of victory. I am aware that 'men', even 'soldiers', do not designate a unitary category. The costs and the benefits of victory in war are unevenly distributed, to a large extent along the lines of class. However, the context of men as victims should be considered different from that of women in the sense that men could at the same time be perpetrators and beneficiaries as well as victims<sup>28</sup>.

Finally, I outline the structure of this thesis, which consists of nine chapters. In chapter 1, I have outlined the historical background of the comfort station programme. In chapter 2, previous work on the "Comfort Women" episode is reviewed, and my own approach and concepts developed. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the explanation of method, methodology and epistemology I engaged with for this thesis: I focus on the personal narrative method. During my interviews with "Comfort Women" and Japanese veterans, an interesting issue emerged: the relationships between them and myself. Chapter 4 is dealing with the stories of

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<sup>28</sup> Concerning women in war, through history women have been rarely engaged into war as soldiers, but they have been recruited or involved in warfare in other ways; for example, as cooks, nurses, as sexual objects of soldiers. Julie Wheelwright's book (1987), *Amazons and Military Maids*, offers examples although her main interest is in those women who have fought as soldiers, usually 'passing' as men. Therefore, it is hard to reach the conclusion that women have been excluded from warfare; to some extent, they have been forcibly implicated in it. In examination of how the exclusion of women from warfare affects and is affected by the status of the warrior and the status of women, Thompson (1991) maintains, 'women too have to be mobilized... thus women share directly the burdens and dangers of war'. However her article would have been more convincing if she had touched on the other side of women, especially the side of losing in warfare.

Korean "Comfort Women", especially their experience and suffering at comfort stations and in post-war Korea, whereas chapter 5 presents the stories of Japanese veterans, primarily about their army life during war. The following chapters 6, 7, and 8, I shall discuss what kinds of masculinity/femininity of the Japanese soldiers and Korean "Comfort Women" respectively, and national identities of both of them were re/constructed through the comfort station system. These three chapters form the main part of my work. In chapter 9, I explore the self-positioning of the "Comfort Women" in terms of conformity and resistance in the face of the Japanese re/construction of gender and national identities imposed on the "Comfort Women".



## 3 RESEARCHING MILITARY SEXUAL SLAVERY

### 3.1 Methodology

#### 3.1.1 *Narrative Resources and Written Resources*

In order to explore the emotional and subjective experiences of the "Comfort Women" as well as so-called 'objective facts', I intend to use both personal narratives, on the one hand, and materials based on methods of data collection deemed to be more 'objective' such as public records and other documentary evidence. Personal and 'objective' methods could play a complementary role to reveal the history of the comfort station system. Both are intended to enrich our knowledge of the past. But there could be discrepancies in the way each of them conveys information and the content they provide. It is significant for the production of knowledge to know how people feel about what happened in history, to incorporate subjectivity into method and theory. History should be a story about human beings themselves, rather than just an impersonal account of events. I think history should be a record about ordinary people as well rather than about the elite, in the tradition of working-class 'history from below' (Thompson, 1924). Unfortunately, written historical materials are largely the record of the dominant elite. Using only written resources would not cover 'subaltern history'. As Yanagita points out, sole dependency on written documents in research could lead to negligence of 'the doings, thinkings and feelings of common people, who do not usually either write about themselves or publish their writings. In contrast, elites keep written records of their deeds and ideas for posterity' (cited in Tsurumi, 1975, 225). Employment of both documentary resources and personal narratives can draw a

more detailed and comprehensive picture about what happened as well as how the 'subaltern' experienced it.

The information which is provided by the two resources is sometimes contradictory. Narratives particularly based on collective and personal memories can contest supposedly 'official' documents and interpretation. Gaps between experienced reality and the official record can be found through comparing the two resources. In order to find the gap in the issue of "Comfort Women", I firstly try to listen carefully to survivors' voices. 'Their own voice can provide an alternative understanding of the situation with 'counterhegemonic insight': because their narratives reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules' (Personal Narrative Group, 1989, 7).

The relevant official historical record on the issue of "Comfort Women" consists of Japanese military and government documents. In pursuing the 'objective truth', historians tend to rely heavily on Japanese official documents issued during the colonial period. To some extent, it might be useful to confront official positions with official records, if there is any counter-documentation. The most crucial archives on the "Comfort Women" system were retrieved by a Japanese historian, Yoshimi Yoshiyaki, at the library of the Ministry of Defence in Tokyo, Japan in 1992. On the other hand, this methodology could be used to fortify an official hegemonic discourse. For example the Japanese government has denied its involvement, claiming that no evidence exists to prove otherwise. On December 16, 1991, Kato Koichi, the government spokesperson, insisted that 'the evidence indicating the Japanese government's involvement (in *Chongsindae*) has not been discovered yet' (Choi, 1992, 101).



I shall access other details on “Comfort Women” which are beyond memory or experience of the women by examining these various documentary sources, but shall also draw on the narration of the women to fill in details omitted or expunged from the ‘objective’ records particularly some Japanese official documents dating from WWII.

### **3.1.2 *Why Personal Narrative Method?***

Oral narratives of women present and interpret women’s life experiences. The Personal Narratives Group identifies the forms that these narratives can take, including biography, autobiography, life history, diaries, journals and letters (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, 4). I would add testimony. I have recourse to the above forms of narratives, in particular testimony, oral history and autobiography. I choose to privilege the narrative method for my research work on the issue of “Comfort Women” for a number of reasons. First of all, they reveal women’s own experiences which are invisible in prevalent written historical materials. Most of the current materials, especially those informed by positivism, focus on androcentric records in the public domain. Women become invisible in a society which is so dichotomised and where primacy is placed on the public sphere. Consequently women are represented only as objects in the record of public events. On the other hand, narratives and testimonies give voice to people whose experiences have been underrepresented or misrepresented. Claudia Salazar underlines that women’s personal narratives are playing an important role in intervening and inscribing in the historical record the political-cultural trajectories and collective memories of silenced ‘subaltern’ people (Salazar, 1991, 97).

Secondly, testimony and oral history provide different kinds of historical information which can capture aspects missing in traditional written sources. Official or traditional historical documents do not write how people feel about what happened. But 'oral history gives the unique opportunity to ask people directly, how did it feel? what did it mean?' (Anderson *et.al.*, 1987, 98).

Furthermore, a number of official documents on the "Comfort Women" appear to have been destroyed after Japan lost WWII to cover up what happened to the women. Some of the materials on "Comfort Women" which remained were issued by the Japanese colonialists. The 'truth' in these historical records has the authority to question the reliability of the women's accounts as Yang stresses. Women's narratives are taken into account in clarifying an already constructed past. Their testimonies are used to 'prove' already established facts. Their testimonies are frequently compared with the historical record in an effort to determine whether they are truthful (Yang, 1997, 53). However, we need to raise the question to what extent 'the record' could convey the 'objective' truth, given its imperialist provenance. The uncritical reliance on the Japanese official records in pursuing 'objective fact', trivialises experiences and voices of the "Comfort Women". A further point is that this methodology is blind to colonialist and androcentric perspective embedded in the resources. The point of view and experiences of those who were forced to serve as "Comfort Women" are not present in most of the official materials. Sole reliance upon written records in historical research prevents women from producing knowledge. The oral narrative method is important for the reconfiguration of women's history.

Finally, the women whom I have interviewed tend to be familiar with the use of oral rather than written forms of communication. Many of them are illiterate or



semi-illiterate. One of my narrators who is semi-illiterate said that whenever she has to read or write something, she feels panic. She continued that if only she could know how to write, she might manage to write a novel based on her experiences. Traditionally, women have conveyed and shared their experience with others by using oral narratives rather than by written work. Thus, personal narratives could be one of the best methods to access their experience.

### **3.1.3 *What are Testimony and Oral History?***

A major purpose of testimony and oral history is the re-construction of knowledge through oral sources. There are several terms for oral narrative sources. Whereas oral narrative is a broad term for something spoken, testimony and oral history are more specific terms. In its widest sense, testimony is evidence about something. According to The Oxford English Dictionary:

Testimony is any act serving as personal, documentary, verbal evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement. In the strictest sense of the term, it is the communication of an experience or the report of an observed phenomenon, made to those whose own experience or observation has not reached so far (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989).

Testimony includes personal experience, perception and emotion whilst participating in an event, especially historical event. Sometimes, 'the notion of "testimony" expresses urgency, a story that must be told because of the struggles it represents' (Stephen, 1994, 224).

According to Stephen (1994), Beverley (1991), Kaplan (1991), and Sommer (1988), there are some different characteristics in testimony and oral history<sup>29</sup>.

Testimony has:

- more of a political tendency
- the intentionality of a narrator
- a resistant and practical challenge
- engagement of the reader's sympathy and solidarity
- collective identity

Firstly, then, testimony tends to provide a more political form of oral narratives. Lynn Stephen proposes that testimonial creation, production, and consumption are inherently political processes (Stephen, 1994, 223). As she highlights, in the case of political comments made by informants, especially in a society where freedom of speech was not guaranteed, testimony can provide information that was previously hidden, and can reconstruct a more detailed picture of the past beyond written documents. A case might be made for considering the Japanese veterans' accounts as testimony, which would cast doubt on the characterisation of testimony in terms of the political tendency to uncover and bear witness to shocking events which have been hidden from view in public accounts. But whether the veterans' accounts are properly to be thought of as 'bearing witness' and therefore, testimony, is questionable. The concern of most, with the exception of those who had been 'rehabilitated' in China, was less to testify than to justify and legitimise. The importance of the veterans' accounts was far from the political radicalism which Stephen associates with the term and their effect as testimony, was

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<sup>29</sup> Doris Sommer emphasises the difference between autobiographical and testimonial strategies of identification (Sommer, 1988, 108 -111).



to shore up conservative hegemonic accounts. Thus not all testimony is necessarily progressive.

My research shows the involvement of repressive surroundings which forced the former "Comfort Women" to keep silent about, even to forget, what happened in the army camp or comfort stations. Secondly, therefore, it is through their testimonies, directed by the intentionality of the narrator, that invaluable details are disclosed which would be deliberately omitted in official written documents or removed after WWII by Japanese colonialists. In contrast, the speech of some of the Japanese veterans is more concerned to legitimate than to testify, directly, about what had been witnessed. One significant intention of the narrator of testimony is to share her eye-witness accounts and perceptions of a specific event. John Beverley argues that:

The situation of narration in testimonio<sup>30</sup> has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself. Therefore the intentionality of the narrator is paramount rather than that of the researcher (Beverley, 1991, 94).

Thus, the act of giving testimony as well as the content of the testimony needs to be taken into account.

Thirdly, as a response to this oppressive environment, many of the testimonies might represent a kind of resistance and a practical, not just theoretical, challenge to the accepted ways of viewing the subject. Caren Kaplan calls testimony a form of 'resistance literature' (Kaplan, 1991, 122). In contrast, Stephen maintains that 'testimony gives voice to people whose experiences have been misrepresented or

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<sup>30</sup> Beverley uses the term 'testimonio' for testimonial narrative (Beverley, 1991, 91).

neglected, they promise to convey a unique authenticity, authority, and truth' (Stephen, 1994, 223). To be accurate, people who give testimony can discover and reveal aspects of reality which are historically, politically and culturally hidden and distorted. In testimony, there is not only a political story but inevitably an unrevealed personal story that is contrary to the established social norms. Testimony could be a source of resistance and reform politically and culturally.

Fourthly, testimony can engage the reader's solidarity if the reader has sympathy with the person who gives a testimony:

The complicity a testimonio establishes with its readers involves their identification - by engaging their sense of ethics and justice - with a popular cause normally distant, not too alien, from their immediate experience. Testimonio in this sense has been important in maintaining and developing the practice of international human rights and solidarity movements (Beverley, 1991, 99).

This point may also be true of testimony concerning the issue of the "Comfort Women". Survivors' testimony mobilised support around the issue and triggered the launch of the campaign in Korea, and this has provided ground for solidarity in Asian countries in which there are other survivors of the comfort station system.

Consequently, testimony assures collective identity to a narrator and a reader/audience, because a narrator's oppressive experience is either shared by many of her/his contemporaries or is one with which they can empathise. 'The narrator in testimonio speaks for, or in the name of, a community or group' (Kaplan, 1991, 124; Sommer, 1988, 108-111). They do not seem to give testimonies only about their own experiences but also about experiences of others which they witnessed, so that testimonies have a representative feature. In testimonies, a 'collective I' could be induced rather than the 'singular I' of conventional Western autobiography'



(Sommer, 1988, 108-111). Testimony gives voice in literature to a previously 'voiceless', anonymous, collective popular-democratic subject, a plural self. In fact, the survivors among the "Comfort Women" more often use the word 'we' rather than 'I' in giving testimonies. This obviously reflects a strongly collective sense of self-identity.

Despite the above positive characteristics of testimony, it was not enough to rely on testimony alone in my research, because it is necessary to show what happened over a long period of time. This is the strength of the oral life history method. Oral history can afford to cover the whole life story of a survivor whereas testimony generally focuses more on a specific single series of events within a certain period. Oral history is defined as an approach to writing history that relies in large parts on interviews with elderly people who provide retrospective data on the events, attitudes, and activities of their childhood, adolescence, and adult life, according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. This typically includes a focus on family life, social structure and social relationships, employment in the market sector, work in the informal economy, leisure activities, perceptions of major public events, and attitudes and values as reconstructed in old age (Marshall ed., 1994, 368-369). Oral history is the collection of experience and thought during the lifetime of the informants, which relies on memory.

But I do not insist on any hard and fast distinction, in which testimony is only about political events whereas oral history is only about personal life. In fact, testimony and oral history spread out across the space of the public and the private. Particularly, comparing women's testimonies to men's, women's testimonies are considered to integrate the personal with the political. But first of all this comparison seems to overgeneralise what women's or men's testimony is like. This assumption

relies on an overly rigid dichotomy between the personal and the political. In reality, political and personal experiences often overlap, and can not be separated.

The politically and socially repressive experiences of the "Comfort Women" in daily life in the comfort stations will be primarily probed and analysed through adopting and interpreting the forms of oral history and testimony in this thesis. Accounts of the "Comfort Women" resemble oral history in that they rely on memory, and locate their war-time experiences in relation to their position now, as 'survivors' who kept silent for so long, and as political activists mobilised by the "Comfort Women" campaign. It resembles testimony in being first person, eye-witness accounts of something is deeply shocking - something which, in the everyday 'ordinary' world, is widely felt should not happen and is difficult to credit. They offer first hand accounts of what happened in comfort stations, and how the survivors experience it. They offer evidence, not readily available in other forms, of the continuing long term effects of sexual coercion and war. Therefore, considering the above strong points of the personal narrative method, I intend to employ both testimonial narratives and oral history methodology. Both methods will help to reveal subject-positioning at the level of the individual and the collectivity in the self-identity of the narrators.

## **3.2 Method**

### **3.2.1 *Collecting Material***

There is a growing literature on the issue of "Comfort Women" published mainly in Japan and Korea in Japanese and in Korean language<sup>31</sup>. When doing

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<sup>31</sup> For details of literature on the comfort stations in Japan and Korea, see chapter 2 Literature Review.



fieldwork at Tokyo University in 1996, I examined the range of literature on "Comfort Women" in Japanese, and made an assessment of the most significant research in the field, in terms of the authors and publications most frequently cited by others, in terms of the most recent research, and in terms of the range of different approaches to the issue. What I have included in the literature review in this thesis was chosen to reflect these three criteria, and represents what I believe is the key research in the area.

Reading in both languages, Korean and Japanese, is not difficult for me - Korean is my mother tongue, and I have been learning Japanese since 1985. I understand written Japanese better than the spoken language. This is because *Kanji* (Chinese characters in Japanese) is familiar to me as I read Chinese. I decided to use translators for the interviews to ensure that I understand correctly what my informants were saying.

In order to quote from material I collected, I had to translate it into English. One problem in translation was posed by military technological terms, which I had to investigate, using encyclopaedias and consulting Japanese speakers. Another concerned the pronunciation of the names of Japanese people, of Japanese military units during WWII, and those of places in China and Japan. I felt it was important to try to get this right for the interviews. My Japanese and Chinese friends helped me with these names.

I found more books on the "Comfort Women" issue published in Japan than I had expected during my six months fieldwork in Japan. Although there are several books published on the issue, it was not easy to access these books from universities, civic libraries or book stores. Some items were out of stock. I ordered those books from book shops or from publishers. According to a member of staff in a book shop

in Tokyo, only limited copies of these kinds of books are normally published due to limited readership. So I started to rummage around second hand book shops to find these books which were not available from a book shop - but this was not very successful. I did not feel comfortable in asking members of staff to find books on the "Comfort Women" issue in book shops, partly because it is a sensitive issue in terms of sexuality, and in terms of Korean/Japanese relationships.

Interestingly, many autobiographies written about their experiences in WWII by Japanese veterans were more accessible from libraries<sup>32</sup>. These materials focus on the male experiences as troops or officers during the war. Far more has been published on the male experience during the war than the female. I am impressed by the fact that these accounts were mostly written by rank-and-file soldiers anxious to leave records of their wartime experiences, given that 'classical autobiographies almost exclusively delineate the life of cultural heroes - those who have achieved greatness through their accomplishments' (Jelinek, 1980, cited in Gergen & Gergen, 1993, 195).

My having connections with activist groups dealing with the "Comfort Women" issue in Korea and in Japan, helped me greatly in the task of collecting materials, which proved invaluable. I was given access to newsletters, leaflets, and journals issued by activity and research groups in Korea and Japan, as well as Japanese and Korean newspaper articles, archives of the Japanese Imperial Army and of the Japanese police relevant to the issue, and had access to conference abstracts. My sources included *Hankuk chongsindae yonkuhoe* (The Korean Researcher for the

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<sup>32</sup> I paid visits to especially the national library of the House of Parliament, the library of the Ministry of Defence, and the Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility in Tokyo, Japan in 1996.



Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan<sup>33</sup>) and *Hanguk chongsindae munche taechaek hyopuihoe* (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan) in Korea, and *Nihonno senso sekinin shiryō senta* (The Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility), *Jugunianfu Mondai Uri Yosong Network* (Military "Comfort Women" Issue Network of We, Japanese Korean Women). The Asian Women's Centre in Japan also provided me with materials.

I attempted to collect all relevant resources, and ended up with huge amounts which I had to ship back to England. I have sorted them, and examined those that seemed most relevant, but not all of them have been used for this thesis. In addition to access to these materials, this connection helped me to arrange interviews with the former Japanese military men. My fieldwork experience has led me into rethinking how the relationship between activism and theory could go together, particularly if a research topic is based on women's reality.

### **3.2.2 Finding Informants**

I had the opportunity to interview the following:

- former Korean and Filipino "Comfort Women",
- Japanese veterans of WWII including former soldiers, officers and a military doctor,
- Korean and Japanese activists and scholars,
- newspaper reporters and a Japanese diplomat dealing with the issue of "Comfort Women".

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<sup>33</sup> *Hanguk chongsindae yonkuhoe* (the Korean Researchers for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan) has changed its English name to Korean Research Institute for *Chongshindae* in 1998.

I interviewed 13 former Korean "Comfort Women" in Korea and in Japan between 1992 and 1996. The interviews were conducted in Korean with 12 "Comfort Women" in Korea, and in Japanese language with one former Korean "Comfort Woman" who has remained in Japan after WWII. In addition, I had access to interviews conducted by others, mostly generated by *Hanguk chongsindae yonkuhoe* (The Korean Researchers for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan) in Korean. The accounts of 39 "Comfort Women" from this source, in addition to the women I interviewed, are quoted in this thesis. The source of each interview is stated at the end of each quote: if it is my interviews, names of my respondents and dates were shown in brackets, and if it is an interview conducted by another researcher or organisation, the name of the organisation or the researcher is written in brackets. Details on the former "Comfort Women" and Japanese veterans whose accounts I used, both those generated by me and by others, in this thesis are shown in the appendix.

It was not too difficult to track down my respondents among "Comfort Women", since they had, in the main, already identified themselves as former "Comfort Women" and registered with activist groups and/or the Korean government. Approximately 15 contacts were made with the women. Only 2-3 among them, concerned about consequences to their family if their stories became known to public, were reluctant to talk about her past. I did not try to persuade them to talk in this case. But one of them agreed to be interviewed under another name. All interviews with the women were on an individual basis. In the nature of the case, we cannot, know how and whether the picture would be altered if we were able to include the testimonies of those who preferred to remain silent. But a clear and consistent account is emerging from those who have chosen to speak out, to testify.



I interviewed 17 Japanese veterans in Japan, mainly in Tokyo area, in summer 1996 - 12 men were interviewed in a group, and 5 individually<sup>34</sup>. 13 out of the veterans were 'rehabilitated' in China after WWII, the remaining four were not. The group interview was a long session with one large group, all from the 'rehabilitated' category. They expressed the wish to speak in this way, and I agreed. These men had a strong sense of constituting a group, whose identity was related to their 'rehabilitated' status. They may have therefore felt it important to speak in a collective rather than individual setting. The group interview had pros and cons. More information from more respondents could be retrieved in an effective way. Accounts of one could stimulate the recollection of another, so a greater variety of information emerged. But when privacy is needed, as in the case of interviews with former "Comfort Women", this method would not answer. The group interviews were at times difficult to follow, when people talked at the same time, but on balance, the advantages probably outweighed the disadvantages. A few accounts of the veterans generated by others, were used in this thesis, but vast majority of them are my own interviews.

Approximately 25 initial contacts were made with potential interviewees amongst Japanese veterans. I approached those whom I had reason to hope might be with more likely to talk about their wartime experience, because they have written a book about it or they reported their experience on a hotline launched by Japanese activist groups to get information about "Comfort Women". These contacts were made through my connection to activist groups and through my Japanese friends' connection. Personal connection appeared to be an essential way things operate in

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<sup>34</sup> For details on all my respondents, see the Appendix in this thesis.

Japanese society. 8 of those who were approached refused to be interviewed, and I conducted 17 interviews out of the 25 initial contacts.

One informant group amongst Japanese veterans whom I have labelled the 'rehabilitated', have been actively involved in an anti-war campaign since their return to Japan, was found without trouble at the press conference held at the House of Parliament in Tokyo in June, 1996. Otherwise, it was difficult to find Japanese veterans who were willing to be interviewed, even though there are so many of them - almost all of the male Japanese population over a certain age were involved in the military during WWII. They seemed reluctant to talk about their wartime experience to me. Some of my potential respondents refused my interview requests. After being persistent, I managed to persuade two of them, who initially refused to talk about their wartime experience to me. There were four 'unrehabilitated' veterans amongst my respondents, two of whom accepted my interview request in the first place, and the remaining two agreed after some persuasion.

The greatest difficulties in the first stage of my interview plan with the veterans were to find and contact them in Japan. Conducting interviews seemed an impossibility without an introduction from others, because I am a foreigner in Japan, especially I am a Korean. Secondly, I am a woman - it was a formidable undertaking for a woman to attempt to gain access to men who had been involved in systematic sexual violence. Thirdly, I was involved in the campaign of "Comfort Women" as an activist. I had participated in demonstrations and attempts to ask the Japanese government to resolve this issue, which is politically quite sensitive between Japan and other Asian countries. I doubted whether I would get the chance to interview former Japanese military in Japan before I went there since I suspected I might not be welcomed by them. I had no direct connection with any of the Japanese veterans. In



spite of all these difficulties, I really wanted to listen to the men's stories, because knowing their point of view is also important to analysis of the issue of "Comfort Women". I really wanted to know what kind of situation the men were in during WWII and how they now think about the issue. Apart from those reasons, I have felt it is urgent to record the past of the veterans before they die. This urgency was also felt in interviewing the former "Comfort Women". With each year that passes there are fewer survivors<sup>35</sup>.

There appear to be different motivations that may have made it more likely that the men's and the women's accounts would differ. Among the men who visited the comfort stations, those who treated the women with violence and contempt were perhaps less likely to offer testimony, whilst among the "Comfort Women", those women who suffered sexual violence were more likely to give testimony than those who formed personal relationships of some kind. For this reason, my informants were self-selected. They are not a random sample. Motivations to speak or to keep silence will have determined who gave testimony.

### ***3.2.3 Preparing and Conducting Interviews***

I prepared more for interviews with the Japanese veterans before they took place than when I interviewed the former "Comfort Women". First of all, there was the limited time available to me for the interviews - I thought that I would get only one chance, whereas I was able to talk repeatedly to the former Korean "Comfort Women". Therefore, the interviews with the veterans needed to be well planned to make the best possible use of the time available - each interview took two or three

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<sup>35</sup> At least four of my respondents of the former "Comfort Women" died after my interview including Kim Haksun, Mun Okchu, Chun Kumwha and Kang Tokkyong.

hours. The day before I interviewed them I spent some time in thinking over how to introduce the sensitive topic of the "Comfort Women". I practised my Japanese to introduce myself and to ask questions. Next, I worked on the Japanese military history of each place where my interviewees served during WWII. If I was informed on what the place where they served in was like, and what happened there during WWII, much more effective communication could be made. In cases where an informant had written about his war experience -four of my informants had published books about their wartime experiences- I read what he had written before I interviewed him.

The contents of the interviews with the former "Comfort Women" were about recruitment and transportation to comfort stations; their family background before and after WWII; aspects of daily life at comfort stations; their reaction on treatment at comfort stations and life after the war. In-depth and repeat interviews were held with 3 "Comfort Women", with sometimes as many as 5-6 repeats, and with interviews lasting for up to 4 hours. This extended interviews allowed me to contextualise their war experience in relation to their life stories. I interviewed 10 other women once or twice for about two hours. An interpreter was involved for only one occasion with a former Korean "Comfort Woman" who has remained in Japan since the end of WWII – she seemed much more fluent in Japanese. Interviews lasted relatively long with my women informants, since they looked so much to pour out once they decided to talk about their past at comfort stations. A strictly structured questionnaire was not proceeded except for the group interview, I rather tried to offer them liberty to recall and disclose their past in their own ways. But I had ideas of questions or themes to raise with them. I asked them sometimes to talk more about topics I wanted to know about more when the topics were on. The interviews with



the veterans except for one, who was fluent in Korean, were carried out in Japanese, and interpreters were involved.

Most of the interviews took place at the informants' homes except for a group interview with the 'rehabilitated' group. I tried to arrange the interviews with the Japanese men and the Korean "Comfort Women" at their homes, firstly so that they might feel more comfortable in giving their own story without being overheard, since the topic is quite sensitive to talk about especially for the women, and partly because they are old, in their 70s. On top of this I thought I might learn more of their home atmosphere and their economic situation.

All the interviews were done with a tape recorder, and all of them except for the Japanese diplomat gave permission for the recording. During the first few interviews I did not dare ask them to allow me to take a photo. I was a bit surprised, when I did finally ask, that they were willing even without knowing or asking what I was planning to do with the photo. It was very different to their response when I asked them for an interview, when I was quizzed closely about who I am, what I was doing, why I came to Japan, and what I was going to do with their story. I think that the discrepancy partly came from their greater openness after the interview, and partly from their fondness to have their photo taken.

All the interviews in Korean were transcribed by me. The interview in which interpreters were involved were transcribed with translation of the interpreters – from Japanese to Korean. I tried to make transcripts of tape-recorded sessions with the Japanese veterans and the former "Comfort Women" shortly after each interview when my memory from the interview was still fresh. The parts I wanted to quote among all transcripts were translated from Korean to English. Three languages have been involved in this process. It was not always easy to deliver the original nuance,

the choked voices, and the emotional outbursts of my informants in written form and in another language. I read a transcript from previous interviews to them in follow-up interviews when this was possible, and had corrections and feedback on the draft from them.

I searched out all my data such as transcripts and other printed records to find out what I had in my data. As a result, I selected themes, such as the myth of masculine sexuality, prostitution, sexual violence, double standard in sexuality, sisterhood, the colonised image of Korean (women), family background, resistance, silence, recruitment, and payment. These themes were stored in an encoded form, which was a clerical process. My data under each topic were filed and were read through again to extract patterns to be analysed.<sup>36</sup> The idea of 'enslaved sexualised femininity', 'military masculinity', and 'Korean identity in pseudo-Japaneseness' were developed from the process of analysis. While analysing my data, I returned several times to my original transcripts in Korean to check and to get more ideas.

It is the case that a shared story from the perspective of the "Comfort Women" is also emerging, as a result of the involvement in activism. This is borne out by the fact that my interviews corroborated what other "Comfort Women" have said previously when interviewed by others. There is continuity in the women's testimonies rather than marked differences between the accounts given to other researchers.

What is distinctive in my thesis is the comparison with the men's accounts, and the analysis that I have offered. I have not found anyone else researching this topic who has interviewed soldiers and made a comparison between the "Comfort

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<sup>36</sup> For the coding and indexing of my data, I consulted with studies by Bryman and Burgess (1994) and Sapsford and Jupp (1996).



Women's" perspectives and those of the men. Another difference is that I interviewed those who hold contrast views among the veterans, and made a comparison between accounts of 'apologist veterans' and those of 'the rehabilitated'. Because of the common experience of 'rehabilitation', the story that this group of veterans tell is perhaps even more 'rehearsed' than is usually the case, and this may also have influenced their wish to be interviewed collectively. Thus, my materials have a wider range of variety in terms of perspectives on the "Comfort Women" issue.

### **3.3 The Relationship between a Narrator and a Researcher**

#### **3.3.1 *Power Relationship between a Narrator and a Researcher***

Next, I will move into the topic of the relationship between the narrator and the researcher who analyses what the former narrates. The relationship between the two is central in the use of personal narratives for research. Feminist and/or ethnographic research methodology emphasises human relationships, engagement, attachment and mutuality. Feminist methodology draws on 'an egalitarian research process': according to Judith Stacey, she stresses that discussions of feminist methodology generally criticised the hierarchical, exploitative relations of conventional research, urging feminist researchers to seek instead an egalitarian research process characterised by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her 'subject' (Stacey, 1991, 112). The teamwork between the narrator and the researcher can provide a prototype of non- or less-hierarchical research and writing.

When the relationship between a narrator and a researcher becomes a subject-subject relationship, that relationship could be symmetrical. Nancy Kleiber and Linda Light (1978) propose 'interactive methodology'. They are particularly concerned with the part played by 'the researched' as well as 'the researcher', and breaking down the power differentials that exist within the research process.

There were several factors in terms of gender, ethnicity and age which influenced the power relationship between my respondents and myself. All of the informants were much older than me, and there are still social mores of respect for old people in the context of Korea and Japan. The power relationship caused by age difference is complicated by another relationship based on the differentials of social background.

To cross the border of different social background, 'there needs to be a reciprocal process of building and growth that involves women from a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints with empathy and mutuality' (Etter-Lewis, 1991, 56). Rather than making an easy assumption of sisterhood and reciprocity, in order to build up a collaborative and reciprocal understanding, I told the former "Comfort Women" something about my life and my experience which I could share with them. This was a process of finding out a similarity and a difference between my respondents and myself.

Secondly, I showed the draft of my interpretation to some of the narrators whom I had interviewed. We kept talking until we came to agreement. This was an attempt to make 'a doubly authored text' (Davies, 1991, 6), with my voice and their voice together making the narrative. This procedure helped us to find misunderstandings and differences through discussion and comment. I found sometimes that we produced different interpretations or meanings of the same words



or experiences. These differences quite possibly came from our different experiences and point of view. It is difficult to know how far I was able to achieve the 'subject-subject relationship'. The empathy I felt towards the women - feelings of anger, anxiety, and happiness- was not forced, and may have helped to establish a sense of mutual trust in which they felt able to tell me their stories of terrible sexual coercion.

A deeper level of understanding and interaction was possible when I interviewed the Korean "Comfort Women". The sense of intense emotional involvement which occurred at the time of the interview, this was often overwhelming. Their stories of sexual violence were enough to make me feel bruised and angry. It was painful for me to see how they were still suffering from trauma because I was emotionally involved. I thought the interview might have therapeutic value, so I tried to apply counselling skills to my encounter with the women rather than just interviewing them. This was therapeutic for me, too, because the accounts I was listening to were so terrible. By contrast, when I interviewed some of the former Japanese soldiers, especially with the apologists, I felt upset. There were some difficulties in maintaining emotional detachment when interviewing the men, given my empathy with the "Comfort Women". So I attempted to use another counselling approach with the men, that of being non-judgmental. The maintenance of a degree of emotional detachment was necessary for me, in order to avoid being overwhelmed, either through a too-great identification with the suffering of the women, or by anger and resentment at the defensive and patronising attitude of the men.

My experience as a woman and as one who used to be a counsellor for victims of sexual violence, makes me more aware of the issue of sexual violence. This awareness led me into deeper sympathy with the women's trauma, and with their

mistrust of people and hostility towards men. Even though giving testimony can offer the former "Comfort Women" empowerment or catharsis by giving them a voice, it also had the effect of making them rehearse again their vulnerability, powerlessness, lack of dignity and control when they were in the comfort stations. The women appeared to relive the moments of violence inflicted upon their body and mind.

The relations with the Japanese men were situated in a very different way. The atmosphere of the interview and level of mutuality achieved with the Japanese veterans seemed to depend on their attitude. When the respondents shared my own approach to war, gender and colonialism, there was less tension during interviews with them. But it was hard to find a feminist perspective even among the 'rehabilitated' group of my respondents despite our shared views concerning imperialism and war.

The 'rehabilitated' group of Japanese veterans were quite open-minded, and they were willing to give testimony about what happened during WWII to 'the girls' who were taken to comfort stations, and what they or their 'buddies' had done to 'the girls'. Some of my respondents were reluctant to talk about their experiences at the comfort stations, some emphasised they did not mingle with the women, and some brought up the issue without hesitation. It did not seem very difficult for most of the veterans to tell me of their sexual experience, including their experiences with the "Comfort Women", once they decided to talk about it, even though it was the first time we had met. It was not easy to discern any reluctance or hesitation from them. This was a quite different atmosphere to that which predominated in the interview with the former "Comfort Women". To hear of the women's experience at a comfort station, I needed to wait till sufficient rapport had been established. A further difference was that more of the former "Comfort Women" had requested anonymity



than the Japanese veterans among my respondents. What makes these differences? What made the men less diffident in talking about their sexual experience at comfort stations than the former "Comfort Women"? I found little evidence that the Japanese men felt any pain while they talked about the topic. There is virtually no social stigma attached to the men as a consequence of their sexual acts. During the group interviews with Japanese veterans, I tried to be cautious because the topic was fairly sensitive, and the topic was about sexuality which is rarely talked about in public. On top of that, we had just met for the interview, allowing little time to build up rapport. Sexuality may not be a comfortable topic to discuss in such a context. But in a sense, our relative ages, theirs in the 70s mine in the 30s, made it a little easier. If they were young men it might have been far more uncomfortable for both of us to talk about the issue of sexual experience. The subject-positioning of the researcher is necessarily implicated in research.

Rather than assuming the air of having transcended the boundary between the respondents and myself, I attempted to find out and admit what the differences and similarities between us were and how these were encoded in my research. The question occurred to me of why I have been engaging with the issue of "Comfort Women", and whether it is my business as a middle-class educated young Korean woman. I wondered what kinds of experience and perspective I could share with the "Comfort Women", who had suffered from wars, sexual violence, poverty, or social stigma to which I was a stranger. However great my empathy, vast differences remain between knowing from listening or reading, and knowing from direct experiences. Therefore, commonality and differences between the informants and myself became visible. In a sense, the acute awareness and acceptance of similarities and differences between the informants and me may have helped to handle the cross-

gender and cross-ethnic interviews, instead of any misplaced attempt to put myself in their place.

### **3.3.2 Commonality**

What would I share with the Japanese veterans and the former Korean "Comfort Women"? First of all, stories of suffering and frustration under the environment of an absolutely hierarchical and non-democratic military system given by both of the groups reminded me of my experience in a suppressed political situation under military dictatorship for around 30 years in Korea, and of the stories of the anti-democratic environments of the military I had heard from my male Korean friends who completed national service in the military. At a certain age, the vast majority of Korean young men have been conscripted to serve in the military for a couple of years, mainly since Korea has been divided into the North and the South.

The former Japanese soldiers' story led me to discover from where my strong sense of objection against militarism comes. This sense of refusal is a part of my identity as a Korean brought up under a militaristic regime and as a woman against the masculinist society. This part of my subjectivity helped me to share and understand the frustration and oppression the soldiers and the women had been through in the war. In contrast, I was uncomfortable and sometimes upset when I interviewed three of the former Japanese military officers who have been holding a Japanese apologist perspective<sup>37</sup>.

Although I have no direct experience of war, the Korean war had created a pervasive awareness of war and the threat of war in Korea. The impact of the Korean

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<sup>37</sup> Among four of my 'unrehabilitated' respondents, three defended Japanese expansionism with an apologist perspective, and one seemed neutral, or tried to be neutral.



War has been extensive - parting families between the North and the South, the emergency sense of imminent war, sometimes perhaps exaggerated by former Korean military governments. Narration of war experiences have been familiar to me, as to most Koreans, from my parents, novels, films and political propaganda projected by the former Korean governments, and in whose interests it was to keep alive the fear of war between the North and the South. The cultural climate in Korea since WWII has been one in which consciousness of war as a reality or a threat, is very prominent. One former military officer who used to be a lecturer in a university in Korea, said to me that he could share his views more readily with his Korean contemporaries rather than with the Japanese younger generation - because the former have an experience of the effects of war in their life, such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War or WWII.

### **3.3.3 *Tension***

There were differences between the informants and myself in terms of sex, age, nationality and class, and these could create tensions. The "Comfort Women" and myself are separated by generation and by class. But my involvement in the "Comfort Women" campaign and the need of the "Comfort Women" to speak out at last to those fellow country men ignorant of their pain and suffering, allowed me to act as an empathetic listener, so that these barriers of generation, class, and experience might be temporarily lowered, experiences shared across them.

There were differences among the 'rehabilitated' group of veterans in the dynamic of the interview process, compared to the veterans who had not had this experience. The latter showed a wary attitude toward me, and I was cautious, too. I felt less nervous or tense with the former group. It was trickier to handle interviews

with the former Japanese military who hold an ostensibly neutral or a defensive point of view on the Japanese involvement in WWII. I thought I should be more discreet with those who have this defensive perspective on the "Comfort Women" issue. I did not think I could ask direct questions about the "Comfort Women" issue especially their personal experience with the women - for example 'have you ever been to any comfort stations?' or 'how were the women treated?' etc. It would be like an interrogation. Therefore, I tried to create broad and rather more indirect questions - for example 'were there any women in or near your military base?' or 'did the women seem happy there?'

I found myself upset especially when two of the former officers I interviewed overtly classified the "Comfort Women" as prostitutes, and when they justified the Japanese role in the 'civilisation' of Asia in a patronising manner. While they expressed colonialist and masculinist views, I had to struggle to contain my discomfort and sharp dissent. I felt obliged to listen placidly to what was said to legitimise Japanese colonialism and the "Comfort Women" system without interrupting, in order to maintain rapport and to complete an interview. Smart (1984) points out that interviews may follow the typical model of male-female verbal exchange. My interview situation was not only cross-gender, but also cross-ethnic. The power relations by no means favoured the interviewer, as is often assumed in the literature on interviewing.

The wife of one of the former officers accompanied us at one interview. From the beginning when I contacted him, I sensed that she tried to discourage him from co-operating. While we were doing the interview she tried to stop him several times from saying something about the "Comfort Women" issue, by saying 'if you are not



really sure, do not say anything about the issue'<sup>38</sup>. I found myself cross with her for another reason, for she did not appear to have any sympathy or support as a woman, for the "Comfort Women" or for the sexual violence they suffered. Did her ethnic identification override identification along the line of gender? Did her loyalties as a wife, and the interests which she shared with her husband motivate denial, a refusal to acknowledge the full extent of the harm inflicted on the "Comfort Women" by her husband as a Japanese officer? More generally speaking, I am sceptical about whether women necessarily share experiences and views simply because we are women. It also has led me into thinking about what it means to be a woman or what it means being a civilian of a post-colonial nation. Both of these respondents pointedly asked 'we, Japan and Korea, used to be one, why now do Koreans not seem to like us, the Japanese?' Similar logic can be applied with Korean men, too. I am quite pessimistic about whether Korean men can fully identify with the "Comfort Women" simply by virtue of their shared nationality.

Some of the Japanese veterans spoke freely of their relations with the "Comfort Women". They might begin straightforwardly with the sentence 'I sometimes frequented the comfort station,' while I was still trying to find an indirect manner of leading on to the topic. My feelings were mixed whenever this happened. I welcomed the access this gave me to what I wanted to hear about their experiences at comfort stations. But the very willingness to speak so comfortably about this experience and the terms in which the stories were cast constituted the confident affirmation of masculine right, power, authority - both in relation to sexual access to

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<sup>38</sup> After about one hour the wife reminded us what time it was in a gentle manner. But he wanted to say more about the war because he was getting enthusiastic in telling me how much Japan had contributed to the development of Korea and Indonesia in post-war era.

the "Comfort Women", and in relation to masculine authority in relation to a young female Korean interviewer.

Even though there was a tension between some of the veterans and me, I tried not to let this come to the surface during interviews. I tried to keep myself as impersonal and 'detached', not showing my discomfort and not interrupting their talk. The counselling skills that I have learned from my experience as a counsellor of the Korean Sexual Violence Relief Centre, at least, helped me to listen to their stories in a non-judgmental fashion. But my non-judgmental stance necessarily masked deep feelings. To give 'practical and emotional support and a form of loving attention, of comparatively nonjudgmental acceptance', as Judith Stacey proposes (Stacey, 1991, 117), in this kind of cross-sex and cross-ethnic interview is a counsel of perfection that few could aspire to. This doubt led me into thinking over whether informants become objects by being used as 'data', for my own research purposes. On the other hand, I also felt objectified or sometimes vulnerable in relation to their defensive or patronising ideas on the war and male sexuality.

Two of the former Japanese officers I interviewed tried to educate me with their stance on the "Comfort Women" issue and Japan's contribution in Korea. They attempted to lead the interview into a tutorial or propaganda session to allow me, a Korean woman, to understand what Japan did in WWII. They tried to persuade me to concur with their perspective, even though I did not say what I thought about the "Comfort Women" issue. The interviews appeared as an outlet for them to recollect their brave and honourable past as members of the Japanese imperial army, and secondly, a way to educate me, a Korean woman, who was dealing with the "Comfort Women" issue, to their point of view.



How did I manage to get through all these very painful and traumatising interviews for this thesis. It is difficult to say briefly. A variety of feelings were engaged. I have very mixed feeling toward the former Japanese military, stemming from my identity as a woman and a Korean and my political view regarding militarism and sexual exploitation. On one hand, I could sympathise when they talked about their suffering in wartime and in camps after the war, and about their present hardships of poverty, isolation, old age or ill-health. I felt uncomfortable, angry, and upset when they tried to justify what they have done during the war, but I felt thankful, respected, and surprised when I interviewed the 'rehabilitated' veterans who identify themselves as war criminals and are active in the anti-war campaign. Interviewing the Japanese men with this mixed feeling helped me understand complexity in subject positioning along the line of gender, nationality and age, and also how to deal with differences.

### **3.3.4 *Language Barrier***

In this section, I will sketch the role of language including translation between languages in the construction of these personal narratives. There was no language barrier in interviewing the former "Comfort Women" in Korean. Even though some of them used their own dialect it was not hard to catch. But when I interviewed the Japanese men, an interpreter was needed, as I did not feel confident in relying on my Japanese. I almost completely depended on an interpreter for the first couple of interviews. I found the men more often looked at the interpreter while talking. The men talked to the interpreter and she talked to me. I felt like an absorber or audience of the interview. This atmosphere prevented a reciprocal relationship developing between the men and me. After that I changed my strategy and tried out my Japanese

on them as much as possible. When I asked questions I tried to do so in Japanese and only when it was too difficult did I rely on the interpreter. This effort seemed to open a new door to me. I felt more involved and accepted by my respondents. They spoke towards me and looked at me. So the interview environment was improved in terms of communication but there was still a language barrier as long as an interpreter was needed.

Once I had a problem with another interpreter because my usual one was not available at the time of interviewing. She was an historian. A problem stemmed from her summary style of interpretation. When I asked her for more details she said everything the informants said did not seem worth interpreting word by word. Only the informant's narration concerning historical facts seemed to be considered as valuable to her as a historian. Her agenda rather than mine, filtered the translation process. During the interview I could not get enough feedback to the respondent because I did not completely follow what he was saying. This kind of gap frustrated full communication.

If an interpreter is needed, a level of understanding between interpreter and researcher is as essential as that between informant and researcher. The interpreter who greatly helped me was the one who had also been involved in the issue of "Comfort Women" as a Korean Japanese. Therefore, she had knowledge and experiences as an activist in the issue. She was an experienced interpreter for Korean into Japanese and vice-versa, fully bilingual. I met her in 1992 at a conference on the issue of "Comfort Women". I interviewed her during my fieldwork in Japan because she is one of leading activists in the issue in Japan. She volunteered to interpret for me since she was interested in interviewing the Japanese veterans, too.



Before we went to meet the veterans I briefed her as to what kind of questions I was going to ask, and sometimes I asked her for advice, as to whether a question would fit in the Japanese context in which politeness is stressed very much especially among the older generation. She gave me other valuable advice on local customs, for example she suggested I should prepare a present and a business card before visiting interviewees, so that I should not inadvertently transgress local codes.

### **3.3.5 *Differences from Orthodox Ethnography***

The dynamics of the research process clearly differed from typical ethnography. As Pat Caplan points out, '(ethnographers) are painfully aware of their own privileged position on the grounds of race, class, education or whatever' (Caplan, 1993, 24). No such privileges attached to my position in these cross-ethnic and cross-gender interviews in Japan. Most ethnographic research has been undertaken in post-colonial societies by a researcher from the West. My interviews with Japanese were in some sense, the other way around. I was a foreigner from Korea which was colonised by Japan and was seen as young in my 30s. Being Korean and a woman is still regarded as socially less prestigious in Japan. The Japanese male interviewees often strived to control the interview situation<sup>39</sup>. I interviewed those who used to be involved in working for Japanese imperialism. In many respects the power relations assumed in discussions of ethnographic research were reversed. My respondents assumed an authoritative stance. Some of them asked me great details about what information I was seeking from them, and what I exactly was planning to do with it. In some case I was required to show them my curriculum vitae. Secondly, my field work in Korea was also different from orthodox

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of power relation in interviewing men, see Deborah Lee, 1997.

ethnography, insofar as it took place in Korea where I come from. It was 'same culture' ethnography, in the case of the Korean respondents.

I am aware of the dangers of inequality and potential treachery of the relationship between indigenous people and ethnographic researchers. Judith Stacey argues that the ethnographic method exposes subjects to far greater danger of exploitation than do more positivist, abstract, and 'masculinist' research methods (Stacey, 1991, 113-114).

I have tried to offset and avoid these kinds of dangers in the process of my research. Making the effort to cross social and cultural borders is extremely important in ethnographic research, but at the same time difficult in oral history interviews, in particular, when the interviewer belongs to a different social, ethnic and economic background from the interviewee. At this point my ethnic and gender backgrounds helped me to communicate with the "Comfort Women". The distance which occurs between a third world narrator and a first world interviewer might not have arisen because of a certain level of shared experience, language, culture, colonial history, and of the political point of view of my respondents.

### **3.4 Epistemology**

#### **3.4.1 *Reliability of Experience and Memory***

The methods of testimony and oral history can enable women who are muted to speak out, and can facilitate the interpretation of their experience as much from their own point of view as possible. Eventually, women's experience and their own interpretation of it can be involved in the building up of theory through the use of these methods. Here the issue of reliability or 'objectivity' of experience and



memory is raised. There are certain things that can happen in the process of the interview. Firstly, narrators might omit certain points because:

they wish to safeguard their own interests, or because they are unconsciously influenced by various factors in their social environment, and are thus led to omit certain facts either by mistake, or through deliberate falsification. In particular, failure of memory may also bring about omission and confusion in giving testimonies (Vansina, 1961, 23, 40).

Secondly, their testimony is conditioned by personality, interests, and social values of the society to which they belong.

For those reasons, positivists do not take oral narrative seriously as objective or authentic historical sources. However, first of all, nobody including historiographers and narrators can be free from their social surroundings. Human beings live within society through their relationships with others. The content of written documents are bound to be linked to the interests and social values of their producers, and the purposes for which they were recorded. This is particularly true of the official documents of an authoritarian imperial state. Official documents carry no more guarantees of objectivity than do personal testimonials.

Secondly, the power of memory is a social phenomenon affected by social values not just by brain cells. What is remembered and what not may depend on all kinds of social and personal factors. As James Fentress stresses, 'individual memory is not simply personal; the memories which constitute our identity and provide the context for every thought and action are not only our own, but are learned, borrowed, and inherited' (Fentress, 1992, viii). Memories are complex cultural products, involving private memories and public representations, past experiences and apprehensions of the present situation. Memory is also gendered. Narratives do not exist independently of the collaborative process involved in their collection (Shostak,

1989, 231). Therefore, selective memory also needs to be interpreted in terms of social context, instead of being neglected as unreliable.

The Personal Narrative Group proposes an idea of multiple truths of personal narratives:

Unlike the reassuring truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. Therefore, we come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to them... Generalisation and elevation over truth by using established criteria of validity serve to control: control data, control irregularities of human experiences, and, ultimately, control what constitutes knowledge. In the name of verifiability, reliability, facticity, or representativeness, it inevitably excludes certain experiences that require understanding' (Personal Narrative Group, 1989, 261-262).

In other words, the Group challenges and reconstructs the traditional definitions of truth and reality. Jan Vansina also said, there is no such thing as 'absolute historical truth', and no one can formulate an 'unchanging law of history' on the basis of our knowledge of the past (Vansina, 1961, 102-103). This redefinition of truth and reality may be able to give legitimacy to women's experience and voice. But pluralism often goes hand in hand with relativism. In the sensitive issue of uncovering, 'what really happened' to the "Comfort Women", which is exercising courts of law, such relativism may be felt to be less than satisfactory.

To cope properly with oral narratives, the most important thing is to elicit unrevealed history in terms of the narrators' own views and experiences. If they omitted, exaggerated, or overestimated/understated something in their narrative story, the reasons for that should be looked for and analysed by the researcher, rather than undermining the authenticity of their testimonies and labelling those stories as unreliable or untrue.



### 3.4.2 *Women's Experience*

Women's experience tends to be invalidated and ignored in terms of objectivity and particularity in the positivist framework. As Anderson (1987) points out, women's experience contributes to the structuring of social institutions. In a discussion of women's experience, Stanley and Wise disagree that the personal is limited because of its particularity and is merely the product of the person whose 'personal' it is (Stanley and Wise, 1983, 53, 83).

Subjective/objective and personal/political can not be sharply separated. They are inherently overlapping, so that personal experience is not only the product of the particular person but reflects the society she/he lives in. As Judith Wittner argues, each individual woman's experience is situated in its social and historical setting. I stress the revaluation of women's experience in the contextualisation of history and knowledge. Kum-Kum Bhavnani argues that both individual experiences and objective knowledge are created and informed by each other (Bhavnani, 1993, 43). Therefore, women's personal experience should be regarded as a core resource for the production of knowledge in history.

In a discussion of theory, Stanley and Wise emphasise that there is a continual contradiction between women's involvement in everyday experience and the 'language of theory'. There is a power relationship between theory and experience, and one consequence is that women are not only alienated from theory but also experience itself (Stanley and Wise, 1983, 163). Learning about women's invisible and neglected areas of experience helps to formulate better social theories (Anderson *et.al.*, 1987, 106). Women's experience can be used as an invaluable source for building up and reconstructing the content of knowledge with testimony and oral history, which are significant methods adapted to women's experience. For example,

the personal experiences of the "Comfort Women" develop a perception and awareness about sexual violence, war and colonial policy. These are important to build up the theory of colonialism and gender. Therefore, experience and theory are interdependent.

In the procedure of producing and reconstructing theory, it is important to interpret women's experience, spoken and unspoken, within its social, historical and ideological context. Anderson and Jack stress that women often silence their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conventions (Anderson and Jack, 1991, 11). For women, the ability to value their own thought and experience is hindered by self-doubt and hesitation when private experience seems at odds with cultural myths and values concerning how a woman is 'supposed' to think, feel and behave (Anderson, *et.al.*, 1987, 102-103). Whilst giving their own story, my "Comfort Women" respondents often speak obliquely rather than choosing specific words to indicate their experience, particularly sexual experience. The meaning of their words could be understood only by the context. A phrase which recurs in their accounts is 'I cannot describe' or 'they are unspeakable acts'.

Their muteness for so long concerning their experience caused them this difficulty to express their experiences, suffering, and anger. The women have little language in which to relate the atrocity. Masculinist language primarily reflects male experience and point of view, and the language of sexual acts is very androcentric. The meaning of having sex is to have intercourse, it does not matter if it is with the women's own will or against her will. The meaning of sexual intercourse is to penetrate. The language they used to depict their experience offers insight into the construction of their subjectivity. Within the frame of male experience and



androcentric language, it is hard for women to express their experience of sexuality. The other reason why the women's experiences have been inexpressible is that Japanese colonialism attempted to strip away 'their identity, or their capacity to construct a narrative' from the women (Funkenstein, 1993, 24). Silence is enforced in the situation of oppression, exploitation, dehumanisation and atrocity.

Thus, I argue that the women's silence stands as much in need of interpretation as their speech. Silence may be eloquent. In the Korean context, based on Confucianism, people rarely like to talk about their own personal sexual history to others especially in public. Sexual experience is considered a fairly sensitive and personal topic, especially to the survivors' generation. What made the women keep silent and who has benefited from the women's silence about the "Comfort Women" programme? Through presenting their experience with their own words, subjectivity can be recovered and reclaimed from the silence, as they become subjects of their own stories. While the theories and research methodologies in conventional social sciences have treated human beings as mere objects of study, it is essential to take into account consideration of both the narrator's voice and their silence.

In the process of interpretation of women's experiences, the relationship between the narrator and the researcher also intervenes affecting the willingness to speak, or to hold back. The Personal Narrative Group suggests that the most significant thing in the process of interpretation is 'to take consideration of the narrators' own self-definitions as they talked about their lives, in contrast to definitions imposed by interpreters of personal narratives and by the narrators' own society' (Personal Narratives group, 1989, 12). On top of reading, 'the narrator's own definition, the researcher's own involvement in interpretation cannot be eschewed' (Stanley and Wise, 1983). The role of the researcher is not only

descriptive, or neutral transcription. The process of analysis would be a process of finding the narrator's and the researcher's self-positioning.

Interviewing the Japanese men led me to think of my identity in terms of gender and nationality. In particular it foregrounded my national identity. One episode in a seminar on national identity illustrates this. One participant suggested that it would not matter where we come from. Nationality need not matter. Sometimes this logic is dangerous as it could be used by the oppressor to make the oppressed assimilate, or to give a falsely united identity as a member of a society from which the oppressor comes, as will be seen in the case of the "Comfort Women" in this study. On the other hand, it would be useful to promote solidarity beyond an ethnic or ethnic oriented interest. Yet people who share the same nationality, gender, race, or class do not necessarily hold the same view. For instance, there was an objection against the scheme to erect a stone monument in memory of the dead "Comfort Women" in Korea, from an organisation of Korean veterans, who saw the episode only in terms of national shame<sup>40</sup>. I had to ask myself while doing my research on the politically sensitive issue of "Comfort Women", whether where I come from would matter for me in doing this research. To a certain extent, being Korean has strongly influenced to my study of the issue.

Similarly, my gender identity is influential in my work on this issue, too. In a sense, my position as a woman is a privileged one in doing this research. Whether I was alone or accompanied affected the encounter with my informants. In one instance, the presence of a man made both the former "Comfort Woman" and myself

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<sup>40</sup> To take another example, there is a male Korean banker in his 40s who hesitated to sign a petition sheet to ask the Japanese government for apology and compensation. He thought that asking financial compensation from the Japanese government transformed, the women into prostitutes retrospectively.



feel uncomfortable and inhibited us from discussing what happened at a comfort station. How would it be possible for male researchers to undertake this kind of project on sexual violence? From my experience as a counsellor helping women to cope with sexual violence, I found that women alone could share their story in a more intensive way: because most survivors of sexual violence are reluctant to tell their story to men.

Stanley and Wise's argument that 'it is inevitable that the researcher's own experiences and consciousness will be involved in the research process. Their experiences are an integral part of the research' (Stanley, 1983, 48-50). This is fully borne out by my research experience. The researcher is an active participant involved in distinctive ways with the shaping and focusing of a personal narrative. Narrators who participate in interviews also have their own motives for doing so. Therefore, testimony and oral history must be regarded as springing from both the narrator and the researcher. Therefore, I argue that gender, nationality, ethnicity, class, perspective, and experience have an influence on the research. The subject-position of a researcher tends to influence the epistemology and the research methods that structure the research design and execution.

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## 4 STORIES OF THE "COMFORT WOMEN"

I will weave women's own narratives of their experiences as "Comfort Women" in this chapter based on my interviews and their testimonies already released. This chapter starts with the ways in which the women were recruited and transported to the comfort stations and then their family background will be probed. Secondly, I will outline aspects of daily life in comfort stations such as sexual initiation, routinisation of sexual and physical violence and its effects, prostitutionalisation. Thirdly, relationships between the soldiers and the "Comfort Women", and contestation and resistance will be explored. Finally I will weave stories of their life in the end of the war and its aftermath.

Their narratives are primarily about their anger and pain, the pain of having gone through the repeated rapes and brutality inflicted on their bodies by the soldiers. The inexpressibility of pain and humiliation have been repeatedly stressed by many of the women: 'how can I find any words to describe it' (testimonies of Mun Pilgi, Chun Kumwha, and Kim Eunrae, interviewed in 1992 and 1995); 'how can I recount everything that I was subjected to in words?' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Ha Sunnyo, 61). There do not seem to be words for the severe and prolonged pain. Elaine Scarry (1985) talks about the inexpressibility of physical pain, too<sup>41</sup>. She discusses the impoverished language of physical pain, and also the ways in which it destroys language and identity. The physical and emotional pain the "Comfort Women" endured resists verbal objectification. Their subalterns' voices might not be

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<sup>41</sup> Scarry refers only to physical pain, and the pain of the "Comfort Women" was not only physical.



able to be heard in ordinary language as a result of their being muted for longer than 50 years.

#### 4.1 Recruitment and Transportation

The girls who were targets for the recruitment of the "Comfort Women" were single teenagers, ranging from those who were still children, as young as twelve, to those of 'childbearing age'<sup>42</sup>. A former Japanese teacher in Korea during the Japanese colonial period, reports being instructed to recruit 'healthy girls from poor families' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 65). In accordance with prostitution laws, the minimum age for prostitutes was eighteen in Japan and seventeen in Korea (Yamashida, 1991, 228). However, most comfort station regulations give no age limits. The vast majority of women taken were between fourteen and nineteen years old, demonstrating a Japanese preference for women under twenty (Chung, 1997, 228). According to the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children which Japan ratified in 1925, using women under age of 21 for prostitution was illegal (Suzuki, 1994, 96-126; Kang Chung-sook, 1997, 222). But colonies such as Korea and Taiwan were excluded from the Convention. Many Korean "Comfort Women" were under this age limit.

The recruitment of young Korean girls for "Comfort Women" had been carried out in several ways. One was conscription in the name of *Yojachongsindae* (the Women's Volunteer Labour Corps). In the case of Kim Un-chin, even though she was first recruited in the name of the voluntary corps through her school, she was later sent to a comfort station (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 239). Many girls among

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<sup>42</sup> Li Kyung-seng was 12 years old when she was taken to a comfort station (*Jainihon chosen*, 1992, 16). Yun Chong-ok, reports in her paper that according to testimonies of the former "Comfort Women", most of them were taken to comfort stations at the age of 17 (Yun Chong-ok, 1997, 278).

the Women's Volunteer Labour Corps had been taken to comfort stations instead of doing ordinary physical labour (testimony of Kang Tokkyong, interviewed in 1992). The National Mobilisation Law (*Kokka sodoin ho*)<sup>43</sup> was passed by the Diet in March 1938. The conscription it authorised was mainly enforced towards the end of WWII with massive mobilisation of Koreans through educational institutions and councils. Japanese primary school teachers in Korea were involved in recruitment of *Chongsindae* (the Voluntary Corps). A former Japanese teacher at Pangsang Elementary School in Seoul, Ikeda Masae, admitted publicly that she had recruited six girls from relatively poor families from her class (*Hangyore Sinmun*, January, 14, 1992). School principals who succeeded in sending a large number of girls to the war front were rewarded with promotion (*Donga Ilbo*, January 14, 1992; *Choson Ilbo*, January 15, 1992, cited in Choi, 1992, 99). This method of recruitment has been confirmed by former "Comfort Women". Kang Tokkyong said:

I joined the first Women's Volunteer Labour Corps and was packed off to Japan, in June 1944, when I was still in the first year of classes. My teacher was Japanese, and he came to me and told me to join the Corps, saying I would be able to continue my study and earn money at the same time' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 177; interviewed in 1992<sup>44</sup>).

There seemed to have been an allocation of quotas for respective provinces in Korea to recruit the women. For example, Hwang Kumju said that in Hamhung, where she was living, now North Korea, girls were drafted from each family to send to ammunition factories (interviewed in 1995).

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<sup>43</sup> The National Mobilisation Law authorised emergency measures, providing among other things for the direction of labour and materials, the regulation of wages and prices, government operation of certain industries, even a compulsory savings scheme and a system of national registration (Beasley, 1963, 253).

<sup>44</sup> Whenever I write 'interviewed in', it refers to interviews conducted by me.



The second method was that of hijack. Mun Okchu was grabbed and taken away to Manchuria in China by a man in a Japanese military uniform in 1940 (Mun Okchu, interviewed in 1995). There is testimony from the Japanese side as well. Yoshida Seiji, a former chief of the National Service Labour Recruitment branch office in Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi Prefecture during WWII, has written a book on his experiences of wartime drafting of "Comfort Women" by force. He has admitted that between 1942 and 1945, with assistance of the Japanese police, he had 'hunted' - mostly in the *Cholla* province - approximately 5,000 Koreans, including 1,000 Korean women aged 18 to 30, and handed them over to the Japanese Imperial Army in Shimonoseko (Yoshida, 1983).

Thirdly, deceit through an 'employment' agency was widely engaged in the recruitment of the girls. In many cases they were lured with the prospect of well-paid jobs, good education, plenty of food and a new better life abroad. An advertisement to recruit "Comfort Women" appeared in the newspaper, *Maeil sinpo* in 1944 (*Maeil sinpo*, 27 October 1944). For girls from poor families these deceptive inducements looked attractive. They were recruited as cleaners, cooks, waitresses, secretaries, entertainers, and nurses for the forces, as para-military personnel, and voluntary corps (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 90).

Another common method had been trafficking by their families, employers or private agencies, without their knowing what was happening to them (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997: testimonies of Jin Kyong-paeng and Pak Yoni, 20). Some Korean women were even sold to the Japanese by their fathers, or husbands. This clearly reveals the status of a daughter in a family as expendable. Daughters were, in some cases, persuaded even by their own families to offer themselves to save their fathers and brothers from being conscripted into the Japanese army or to work in the

coal mines and other forms of slave labour in Manchuria and Kyushu, Japan (Chai, 1993, 70). Yang points out that the Korean patriarchal family was not always a shelter which protected women from the economic and social hardships that served as a backdrop for entrapment and recruitment (Yang, 1997, 65).

There were basically two avenues of recruitment of the women - one was through military or local authorities, the other was through traffic markets (Kang Chung-sook, 1997, 219). Whatever the routes of mobilisation, recruitment was without consent. Both routes were more or less controlled and supervised by agents of the Japanese imperial state. While the recruitment was carried out by civil agencies in many cases, the Japanese Imperial Army screened and selected the agencies. It must also be noted that for reasons ranging from intimidation to personal gain, some Koreans co-operated with the Japanese authorities and acted as 'recruiters' of women (Dolgopol, 1994, 27, 43). Police and military police co-operated to take Korean girls by force (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 91). Many of the women gave testimony of the presence and involvement of the military police or the police when they were taken. Noh Soo-Bock testified that she was told by a Japanese policeman that she was chosen to be sent abroad as a representative of the Emperor (Asian Women, 1996, 9).

In Japanese colonies, in Korea and Taiwan, the Ministry of the Japanese Army gave orders, and military police, the police and local private agencies carried out the recruitment of women in co-operation with each other. In order to overcome problems caused by forced recruitment in the abduction of Korean girls, which had negative effects on the prestige of the army, the War Ministry gave two orders in 1938: firstly, the recruitment of the "Comfort Women" should be fully regulated by the army, and the people in charge of the recruitment must be chosen carefully.



Secondly, in the processes of the recruitment, there must be close co-operation with the police in the region concerned (Yoshimi, 1992, 32, 99-106).

The transport of the girls to comfort stations was strongly supported and actively organised by the Japanese forces in several ways. Different sources give accounts of escorting the girls<sup>45</sup> and the use of military equipment and accommodation, for example by train<sup>46</sup>, naval ships<sup>47</sup>, or military trucks<sup>48</sup>. The women were herded onto places for military supplies, such as the tail compartment of a train, or the bottom level of a ship (Nishino, 1992, 53), since women had no official place in the Japanese military except as nurse. While they were transported to the Pacific islands there was a note in the ships warning 'no using on board' - which means having sex with the women on board was banned (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 57). When the women were allocated to each unit, their names were written on papers under the titles of 'distribution of supplies', and 'receipt of supplies' (*ibid.*, 67).

It should be pointed out that the employment of military transportation needed the sanctioning of the headquarters, because civilians had not been allowed on board naval ships. The army provided transportation even when civilians transferred women, and all civilians needed an official pass to leave the country and travel abroad (Chung, 1997, 228). In addition, recruitment costs of "Comfort Women" had been paid from a provisional budget of respective expeditionary forces according to

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<sup>45</sup> Mun Pilgi and Yun Turi were escorted to Manchuria by the Japanese forces (interviewed in 1992).

<sup>46</sup> Hwang Kumju was taken to Jilin in China by a military train (interviewed in 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Mun Okchu, Yi Sunok, Yi Tungnam were taken to Rangoon, to Singapore, and to Sumatra, respectively, by naval ships (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 156, 175, 204).

<sup>48</sup> Mun Okchu was transported by military trucks in Rangoon and in Thailand (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 158, 97, 156, 175, 204, 160).

Senda Kako (Senda, 1981, 84). There was, clearly, a systematic involvement of the military and the state in the process of recruitment and transportation of the "Comfort Women".

## 4.2 Family Background

Most of the former "Comfort Women" came from poor families. During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Korea was exploited to the point of destitution and even starvation. Most of the land was taken away from farmers by the colonial government as referred to in the introduction chapter. The colonised women of poor origin especially were more vulnerable to force, or to deceit with money, because they had less power.

Some of the "Comfort Women" came from single parent families, especially single mother families, as in Kim Tokchin's case. She left home to reduce the burden to only one child to feed, and to earn some money. She ended up at a comfort station (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 41-42). Another vulnerable group were orphan girls, who were even more powerless (*ibid.*: testimony of Yi Yongsuk, 50). Even where there were parents, however, there was often virtually no father as a breadwinner in the family - they were alcoholics, gamblers, or ill (testimony of Chun Kumwha, interviewed in 1993; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 65). These fathers did not support their families who remained poor in this situation.

Another interesting observation among "Comfort Women" is that many of them were the oldest daughters in their families, and may have felt some responsibility to support their families (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 134). Daughters, especially the oldest ones, tended to be considered as profitable resources or scapegoats for the family among the poor. Daughters of the



poor often worked as living-in maids for other families. Some of the girls were maids when they were taken away to a comfort station. Hwang Kumju tells her story:

In Hamhung, Japanese officers went around telling each family to send at least one daughter to the army ammunition factory. Three daughters of my foster parents[my employer] were studying in school or college. My employer's wife was worried. I therefore offered to go in place of those girls. I felt obliged to repay the kindness shown by my employer to me. I therefore suggested that I be allowed to go, in order to earn more money and improve my economic situation. (Dolgopol, 1994, 93; interviewed in 1995).

Girls in a *kisaeng* school were another target group for the recruitment, like Kim Haksun and Hong Ejin (Kim Haksun, interviewed in 1992; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 44). They were trained at a *kisaeng* school, to become entertainers who sang, danced and generally served men at banquets. The female entertainers, *kisaeng* were another vulnerable group, because they belonged to no particular man to be 'protected' in a patriarchal Confucian family system. Most *kisaeng* also came from poor families.

Although poor women used to be particularly vulnerable, there are exceptions. Not all the women who were pressganged into this 'service' as "Comfort Women" were poor. Some were taken for political reasons. Daughters from families who were involved in the Korean independence movement were another target group for "Comfort Women" (testimonies of Chung So-un and Yun Soon-Man, *Ajia Taihen* 1997; Yun, 1997, 50-51; Dolgopol, 1994, 78).

The rich were not always exempt, but the majority of "Comfort Women" were taken from the poor. There are occasional examples of women who were from rich families<sup>49</sup>, (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Sangok, 124; Dolgopol,

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<sup>49</sup> There are cases testifying that daughters of those who worked for the Japanese colonial government, for example a town mayor and a government officer, were taken to comfort stations.

1994: testimony of Kim Sang-Hi, 99), but these cases seem to be exceptional. Daughters of low class powerless groups in Korean society during the Japanese colonial period were prime targets for the "Comfort Women" programme. The majority of Korean women taken for military sexual slavery were from the rural lower classes, possibly to minimise any social unrest occurring as a result of the mobilisation (Chung, 1997, 228). Thus, an aspect of class was involved in the issue of "Comfort Women".

### 4.3 Sexual Initiation

Coercion undoubtedly played a role in the sexual initiation of "Comfort Women". The initiation usually took the form of rape, in most of the cases by officers at their first destination. Kim Haksun reported that:

We weren't aware of that was going on and couldn't even guess where we were... He (an officer) dragged me off and held me close to him, trying to take my clothes off at the same time. I struggled, but in the end my clothes were all torn away. He took my virginity. During the night he raped me twice (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 34-35).

As in her case, the girls taken away to comfort stations had no idea that they were to be subject to this sexual coercion. Many of them showed resistance against being raped.

Violence was commonplace in this initiation: for example, tearing away their clothes, slapping, frightening with a knife, a sword, or a pistol or beating (testimony of Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 43). The women must have been overwhelmingly terrified when they were raped with intensive violence. This initiation has been described as 'tearing away virginity' (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Chong Song Myong, 105; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 137) or 'hurting body' (*Hanguk*



*chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Taeson, 155), a phrase which graphically illustrates the violence of the initiation. Lack of knowledge about sexual intercourse is disclosed in the women's narratives: most of them were without previous experience of sexual intercourse. One former "Comfort Women", Choe Myongsun, describes the first experience: 'something was entering me, and at first I thought it was his knee' (interviewed in 1992).

Sometimes this sexual initiation took the form of gang-rape, which must have left the girls in despair and humiliation, reducing any further resistance: 'after the officer had finished, the soldiers began to come into her room and raped her repeatedly' (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kang Soon-Ae, 91). Some previous studies on the "Comfort Women" represent the "Comfort Women" system as systematic 'rape by the state' (Suzuki, 1993, 25), 'sexual slavery exclusively for the military' (Kawada, 1995, 5) or 'gang -rape' (Yoshimi, 1995-a, 231).

Forcible sexual initiation of the women was frequently perpetrated by high-ranking officers (Mun Pilgi, interviewed in 1992; Dolgopol, 1994, 95). Only officers were privileged to have virgins in the first place when the "Comfort Women" arrived. A superstitious belief that having sex with a virgin brought good luck was sometimes involved in this sexual initiation. For an officer in the Japanese army to get access to a virgin is sometimes interpreted as bringing them good luck on the battle field, a talisman for the avoidance of death in battle (Hicks, 1995). Here woman's virgin body is attributed almost magical properties. After this initiation the women were forced to serve rank and file soldiers. Hierarchy was maintained even in such brutality (testimony of Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995).

## 4.4 Aspects of Daily Life

### 4.4.1 *Routinisation of Sexual Violence*

After the crisis of sexual initiation, being forced to have sex with the soldiers became an on-going daily routine of the women. Rape became an 'ordinary' everyday experience. One typical sight at comfort stations was that of soldiers queuing up for sex 'their trousers down and underpants already off' (Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995). In such instances, each soldier completed intercourse in three to five minutes as the soldiers waiting for their turn were very impatient of others taking time. A former officer, Suzuki Yoshio reported that, typically, after 5 to 10 minutes the other soldiers would bang on the doors and tell the occupant to hurry up. Many soldiers began to undress outside the door and would come out of the rooms undressed (Dolgopol, 1994, 128). This scene looks very like that of a queue for a toilet. In fact, the women were considered to be sanitary 'public toilets' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 48). In Tanaka Matsu's paper, she states that the word 'public toilet' was also used as the euphemism for these sexual slaves for 'sanitary use'<sup>50</sup>. The women were treated as objects to excrete into: disposable objects used to meet the sexual needs of many men. The use of this imagery exemplifies in graphic fashion the belief that men's sexual needs are as basic as the need to excrete. The routinised on-going sexual exploitation of the bodies of the women constitutes the destruction of their integrity as human beings. Most of the women recall their life at comfort stations as 'less than that of an animal' (Chun Kumwha, interviewed in 1993).

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<sup>50</sup> Tanaka Matsu, 1970, *Benjo gara no Kaiho* (Liberation from the toilet) (originally a pamphlet) Shiro, eds. Miki et al. (eds.) (1992-1995) vol.1 : *Series*, eds., Ueno et al. (1994-1995), vol.1, cited in Ueno, 1996-c, 175-176.



#### 4.4.2 *Rhythms of Daily Life: the Weekends*

Nevertheless rhythms of everyday life were established. There was a pattern of what happened punctuated by daytime and night-time, weekend and weekday, before battle and after battle, or when a military ship came into harbour and after the ship left. In the 'ordinary' routine, rank and hierarchy were maintained. Separate times were allocated for use of the comfort stations to soldiers and officers.

We started to serve soldiers from around 9.00 a.m., straight after breakfast. The rank and file stopped coming at around 4.00 p.m., and then officers would come until 10.00 at night. After that, some officers stayed through the night (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Mun Okchu, 110).

One of the important factors which created a pattern in the daily lives of the "Comfort Women" was the military schedule of the forces: expeditions, combats, moving, and holidays: 'when the soldiers were away on an expedition it was nice and quiet, but once they returned then they would come to our rooms in a continuous stream' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 66). There was a different pattern at weekends and weekdays. Most of the former "Comfort Women" recalled painfully, that they had to get through harder times at weekends since more soldiers frequented the comfort stations from 9.00 in the mornings until midnight or over night (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 99). The women often did not even get time to eat, so they ate meals lying on the bed (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 48; Yi Yongsuk's testimony, interview in 1996). Pak Sunae describes that what weekends with the soldiers were like: 'we normally wore dresses, but on busy days we had no time or energy to bother to wear pants. My abdomen swelled and my womb throbbed' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 162). Son Pan-im, recalls that she felt like she was entering a slaughterhouse when weekends were approaching (*Hanguk*

*chongsindae*, 1997, 69). This weekend exhaustion is confirmed by a Japanese veteran, Matsumoto:

The woman I had on that day had been already very busy and served numerous soldiers on that Sunday. When I entered into her room, she seemed too exhausted even to sit up. She was almost falling asleep (Matsumoto, pseudonym, interviewed in 1996).

The pattern of exhaustion and recovery of the men was inversely related to that of the "Comfort Women": for the women, exhaustion at weekends, (relative) recovery during the week, in inverse relationship to the work and 'leisure' of the soldiers.

As comfort stations were supported and supervised by the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy, the forces supplied everyday necessities and, in some cases, meals. The Japanese soldiers brought rice and other groceries (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 37, 278, 220). In some cases, "Comfort Women" took their meals in an army canteen, and the soldiers cooked for them (testimony of Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995). Toward the end of the war, they also suffered from lack of food and everyday necessities.

#### **4.4.3 An Ostensible Form of Prostitution (Prostitutionalisation)**

Ample evidences of sexual violence as seen in the previous section dispel any claim that the "Comfort Women" were willing participants in some kinds of prostitution. The programme amounted to systematic and brutal rape. The label 'sexual slavery' may appear sensational, but is no more than an accurate description of what was endured by these women. There was no consent by the women to serve the soldiers sexually. Moreover, coercion, confinement, or isolation were deeply implicated in the comfort station programme. From the point of view of the women, it was clearly sexual violence rather than prostitution.



In spite of this, the "Comfort Women" system has been assumed to have been a form of prostitution since the system imitated in some respects that of licensed prostitution in modern Japan. In fact, the organisation of daily life in comfort stations was like that in brothels: allowing the men to choose their favourite one among those lining up (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Sunok, 120), and the men paying for having sex, which can usually be observed in brothels. Yi Yongsuk, an ex-"Comfort Woman", recollects the practice of being sat on a chair after tidying up to be selected by a military 'customer'. The women's name tags or numbers were attached to the wall. In some comfort stations, the women were identified with numbers; every woman had her own number and the soldiers made a line up in front of the room where the number plate he had chosen was hanging (Suzuki, 1992, 130).

Concerning payment, most "Comfort Women" testify that they were paid virtually no money, even though the military personnel paid for sex. According to regulations presented in the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Research Report: Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces in 1945, 50-60% of their gross takings was theoretically supposed to be allocated to the women (Allied Translator, 1945). However, costs for food, clothes, medical treatment and other daily necessities were charged to the women, especially when the women caught any sexually transmitted diseases. They had to pay expensive costs for medical treatment, for example in China (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 43, 108). In addition, it was common practice to retain a substantial part of their wages, if there were any, as part of a compulsory savings programme, or simply to extend the initial employment contract (Yang, 1995, 35, 42). Part of their compulsory savings went for military

expenses, for example to buy military planes<sup>51</sup> (*Hanguk chongsindae* 1997: testimony of Bae Chok-gan, 178). So there was virtually no money left in their hands. This underlines the fact that it was a deal between proprietors of comfort stations and the forces. Fees were determined by regulations and were primarily paid with tickets sold to the troops prior to their visit.<sup>52</sup>

We collected these tickets and gave them to the manager, who recorded them in his notebook each day. He promised to improve our conditions once Japan won the war, but we received no wages (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 46).

The women were controlled and regulated by punishments and rewards depending on the numbers of ‘customers’ they served. Typical punishments were being beaten, confined, being given no food supply for a while, or threatened with being sold and sent to a private brothel. Pak Yoni reports that the number of soldiers she ‘served’ was counted at the end of each day, and she was punished by the keeper of the comfort station when she had not served enough men (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 125). On the other hand, some prizes such as a gold ring, better food, better treatment, sweets, or ‘promotion’, were offered when they ‘served’ more men. A divide-and-rule principle was employed to control the women. A sense of rivalry and competition was created among the women by grading them according to the numbers of men served. In some cases, like Bae Chok-kan, the women were given ranks like the military men in accordance with the duration of their stay in a comfort station. Senior ranking women could punish others (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 177-

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<sup>51</sup> Pak Yoni recalls that her income was put into a bank account and she believed the saving scheme. But after the war the account book turned out to be just a sheet of paper (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 132).

<sup>52</sup> *Shireibu, Daini-gun jokyo gaiyo* (General Situation of the Second Army), 10 December, 1938, cited in Chung, 1997, 229.



178). Pak Yoni reports the hierarchical system among the "Comfort Women": the new comers had to be submissive to seniors. The subordinates were trained in how to serve the men, for instance how to use condoms and to clean themselves, by the seniors (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 124).

A prime source of the hierarchical order was the rank of the men whom the women 'served'. This male hierarchy was reproduced among the women, transmitting prestige and hierarchy to the women. Access to high-ranking officers in the military made a difference in the daily lives of the women. Their place in the ladder of hierarchy determined which, but also how many men the women had to serve in their daily routine. The Japanese "Comfort Women" who mostly served officers did not have to serve as many men as other women. The result of this discrimination was to divide and rule thus fostering disunity among "Comfort Women".

#### **4.4.4 *Rhythms of War, Rhythms of Violence***

According to the "Comfort Women", there was a pattern of violence before and after battles which seems to have produced and released military aggression. This pattern of violence before and after combat was presented by Hwang Kumju: 'the men were even more cruel; they were savage. Those who knew they were about to go into combat were even worse. It was simply unbearable' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 77; interviewed in 1995). As Nishino reports, this was especially so when the men's colleagues were killed in the battle. The soldiers killed immediately any Chinese they saw on the way back to their camp. Their aggression and tension reached to the limit. At this moment, sex with "Comfort Women" was provided to relieve their aggression (Nishino, 1992, 77).

The most common form of violence was beating. Choe Myongsun said that she was beaten so much that she seemed to lose her spirit - she just lay like a corpse, with her eyes open but not focused on anything (interviewed in 1992). Bae Bong-ki recalled there was no freedom at all even to die (Kawada, 1987, 84). Violence was used by the soldiers and comfort station keepers to subdue the women. When any "Comfort Women" were rebellious, they were more harshly beaten (Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995). Even when the women complied they were often beaten. Beatings became one of their routines:

We were beaten almost every day. If we looked at the moon, we were hit as the soldiers asked what we were thinking of. If we talked to ourselves they hit us again, saying we must be swearing at them (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Hwang Kumju, 76).

Attacking the women's private parts was another form of violence, one which gave the women more humiliation, for example, placing burning cigarettes on the pelvis and stabbing the genitals (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kang Soon-Ae, 89).

Sexualised humiliation was inflicted, for example being forced to keep the men hard orally (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Haksun, 36). One of the most extreme forms of violence at a comfort station involved murder attempts, for example Mun Okchu and Yi Saunnok were stabbed with a sword by drunken soldiers (Mun Okchu, interviewed in 1992; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Sunok, 119). Alcohol and violence were prohibited by regulation, but this regulation was not strictly followed. Alcohol often appeared to trigger the soldiers' violent behaviours. Drink must have been a means to temporarily escape from fear of death or from the tough life of the soldiers.



## 4.5 Woman as Body

Women's experience is often constituted around their body or body image. To be particularly beautiful is traditionally seen as an advantage, giving access to more resources or prestige. In the situation faced by the "Comfort Women", beauty merely compounded their misfortunes:

More soldiers came to me than to the other women because I was pretty when I was young. Therefore, it was extremely painful for me to have to serve more soldiers (Chun Kumwha, interviewed in 1993).

The women's bodies were injured not only by violence but also by diseases and unwanted pregnancy. The women's bodies had been jeopardised by illness such as malaria especially in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, venereal diseases, malnutrition and overwork at comfort stations (*Jainihon chosen*, 1992, 7). The women were, most notably, at high risk of catching venereal diseases from the military men. Syphilis and gonorrhoea reached epidemic proportions. The Japanese military provided the comfort stations with condoms and emphasised the importance of sanitary conditions, yet despite these efforts, venereal diseases were rife among the "Comfort Women". Ebado, a Japanese veteran, reported that some of soldiers who had venereal diseases forced the "Comfort Women" to have sex without a condom as they asserted that if they transferred the disease to others then they would be cured (interviewed in 1996). The infection sometimes resulted in death (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 67). When the women caught a serious disease, they were sold to civilian brothels for example, in Indonesia and China, or were discarded (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 108). When they were first taken to the comfort station, they did not have any venereal diseases as most of them had not had any experience of sexual intercourse. After an initial examination for the

diseases, compulsory periodical genital examinations of the women conducted by the military doctors have been mentioned in most of the testimonies given by “Comfort Women” and the Japanese veterans.<sup>53</sup> The bodies of the women were regularly checked and reported on by the agents of the Japanese state. All of the women’s names were listed in order to control and classify their medical states. The results were broadcast to every regiment with ratings for each woman (Dolgopol, 1994, 33; Mita Kazo, interviewed in 1996). This practice of regulation did little to check the spread of venereal diseases.

To add insult to injury, when the women caught the diseases they were beaten and condemned for being polluted even though they caught the diseases from the men. Chun Kumwha asked, pointedly, ‘why were we responsible for the disease when the Japanese soldiers were the ones who had transferred it to us?’ (interviewed in 1994). The treatment for disease was almost as painful as the infection. A military doctor, Yuasa Ken, reported that shot ‘No.606’, an antibiotic containing mercury and arsenic (Salvarsan), was very strong and had major side effects (interviewed in 1996). The “Comfort Women” were forced to inject the ‘No.606’, which worked to cure sexually transmitted diseases and to prevent pregnancy (Choi, 1997, ix). Yi Yongsuk, a former “Comfort Woman”, points out that attempts at protection of the women from sexually transmitted diseases were solely for the purpose of retaining the soldiers’ strength for combat, rather than for the women’s sake (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 53).

Pregnancy, always a risk in such circumstances, made the women’s life even more difficult. In most cases where women fell pregnant, they had to get abortions

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<sup>53</sup> For instance, Yoshioka and Nakano (interviewed in 1996), Kim Haksun, Yi Sunok, Yi Sangok, Yi Tungham, and Bae Bong-ki (*Hanguk chongsindae* 1993, 1995; Kawada, 1987, 85; Senda, 1992-a, 102).



(*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 45). Hong Ejin endorses the enforcement of abortion when her pregnancy was found out by the keeper of the comfort station. At that time her womb was removed (*Hanguk chongsindae* 1995, 48). Medical staff in the forces carried out abortions (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996; Nishino, 1992, 94-95). In other cases, the women were sent somewhere else (Senda, 1992-a, 157). The whereabouts and fates of those women remained in general unknown. The military were not interested in the babies, as the women were only for sex. Getting an abortion under the circumstances of lack of medicine and facilities was hazardous. Some died while having abortions (Yun Turi, interviewed in 1992).

In some cases, like Song Sin-do's, a baby was born and adopted by a Chinese local (Yang, 1995, 37). Some "Comfort Women" who were pregnant attempted to kill themselves (Yun Turi, interviewed in 1992). The women's lack of knowledge of sexuality due to their youth and inexperience resulted in having to give birth as in Midori's case:

Midori became pregnant. Without knowing, she kept on serving soldiers until she became noticeably larger. It was too late to abort, and she had to give birth. She then had to continue to work and had someone else look after the baby, but it died of sickness after just eight months (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 139).

Female menstrual cycles were totally disregarded at comfort stations. At some comfort stations, there was a regulation banning the women from contact with the men during their period (Allied Translator, 1945, 11), however, many survivors have reported that they had to 'serve' the soldiers during menstruation. Some recall this as one of the toughest things to endure (Mun Pilgi, interviewed in 1992). Despite the continuous exploitation during their period, they were in trouble due to lack of sanitary arrangements. Kim Haksun also had to 'serve' the soldiers during her

periods, inserting self-made small cotton balls inside so that no blood leaked out. Lacking cotton for this, she had to cut cloth into small strips and roll this up to use instead (Kim Haksun, interviewed in 1992 and 1993; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 37). The women were deprived of any last bit of dignity at such time by the lack of sanitary protection.

We were given some sort of cotton wool to use during our monthly period. But the supply of cotton stopped after a year, and from then onwards we either stole someone else's sanitary towel as it was drying on the washing line or collected, washed and used gaiters discarded by the soldiers. If we were caught taking the gaiters, we would be beaten up; the soldiers regarded this sort of thing as unlucky (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Hwang Kumju, 75).

The women were in effect treated as disposable 'objects,' to be dispatched when no longer useful for 'serving' the soldiers (Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995), for example, when they were too ill or too weak for sex (Dolgopol, 1994: testimonies of Ri Po Pu and Kang Yong Shil, 109, 114). The women were given no value outside their usefulness as sexual bodies, only the reasonably healthy and disease free were regarded as useful. They were deemed to be dispensable objects. Accordingly, there was no value in a too weak or dead body of the women. Dead bodies were just discarded without burial or ceremony. Not only their bodies but also their dignity were deemed disposable.

If anyone was too weak to work, the receptionist dragged them out and put a more healthy woman in their cubicle. Anyone who died was also carted away to the mountain, the bodies left there, barely covered with grass (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 99).

This gross sexual exploitation was overlaid by the additional exploitation of the women's labour. They were expected to undertake all kinds of work; from sexual slavery to military services, especially towards the end of the war. For example,



cleaning the military bases, washing military uniforms (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 115), cutting and burning hay for camouflage (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimonies of Yi Okpun and Oh Omok, 67, 100), receiving military training with a spear (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997: testimony of Bae Chok-gan, 177), carrying bullet boxes or bombs (Asian Women, 1996: testimony of Noh Soo-Bock, 10; *Hanguk chongsindae* 1997: testimony of Kang Mu-ja, 60), nursing wounded soldiers (Mun Okchu, interviewed in 1992; Dolgopol, 1994: testimonies of Kim Tai Il, Kang Yong Shil, 109, 114), welcoming soldiers from expeditions (Kim Haksun, interviewed in 1992), delivering and serving food for the forces (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 66), entertaining with singing and dancing, making garters after 'serving' the soldiers (Mun Okchu, interviewed in 1992), washing condoms for re-use (Mun Pilgi, interviewed in 1995), waving the men off to war, donating blood for the wounded soldiers, like Kim Pok-dong, (Yun, 1997, 383; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 95) and even spying (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 115).

#### **4.6 Relationships between the Soldiers and the "Comfort Women"**

Two contradictory positionings of the soldiers by the "Comfort Women" are visible in the women's testimonies. One of the images the soldiers held of the "Comfort Women" likened them to 'filthy bitches'. These women also regarded the soldiers as 'crazy dogs' (Dolgopol, 1994: testimonies of Yun Soon-Man, Kang Yong Shil, 79, 109; Chun Kumwha, interviewed in 1993), or 'brutal beasts' (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kang Soon-Ae, 91).

Contrarily, some "Comfort Women" recalled that not all the soldiers were bad and cruel. Bad soldiers were indescribably cruel, but there were sympathetic men. Kang reported one who cried saying he could not help what he was doing as it was

by order of the Emperor (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997: testimony of Kang Mu-Ja, 57). The image of the men she held was that of 'poor things' since the men were beaten and oppressed by their superiors in the army as she was (Kim Eun-rae, interviewed in 1995). In spite of this terrible environment of sexual violence, the "Comfort Women" gave sympathy, since they felt in the same boat in terms of being driven to face death. Hwang Kumju took pity on the soldiers when they cried with her before going out to battle (interviewed in 1995). This might be a sense of sharing of an experience of oppression with people who have less power. Therefore, there is a complexity, a sense of sympathy and hostility, in the relationship between the two different ethnic and gender groups.

Sympathy or generosity towards the women, rather than violence, were shown by some soldiers just about to leave for combat, especially when they anticipated their imminent death. Two contradictory attitudes were displayed in the soldiers facing death: one was being more violent, the other was being generous or nicer.

The soldiers who were about to leave for combat were somewhat more gentle and a few of them would give us their loose change, saying it wouldn't be of any use to them if they died... they were so scared to go to fight. I would comfort them and tell them to come back safely from the battle (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 46).

Among the relatively nice soldiers in the women's memory, who took pity on or had sympathy for them, were those who chatted instead having sex with them at the comfort stations (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 129; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 173). In such cases the women were not predicated as just a body to have sex with. Park Yoni recalled that there were very occasionally sympathetic soldiers who brought sweets or fruits and did not touch her body. She considered them as some consolation in the rough life she had to endure (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 131). In



the circumstances of slavery for the women, being shown even a little affection or sympathy must have been immensely valued. 'Life was so hard that I would plead with any man who seemed like he might be kind-hearted to help send me home on a plane' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Pak Sunae, 162). This sympathy sometimes developed into a personal relationship, creating a respite from the brutality. Kim Tokchin developed a regard for Izue, who loved her as her father, husband, and family rolled into one (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 47). However, there was a mixed feeling toward the men who could sympathise with the "Comfort Woman" like Maria Rosa Henson, the former Filipino "Comfort Woman":

I felt then that only Captain Tanaka understood my feelings. He was the only one who did not hurt me or treat me cruelly. But inside in my heart I was still very angry with him... Although he was not as rough as the others, he still took advantage of me (Henson, 1996, 71-72).

Involvement in personal relationships may often appeared to transform sexual exploitation into romanticisation. Most of the relationships were temporary: when Japan was defeated, most of the women who had personal relationships were deserted, too. Thus, this relationship could have the effect of controlling the women through giving temporary 'pseudo-affection' and romance. Some women attempted to build up relationships with officers as one coping strategy at the comfort stations. I will show details on this case in the next section.

In some places, there were Korean soldiers among the 'customers'<sup>54</sup>. Mun Okchu encountered a Korean man at the comfort station where she worked:

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<sup>54</sup> 400,000-500,000 Korean men were sent to battlefield as soldiers or as low-rank para-military personnel for lowliest tasks, including the guarding of captives during the war. Some of them were charged and convicted after the war for committing crimes against Allied prisoners (Suh, Kyung-sik, 1989, 18; Cook, 1992, 113).

One day, a soldier came into my room sobbing, and he said that he was a Korean and had been drafted to the Marusa Unit. Koreans in the unit brought tickets and condoms just like the Japanese (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 110).

Some Korean soldiers had sex with the "Comfort Women" as she hints, and some did not. Kang Mu-ja told about two Korean soldiers in her room at the comfort station, who pitied her and spent their time talking instead of making her serve them (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 57).

#### **4.7 Contestation and Resistance**

Just being Korean itself was a reason to be despised by the Japanese (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kim Tai Il, 117). Being Korean "Comfort Women" sanctioned more despicable treatment and taunting (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Mun Okchu, 112). They were forced to use Japanese language and names, and garb identifying them as Japanese (Yun Turi, interviewed in 1992). The use of Japanese language, hair style and dress may have been in order to provide a more familiar environment for the Japanese soldiers. They were taught Japanese phrases to greet the soldiers (Pak Sunae, interviewed in 1996). Failure to understand what the men requested might have earned a beating (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 66).

On the other hand, everything related to Korea was systematically rooted out. For example, Korean language, dress, songs, and hair styles. Yi Sangok recalls that she had her long hair bobbed, after her keeper told her that she would be recognised as Korean because of it (Yi Sangok, interviewed in 1992). Using the Korean language or singing Korean songs were banned and punished. This prohibition attempted to silence their voices. In some extreme situations the mother tongue came out like a flood; for example, one of the "Comfort Women" was arrested by the



military police and taken to a court as she had killed a Japanese soldier to protect herself from his attempt to murder her. She explained the details of what happened in Korean, weeping, at the court (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Mun Okchu, 111). Under the repressive circumstances, the women's effort to maintain their identity as a Korean was remarkable. Chatting about Korea in Korean or talking with another Korean and singing Korean songs, especially *Arirang*, which is a traditional Korean folk song, were ways, in the face of repeated violence and humiliation, to generate a bond of unity among the women. When the women felt miserable or homesick, they would sing in unison or hum together quietly (Mun Okchu, interviewed in 1992). Practising sisterhood at the comfort stations consolidated cohesiveness among the women:

If one of us was ill or looked extremely hungry, we would each give them a spoonful from our own bowls behind the backs of the Japanese. But if we were caught sharing food, both sharers and recipients got a severe beating (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 99-100).

Attempts at destroying the Koreanness of the women generated a counter reaction. Korean identity was formed or fortified in that way. Some dared to speak out against the treatment of Japanese soldiers or comfort station keepers:

I didn't like anything made with flour, so I alone ordered rice. It was at this point that I overheard the proprietress saying 'A Korean bitch can't be helped'... After the party was over I kept drinking... I shouted at all the women, asking who had called me a Korean bitch... I told her (the proprietress) that she had no right to treat me differently from the other girls (Japanese "Comfort Women") since I had been brought to this land specifically for her people (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Yongsuk, 55).

Here is another story from Kim Tai Il who was one of the boldest in fighting back when she was humiliated as being Korean. She shouted 'OK. kill me. I am a

Korean. I will show (let you learn) Korean women's spirit. Kill me, kill me!' (*Jainihon chosen*, 1992: testimony of Kim Tai Il, 42).

While the women had to endure routinised sexual violence, there were coping strategies to deal with long term sexual coercion. The coercive and violent structure of the comfort stations weakened the women's resistance. Nonetheless, some women had resisted in several ways, actively or passively. The strategies of resistance were attempted at a multiplicity of levels; for example, escape from the comfort stations; resistance to the soldiers' demands; fighting back; killing the soldiers; suicide attempts; becoming mad; taking drugs or drinking to escape from the harsh reality; cultivating closeness with officers.

First of all, one of the bravest forms of resistance was to attempt to escape. The feeling was that if one way or another they were going to die anyway, they might as well risk death by absconding:

But by nature I am not docile, and my head was full of ideas about ways to escape... Emiko and I discussed many different possibilities... We promised each other to escape together when an appropriate opportunity came (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Haksun, 37).

Most of the attempts at running away failed, since the women were closely scrutinised all the time (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 139). The military documents such as *Tsucho* (military communication), *Jinjunissi* (military daily records) instructed that surveillance of the comfort stations should be carried out by the district military chief and by military police.<sup>55</sup> Jin Kyung-peng said that she was always watched by military police to be kept from running away or suicide. She continued that 'I had no freedom even to die' (*Hanguk chongsindae*,

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<sup>55</sup> References 42 (1938) and 44 (1939) in Yoshimi, 1992, 197-199, and 200-201.



1997, 24). It is reported that the letter 'comfort' was tattooed on either their bellies or arms in some comfort stations in China in order to make the women easily recognisable as "Comfort Women" (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 42).

Another reason for the failure to escape was that most of the comfort stations, especially where there were Korean "Comfort Women", were housed on or very near battle fields. Even if they ran away from a comfort station it might have been more dangerous outside, and they were not able to access help or transportation. Furthermore, there was a language barrier between the women and local people (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Ha Sunnyo, 62). Those who attempted to escape unsuccessfully suffered punishment. Escape attempts were high risk activities. More Korean "Comfort Women" who were taken to Japan or within Korea than to any other areas tried to escape, like Yun Turi (interviewed in 1992). At least they could communicate with local people, and there were Korean people around who could help the women.

Another form of resistance was to refuse the soldiers' excessive demands, or even to use violence against the men. Needless to say, the consequence was always to be unmercifully beaten. There was one case of a "Comfort Woman" defending herself from a threatening soldier with his sword. Mun Okchu attacked him back, ready to die: she reported that she fought back without realising what she was doing: 'I grabbed it and stabbed him in the chest. He was taken away, bleeding. I was arrested by the military police' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Mun Okchu, 111).

One of the most extreme attempts to escape the situation was suicide. Committing suicide may be seen as a passive but powerful form of refusing an oppressive situation. The "Comfort Women" tried to escape the on-going violence on

their bodies by attempting to kill themselves by taking poison such as disinfectant, hairdye, or creosote (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kim Sang-Hi<sup>56</sup>, 101), jumping into the sea, or leaping from a high place. However, their attachment to their origin or the strong wish to return sometimes deterred the women from killing themselves (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Chang Su-Wol, 115; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 140). Some attempted suicide on the way back to Korea after WWII, fearing the social stigma they knew they would face. For example, when Kang Tokkyong learned of her pregnancy she tried to throw herself off the ship as it crossed the sea to Korea (interviewed in 1995).

Another way to resist in an oppressive situation was by becoming mad, which may be seen as a form of resistance and not only of mental illness. Im Kuma presents her experience of becoming mad three months after she arrived at the comfort station, since she found it too 'horrendous' to 'serve' the soldiers (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 104). Some of the women went mad after they returned to Korea (Choe Myongsun, interviewed in 1992).

We may identify coping strategies as well as resistance, such as taking drugs, especially opium, or drinking alcohol (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 105). Li Pong-wha reported that she started to drink and smoke at the comfort station, otherwise she could not get through life (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 90). Choe Il-lye became an opium addict shortly after arriving at a comfort station (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 193). This strategy may have enabled the women to endure and survive their harsh reality. However, sometimes taking excessive amounts of drugs resulted in death (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Ha Sunnyo, 63). Drugs

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<sup>56</sup> Kang Sanghi tried three times to kill herself by drinking creosote liquid. (Lee Sangwha, 1997, 293)



had been tolerated or encouraged by some of proprietors of comfort stations. Chung So-un gives a testimony about drug injection:

When I was too exhausted after being harassed by uncountable soldiers to serve more, then a drug was injected into my arm so I could carry on. Especially on weekends, I had to get an injection before the soldiers came to the comfort station (Yun, 1997, 290 - my translation).

One former officer, Goyama, stated that proprietors were involved in opium dealing and made money out of it with the connivance of the military authority (interviewed in 1995).

An important long-term coping strategy was to keep themselves in a reasonable shape, for example trying not to be infected with sexually transmitted diseases, looking after themselves, and avoiding being beaten (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Tungnam, 138). Noh Soo-Bock told of her survival strategy: she became very obedient. She did everything the soldiers asked her to do (Asian Women, 1996, 10). The ability to live through sexual atrocity may itself be seen as a form of resistance, albeit in this passive form. Less risky strategies included pleading or pretending: pretending to be ill, or pretending to have their period by staining with blood where the regulation of not serving during the period was maintained. Pleading or threatening was sometimes employed to handle the soldiers instead of direct opposition. When the soldiers violated a regulation at comfort stations, for example, not using condoms, the women sometimes resisted by pleading with them to use one and/or threatening to report them to their superiors. Physically hiding themselves somewhere like a backyard or a toilet was a tactic to temporarily avoid the soldiers. However, when they were found they were heavily punished (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 142, 229).

Another strategy was 'going slow' to reduce the number of men they had to serve, for example prolonging the span to serve each man, or to wash themselves in between serving the next man (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 99). Sometimes the women played tricks, pretending to be ill or to have caught sexually transmitted diseases, so they could avoid the routinised harassment for a while:

After one exhausting year at the station, I realised I should look after my own body a little better. Sometimes I would pretend to be ill by stepping on to the examining table without having washed myself. Then I had to go through a period of treatment, during which I didn't have to work (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Yongsuk, 54).

Some pretended to be submissive to avoid violence since physical violence was overwhelmingly threatening to the women. In the face of such brutality, it is not surprising that many women were too terrified to resist. Not showing resistance may be interpreted as a survival strategy:

I was so scared that I did whatever I was told to, and I would even have pretended to die if I had been told to do so. Maybe because of this, the soldiers didn't treat me as cruelly as they could have done (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 46).

Kim Pun-son recalled that 'there was no more occasion to argue since I did as I was asked' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 110).

Displays of violent punishment, such as the murder of a rebellious woman, or the cremation of a woman who killed herself demonstrated to the women the consequences of resistance, in order to deter them from any resistance (Yun Turi, interviewed in 1992). Yi Tungnam told how she had to please Captain Sikai, who was violent, as she felt that she had no power to stop him visiting (*Hanguk*



*chongsindae*, 1993, 138-139). Compliance served long-term survival. The ‘fake-smile’ of the women was used to avoid violence.

If you wanted to survive, you had to be tactful. If we made faces at the men we were taken to a confinement room by the receptionist, so we smiled regardless of whether we felt like doing so (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 99).

However, these stratagems to avoid violence meant that the women internalised and hid their anger or ‘the desire for revenge’ (Yi Yongsu, interviewed in 1996). This does not amount to acquiescence, even though it was so many years before that pent up anger and desire for revenge was expressed. They were silent, because they were silenced.

Whenever any of us were beaten by the soldiers, I used to grind my teeth together, saying to myself; ‘One day I am going to kill you all. I will wipe out your descendants’ (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 101).

Another survival strategy was to get access to power by building a relationship with an officer with the expectation of avoiding being harassed by so many soldiers or getting some help from the officer:

Pretty and intelligent girls were selected for very high-ranking officers and taken into the army unit by car. I was chosen in this way and developed a special relationship with an officer called Izue (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 46).

## **4.8 The End of the War, and its Aftermath**

### **4.8.1 *Being Deserted or Killed***

When the end of the war was approaching, the women had to follow a unit moving or withdrawing to other battlefields or safer areas. In the course of this

withdrawal women suffered from injuries or starvation. Women too wounded to move were sometimes shot (Bang, 1997, 237). Bae Bong-ki recalled a great deal of suffering from starvation, overwhelming even the fear of war: 'common experiences among the women in Okinawa at the end of the war were serious malnutrition from starvation, some suffered nervous breakdowns in the end' (Kawada, 1992, 107-108 - my translation). Most of the women were not informed of the end of the war.

After the surrender by Japan, there were three ways to sort out the "Comfort Women" in the Japanese army. The first was to kill them to cover up the existence of the "Comfort Women" system or for security reasons (*Jainihon choson*, 1992: testimony of Kim Tai Il, 44). Some were killed when they were put into underground shelters which were bombed. Numerous "Comfort Women" were disposed of in this way at the end of the war - for example, a ship full of Korean women who had been told that they were on their way home to Korea was dynamited, and explosives were detonated in a cave after the women had been driven into it (Choi, 1992, 103). The second was to transform them into military nurses to camouflage the existence of the comfort station system from the Allies (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 30; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 79). The last and simplest way to handle the "Comfort Women" was to abandon them. The women in most comfort stations were left behind by the fleeing Japanese soldiers without knowing what happened when the war ended, or left to perish in the jungles, or succumb to starvation.

One evening, there was no call for supper. There seemed to be nobody around, and it was strangely silent. I crept quietly to the dining room and found the place completely deserted. There was not a single human being in sight (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Hwang Kumju, 77).



#### **4.8.2 Diseases, Barrenness or Hysterectomy**

The long term consequences of the ordeal of the "Comfort Women" were trauma or illness such as continuous gynaecological infections, venereal diseases, endometriosis, vaginitis, urethritis, prolapse of the uterus, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, stomach trouble, heart trouble, mental disorders, suicide attempts, insecurity, negative attitudes to men and sex, loss of self-respect, alcohol or drug addiction (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 49; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997: testimony of Kim Un-Chin, 246). According to the results of medical examinations of the former "Comfort Women" in 1996, some of the survivors were still suffering from syphilis caught from the comfort station days (Lee Sang-wha, 1997, 254). Persistent sexual exploitation has left the women 'barren'. Some have had to have hysterectomies (Hwang Kumju, interviewed in 1995). Perception of the value of women have been constituted around women's bodies in a patriarchal society. In this context, 'barren' women have been regarded as worthless in Korean society. This view is sometimes expressed by the women themselves: the women experience their inability to reproduce 'with great regret' or 'resentment' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Sunok and Oh Omok, 1993, 69, 123).

#### **4.8.3 Stigmatisation: 'Damaged Goods'**

The women who survived to return home have been haunted by shame, condemnation, and stigma. They were frequently considered as 'damaged goods' by themselves, by their family and by the society at large. Kim Haksun talked of her bitterness that she did not feel herself to be like other ordinary women. She missed a life free from shame (Kim Haksun, interviewed in 1992). Some of the women have been regarded as a disgrace to their own family by their family, or by their relatives if they know what happened to the women during the war (Mun Okchu, interviewed



in 1992). This has often driven them to leave their family after returning home. In some cases, saving the honour of the family from shame is a priority when the survivors attempt to publicise their ordeal:

I told one of my nephews about my past and asked if I should register at the Council (Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan). He said 'You will only bring trouble on your family and your children will be traumatized.' He pleaded with me not to register. I discussed the matter with another nephew. He wept as he listened to my story and advised me not to register. He said 'It will break your son's heart. What will your stepson in the United States say when he hears all this?' But I felt uneasy and couldn't sleep at all... I told my son about the whole thing, and he wept uncontrollably, saying 'Mother, you have lived so courageously even with such a rough past...' But the wife of my youngest son became despondent, and even my son is now disheartened. I feel very sad and guilty when I see them (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Kim Tokchin, 49).

This social stigma suffered by the women led them to identify themselves as 'damaged goods'. Yun Soon-Man said that she hates herself because she was not given the chance to be a good girl (Dolgopol, 1994, 80). This sense of shame and disgrace surely restrained the women from embarking on marriage or coming forward to give public testimony. Mun Pilgi told that she could not bear the thought of becoming someone's wife, not with her past as a comfort woman to haunt her (interviewed in 1992). In some cases, where they have married, this sense of shame has haunted them and kept them mute, obliging them to accept further injustice: 'he [my husband] had affairs with other women and he tormented me while he was young, but I was in no position to complain' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Choe Myongsun, 175). Some of the women have not married because they developed an aversion to men and sex as a result of the trauma of long term sexual violence. Yun Turi says that she is conscious of the smell of men when they are in the same room (interviewed in 1992). Another woman suggested self-isolation to



handle the stigmatisation and disgrace they experienced from the society they have lived in: 'Okhui (another former "Comfort Woman") used to say that, since we couldn't have children or be married, we should live on our own' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Oh Omok, 69). In a society where women are acknowledged by their reproductive ability, especially by the production of a son, having no children to bury them is regarded as 'a great pity' (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Ri Po Pu, 111). The women have been regarded as disqualified for marriage (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Yongsu, 94). Poverty has often been the result as the women have no husband or children to support them. For their generation, being married to a man might have been the sole means to survive with some degree of comfort or prosperity.

Because of this disgrace, shame and humiliation they suffered when their experiences as "Comfort Women" were disclosed, their past has not been told: Kim Soon Duk says that the survivors including her have lived for the past half century keeping all the pain and suffering to themselves, not opening their hearts even to their own parents and siblings because of humiliation and self-loathing (Korean Council, 1995: testimony of Kim Soon Duk, 19). This stigmatisation in their own society kept some of the women from returning home after the war. Substantial numbers of the women have remained where they were abandoned (*Senkyuhyakunanajini*, 1992, 277). After many days of agony Noh Soo-Bock, who has remained in Thailand, decided not to go home, and she ran away from the refugee camp (Asian Women, 1996, 8).

To be allowed to retrieve their dignity has been their claim in the face of their social stigma: 'even though they compensate with big money, my deeply inscribed

scars can't be cured. What I have wanted is to get an apology and retrieve dignity' (Song Shin-do, interviewed in 1996).

#### **4.8.4 Anti- Japanese Reaction**

Survivors have attempted to purge the memory of the comfort station days, and to suppress the feelings evoked. Yi Okpun's narrative speaks of her action in cutting off a part of her photo on which there were Japanese soldiers surrounding her symbolising her desire to obliterate the memory of her time in the comfort station (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 101). However, certain things trigger memories of their ordeal, such as representations of Japanese or of any violence; for example, the Japanese national flag, men in military uniform, or watching violent scenes on TV. These types of flashback make it possible for the women to retrieve memories buried from consciousness. As Elaine Scarry puts it, 'what is remembered in the body is well remembered' (Scarry, 1985, 109). The memories of the past of the "Comfort Women" are inscribed in their bodies. Their scars from the days at the comfort station seem too deep to be cured: 'I will not be able to forget what happened even after I die' (Yun Turi, interviewed in 1992).

The women's experiences have raised their consciousness in other ways. Not surprisingly, the women have strong anti- Japanese reactions. Most of them still keep their 'unwipeable anger and resentment' towards Japan alive (Kim Tokchin, Yi Okpun, *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 49, 101). Their experiences have expanded their political awareness. Many of the women connect their experience to the colonial history rather than considering it as only their personal 'misfortune: 'I decided to report my past in the hope that my case might be of some help to my country. I think that Korea should never be controlled by another country again' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Pak Sunae, 167). One of the reasons the women



have brought their story to public attention is to make people aware of the atrocity (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Chong Song Myong, 107). Another reason is to counteract the attitude of the Japanese government on the issue. Yi Okpun said that she was prompted to give her testimony in public when she read about the denial by the Japanese government of involvement in the comfort station system from newspapers. She protests that 'I wanted to prove to that lying Japanese government that at least I am still alive and I know what they did' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 103). The survivors ask for a sincere apology and compensation from the Japanese government.

Kim Soon Duk enlarges her perspective to view the issue of the "Comfort Women" as a war crime committed by Japan. She regards the unresolved issue of the "Comfort Women" as an obstacle in the relations between Korea and Japan. Furthermore, Song Shin-do, a former Korean "Comfort Woman" living in Japan makes a link between the Japanese Emperor and the war crime: 'the Japanese Emperor was bad. He is the one who is responsible for war crimes' (interviewed in 1996).

The survivors have been disappointed by the two patriarchal states, not only the Japanese but also the Korean. The way the Korean government has handled this issue has not satisfied to the survivors, either. The Korean government did not make its voice heard on the issue before the activation of the campaign at the non-governmental organisation level from 1990. The women have been protesting and asserting their rights against the Japanese and South Korean governments by challenging those states for reparation and redress, and for the retrieval of their

integrity and dignity. The "Comfort Women" story is one that ranks alongside other horror stories of war<sup>57</sup>. It is a story that must be heard.

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<sup>57</sup> Recent renewed resort to systematic rape as part of the process of 'ethnic cleansing' can be shown in the reports from Kosovo and Bosnia. For Bosnia, see Pettman, 1996, 190-191; Zarkov, 1997.



## 5 STORIES OF THE SOLDIERS

This chapter relates the stories of the soldiers. There is no single story that fits 'what happened' in every case, and it is perfectly possible that multiple reactions may have occurred. In terms of ways of speaking about 'what happened' there were two types of testimony. One is constituted by accounts of the soldiers' own personal participation in the "Comfort Women" system. These confessional first person narratives were a small proportion. They were first person accounts. For example, '*I* went to a comfort station with pleasure, too. Because *I* am a man' (Dokoda Masanori, interviewed in 1996). The other is indirect testimony reporting on the behaviours of others or on what the Japanese military as a whole did to the "Comfort Women". The third person was used for these accounts. For example, Miki reported that 'there were always queues in front of the women's room. *They* did not care for the human rights of the women at all' (interviewed in 1996 - my emphasis). Most of the men's testimonies fell into the latter category, while the women talked more directly about their own story even though it took time for them speak. Using the third person seemed to make it easier for the men to talk about rather shameful or sensitive things. In this reluctance to disclose personal experience of the comfort stations, may be detected a sense of shame. There was one distinctive group which gave mainly first person testimony, consisting of soldiers 'rehabilitated' by the Chinese communist government after the war.

As a result of the rehabilitation programme by the Chinese communist party after the war, most of the (Japanese) male prisoners of war in China including me came to clearly realise that we were deceived, to be used for fighting the war. I also realised that I was misled by the state power of Japan, and I did as I was ordered which means killing Chinese because they were our enemies (Yuasa Ken, interviewed in 1996).

This group seemed willing to talk about what happened during the war in China. The rehabilitation programme made it possible for the men to 'confess' because they could distinguish between the 'rehabilitated' self, who gives testimony, about an earlier, 'wrongdoing' self. They were able to talk about it as a matter of their past, placing a distance between the self that existed during the war, and the self transformed by rehabilitation. As a result of the re-education programme, they have brought themselves to speak, while many of the former "Comfort Women" who still keep silent gained no such catharsis. The narratives of the "Comfort Women" were overwhelmingly corroborated by the testimonies of this group of veterans. In contrast, among the other informants, some appeared to want to educate me with their apologist point of view. A few who claimed they had no experience of visiting the comfort stations seemed to wish only to present themselves as war heroes.

## 5.1 Personal Relationships

What the men portrayed as happening was from a different angle from the women's. Much more emphasis was placed in the men's accounts on their interaction with "Comfort Women" as 'personal relationships'. A veteran recalled that 'still now if I think about those days it was very enjoyable. It is a very sweet memory. They were lovers' (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 268). The implication was that these feelings were mutual.

Kaoru (a Korean "Comfort Woman") and I got on well with each other. I had never visited other women. I might have married her. But I always paid... because it was a business for her. When I moved to Kuandong she came to see me. So I am sure she loved me, too (Dokoda Masanori, interviewed in 1996).

Some former "Comfort Women" confirmed proposals of marriage from the soldiers. Kim Tokchin said one or two among her regular 'customers' confessed their



love to her and even proposed (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 46). But, as already shown from the women's narratives, sexual acts with the "Comfort Women" were, characteristically, not a mutual or pleasurable exchange of the use of bodies. To assert that these were personal relationships is to deny the much more commonplace understanding on the part of the women that they were the victims of sexual violence.

Some veterans reported recovering their subjectivity as men from the relationship. One soldier described his encounter with the women as 'a truly human contact' (Nishino Rumiko, 1992, cited in Hicks 1995, 53). A deep discrepancy in the experience of the men and the women is exposed. In stark contrast to the tenor of the women's narration, the men spoke of the women as 'fellow human beings, lovers or mother figures' (*ibid.*, 52). The women were objectified as substitutes for their womenfolk as the men sought to discover their mothers, wives, and 'lovers' in the women.

This sense of human relationship seems to have coexisted with a sense of contempt. The image of the women as filthy, and as mere sexual receptacles frequently recurred. The fear of the prospect of imminent death in battle could explain this irony. The attempt to cope with the confusion, frustration, and dangers of warfare may have intensified the yearning for relationships that might give some transient reassurance in the face of an uncertain future. One of my informants, Iwasaki, confirmed this relationship between the "Comfort Women" and the soldiers as an abnormal emotion between those who faced imminent death (interviewed in 1996). This interpretation has been confirmed by another veteran, Suzuki Yoshio (Dolgopol, 1994, 128). This is especially true, towards the end of the war when the prospect of death was very close. Suzuki reported that the men were even more

desperate to go to the comfort stations and cling to the women, since there seemed no hope. A former "Comfort Woman", Yi Yongsu told of her encounter with a soldier just before going out for combat:

One evening, a soldier came to me and said he would be in combat later that same evening that would mark the end of his young life. He would be a suicide pilot. He gave me his photo and said he had got venereal disease from me. He said he would take the disease to his grave as my present to him (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 93).

There is an interesting contrast between the women's and the men's accounts in reporting the situation towards the end of the war. While the men reported that closer relationships were built at the end of the war, most of the women reported an increase in sexual coercion and violence: 'the bombing was becoming more serious. The soldiers became more violent towards us and our life became more miserable with each passing day' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, testimony of Yi Tungnam, 140).

Of course it is quite possible that both responses occurred - the soldiers may have reacted in disparate ways to the threat of imminent and violent death. What is striking, however, is the frequency with which the men emphasised the more 'humane' response, the women the acceleration of sexual violence.

A sense of rivalry and possessiveness towards the women was sometimes recorded. There was fighting for access to their favourites among the military men. This conflict among the soldiers sometimes ended up with death. Yuasa, a former military doctor, reported a case of death from fighting with another soldier, which was reported to the military authority as a death in battle. By a regulation issued by the military authority, personal relationships with the "Comfort Women" were banned. In Rule 1 of the appendix on discipline in the Serviceman's Club Regulations, set out by unit Yama #3475 stationed in Okinawa, executed in



December in 1944, it states that the concept of common possession of the 'female staff' is to be consistently applied throughout and the concept of special appropriation is strictly prohibited (Kawada, 1992, 81). What the military authorities were concerned about was the possibility that soldiers might release military secrets such as movement of troops, to their intimates. There was also the fear that these women would dilute the men's loyalty to the military, and concern about the soldiers' desertion from their barracks together with the women. The number of visits to the same woman was reported and limited (Dolgopol, 1994, 125).

## 5.2 Motivations

### 5.2.1 *Motivations to Go to Comfort Stations*

There were variations in motivations to go to the comfort station presented in the narratives of the men. Firstly, biological motivation to meet their sexual need was presented: 'I had frequented comfort stations because of sexual drives. Thus, I had to go the station' (Ogawara Goichi, interviewed in 1996). A "Comfort Woman" confirmed this by reporting that the men looked 'starved' and looked crazy at the sight of women (Kim-Gibson, 1997, 260). Male sexuality was represented as directly produced by a biological drive. So men were expected to be sexually incontinent and out of control. This assumption was maintained in most of the men's accounts. Nakano Takashi, a former officer, asserted that 'if there are troops, a facility like a *piya*, a comfort house, is needed. Otherwise, local women will be raped' (interviewed in 1996). This allegation was maintained by the 'rehabilitated' group of veterans, too. This assumption led to consideration of the women as a 'necessary evil', rather in the way in which prostitutes were viewed in Britain in the nineteenth century (Walkowitz, 1980).

In addition to the biological rationalisation social or psychological factors leading to the visits to the comfort station were recounted by the men. One was pressure from their buddies or their seniors:

If I did not go the station even after I became a non-commissioned officer I would have been left out and the rumour circulated that I did not enjoy being with a girl. I did not want to be excluded by others in the troop so I went for a girl (Sato; pseudonym; interviewed in 1996).

Seniors sometimes took their subordinates, especially young virgin soldiers, to the comfort station almost by force urging them to lose their virginity before death, since they were liable to die on the battlefield at any moment (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 69), and even went so far as to check on them from outside. Nakano, a former student-officer, reported his experience that his commander stayed near the room he was in and often checked whether he was 'doing OK' with the girl (interviewed in 1996). The pressure from buddies or seniors may have been motivated by the male bonding that resulted from such sexual behaviour.

A desire for sexual experience, especially when facing the prospect of death in battle was a frequently cited motivation. The desire stemmed from the belief that manhood was achieved through sexual experience. An assumption of sex as the essence of masculinity lay behind this motivation. For men, sexuality was deemed as a way of affirming and validating their male identity:

Including me, there was a rampant feeling that it is really a shame not to have any chance to have sex with a woman before being killed, if one was born as a man. If not, one could not be a real man (Wada, interviewed in 1996).

On the other hand, not to be able to prove virility through sexuality provoked additional violence against the "Comfort Women":



Once there was a soldier who was in such a hurry to come that he ejaculated even before he had entered me. He was very angry, and he grabbed my hand and forced me to fondle his genitals. But it was no use, because he could not become erect again. Another soldier was waiting for his turn outside the room and started banging on the wall. The man had no choice but to leave, but before going out, he hit my breast and pulled my hair... Whenever the soldiers did not feel satisfied, they vented their anger on me (Henson, 1996, 65).

Psychological reasons were sometimes given to explain why the men frequented the comfort stations: feelings of loneliness, frustration, or hopelessness. Some veterans recalled the comfort stations as the only places where they could feel relaxed (Nishino, 1992, 52). This implied that sexual contact was used as a temporary escape from despair, or an attempt to recover damaged masculinity from the tough reality of war: 'they (the soldiers) must have felt no hope as they were in danger at the front line of a battlefield, and were quite often blamed and beaten by their seniors' (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996). In contrast, Yuasa continues, the soldiers 'felt liberated and got a sort of catharsis at a comfort station'.

On or near the battlefields, there was simply no other place to go and nothing else to do. Miki reported that almost everybody went to the station on the off duty days (interviewed in 1996). Having sex was considered as a form of recreation: a pastime.

Having sex which was in fact rape, and was deemed as a reward for the men. Before they went into the army, some of them had heard of this 'privilege' of soldiers on the battlefield, having sex freely because *Chosenpi*, the Korean "Comfort Women" were provided for them. Even rape of the local women was permitted:

Furthermore once fighting started then we could rape Chinese girls at our pleasure. Thus, I heard we could do freely on battle fields what we were not allowed and were restricted to do in Japan (Wada, interviewed in 1996).

Summarising, then, biological, social, psychological and political motivations to go to the comfort stations were disclosed by the men. Often these were being used to justify their behaviours. I will say more about these justifications later in this chapter. Most seemed to take the view that they had accepted this 'service' of "Comfort Women" as a right conferred on them as soldiers.

### **5.2.2 Motivations Not to Go to Comfort Stations**

On the other hand, some informants claimed to have been reluctant to visit the "Comfort Women" for several reasons. This story could be told in the first person. They told of a sense of shame at sex without affection: 'I did not go to a comfort station as I was brought up to think sex is dirty and obscene. Especially I was educated that sex without affection is shameful' (Yoshioka Tadao, interviewed in 1996).

Another, an officer, affirmed his reluctance to allow his biological urges to overcome his human good sense:

I was conscripted when I was in the second year in the University of Tokyo as a student soldier. As I am an educated person, isn't it sensible that I should be able to control desire? (Nakano, interviewed in 1996).

Others claimed that their full devotion to the fight for the nation blotted out all thought of sex. Yuasa presented his experience during the first 4-5 months when he believed that he had been involved in the war for justice in order to let the Chinese be liberated from Western imperialists such as, Britain and the USA. He claimed that he had no desire to visit a comfort station as he was armed by the highest spirit to fight for justice (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996).

Holding the view of women as 'filthy' or 'dirty' deterred some from having sex. Iwasaki remembered that he felt the women in the comfort stations were like



animals, dogs and cats, with whom it would be tremendously shameful to have sex (interviewed in 1996).

## 5.3 Regulations and Disciplines of Military Life

### 5.3.1 *Hierarchy*

There was a hierarchical structure in the forces between seniors and subordinates. Most were stratified by rank which largely paralleled social class, such as, student soldiers and peasant soldiers. As Kazuko Tsurumi reports, 'the new conscript was assigned to a senior private, his 'fighting companion' (*senyu*) or big brother'. The new recruit had to clean his fighting companion's gun, shine his boots, and generally perform whatever errands he was ordered to do - even to massage his back (Tsurumi, 1970, 98). This hierarchical structure of the military was maintained in the comfort station system. The ranks and the officer corps were expected to consort with different ethnic groups of women, the former with either Korean, Chinese or local women in other occupied areas, the latter with Japanese.<sup>58</sup> On top of this, only officers had access to virgins (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 56). Testimonies from Japanese veterans indicate that, 'when new girls arrived at a comfort station, officers 'tasted' them first' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 69). The officers' tickets for the comfort stations had higher prices than those of the rank and file (Mun Pilgi, interviewed in 1992). According to the rule in the appendix on discipline in the Serviceman's Club Regulations, set out by unit Yama #3475 stationed in Okinawa, executed in December in 1944, the service charge was three Yen for officers for 40 minutes, two and a half Yen for non-commissioned officers

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<sup>58</sup> In big cities, there were separate comfort stations for officers and soldiers. When it was not possible, there were different time allocations in a comfort station for the two groups (Kang Chong-sook, 1997, 221). In this case, there was a separate entrance to the comfort station for the officers and the soldiers (Yoshimi, 1992, 92).

and paramilitary personnel, two Yen for soldiers (Kawada, 1992, 80). Personal relationships between the "Comfort Women" and the soldiers were prohibited, but, numerous officers had exclusive access to "Comfort Women" who were in effect their mistresses.

This military system made a hierarchy among "Comfort Women" themselves: a racial hierarchy. Miyamoto Sizuo recounted that:

Among "Comfort Women", there were Japanese, Korean, and local women in Indonesia. Comfort stations with the Japanese women charged customers most, and then the price was this order; Korean, Chinese, the mixed between Chinese and the native Indonesians, and then the cheapest were the natives. But the mixed between a Chinese and a Dutch or between a native Indonesian and a Dutch were more expensive than the Chinese or the natives as the soldiers preferred the mixed (Miyamoto, interviewed in 1996).

There were variations in the allocation of "Comfort Women" according to area. But there were different rates for different ranks of officers depending also upon the nationalities of the women, that is, Japanese, Korean and Chinese, with Chinese or locals in Southeast Asia, or the Pacific Islands being the lowest paid (Allied Translator, 1945).

The separate allocation of the Japanese and the Korean "Comfort Women", and the dispatch of the Korean women to more dangerous places, was clearly discriminatory:

There was obvious differentiation between Japanese and Korean "Comfort Women". The Korean women were allocated to the dangerous places for example, near battle fields. The women near the battle fields were always threatened to be killed as much as the soldiers. The Japanese military authority was involved in this allocation (Goyama, interviewed in 1996).

One reason for using Korean women as the "Comfort Women" was to ensure security. Given the choice between Korean "Comfort Women" and Chinese



prostitutes, the former were preferred for fear of connections between Chinese prostitutes and guerrillas. Nakano Takashi, a former officer, says that Chinese were not regarded as a part of Japan, unlike Koreans, who were therefore, at that time, seen as less risky (Nakano, interviewed in 1996). However, the 'Japanese' status of the Korean women did not protect them from discrimination and contempt. One of my informants stated how deeply xenophobia was ingrained in him from his early days: 'the sense of disdain of other Asian nations including Koreans, and the ideology of the Japanese Emperor system were poured into me from my childhood through education' (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996). Even the "Comfort Women" from its Korean colony were considered as less than human beings as Suzuki Yoshio reports. They were not seen as having human rights.

### **5.3.2 Regulation and Control of Soldiers**

The soldiers were strictly controlled and regulated. They had to conform to military expectations. However, the officers were much less restricted.

Soldiers had never any rights or chance to decide by their own will and to refuse obedience during the war. It was very like living in a prison. Seniors or officers gave orders to the rank and file, whatever they are, saying 'it is an order of the Emperor, it is the war for justice. You must do your best for the war.' But, contrarily, the officers had indulged in enjoyment with the "Comfort Women". There was no freedom given to the soldiers. They were always supervised and watched' (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996).

A harsh tyranny of discipline by seniors and tough military training were prevalent in the forces:

In particular, what every new recruit experienced was what is called 'arbitrary discipline'- being beaten day after day. If their lapels were soiled or their boots poorly polished or if their replies or attitude didn't appeal to their superiors they got knocked around (Nishino 1992, cited in Hicks, 1995, 53).

To offset tough soldiering, entertainment with sex was offered. It was a 'stick and carrot' logic in order to use the men more effectively for the war. Yuasa says that 'what is the sexual pleasure for the soldiers is what gasoline is for a car.' One of my respondents, Yoshioka Tadao, confirmed dependency on the "Comfort Women" for the regulation of the soldiers. In fact, the most important people in the forces are the "Comfort Women". Soldiers all go crazy or become animals. To make them manageable and keep them going, the 'female staff' are mostly required (interviewed in 1996).

This intensive level of control resulted in suicides when Japan lost the war. A Japanese veteran recalled the moment of one group suicide: 'after shouting three times 'Hurrah', loud and continuous sounds of firing rifles, 'Bang, bang, bang', or the sound of an explosion of a bomb were heard' (Nishino, 1992, 74). The Japanese, masculinist, military code of honour demanded victory or death: as the Field Service Code of January 15, 1941 states, 'if alive, do not suffer the disgrace of becoming a prisoner; in death, do not leave behind a name soiled by misdeeds'.<sup>59</sup> Collective suicide after the war, especially among officers, was widely reported (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kang Soon-Ae, 89; Cook, 1992: testimony of Yamaichi Takeo, 289). The Japanese men were expected to be ready to die for their nation. Yoshioka, a former officer, confirmed this: 'whoever he was, if he was a Japanese man, he had to die for his country during the war. When I was conscripted, I was prepared myself to die. No other way to choose, if he was a Japanese' (interviewed in 1996).

The soldiers' private lives were also regulated by the authority of the forces. In particular, their sexuality was controlled. There were medical checks for the soldiers

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<sup>59</sup> Tojo Hideki, Army Minister, *Senjinkun* (Field Service Regulations), Tokyo: The Army Ministry, 1941 (reprinted by Boei mondai kenkyukai, Tokyo, 1972), cited in Cook, 1992, 164.



in some areas. If the men were found to have caught a venereal disease, they and their boss might be put into a military jail. This was regarded as a great disgrace for a member of the forces (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 57; Nishino, 1992, 96, 104).

In addition to medical checks, the soldiers' privacy was monitored:

Every morning the Korean couple provided to the military police a list of users for each woman and the military police would look to see if one particular soldier was visiting the same woman too often (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Ichikawa Ichiro, 125).

Pertaining to sexually transmitted diseases, in the military doctor, Hayao Tarao's report, more officers, especially high ranking officers, had venereal diseases than soldiers since they frequented several different comfort stations more often (Yoshimi, 1992, 215).

*Saku*, condoms, were distributed before the soldiers went out. Using condoms was ordered to prevent the spread of diseases. Nakano, a former officer, recalled that checking that the soldiers possessed condoms before being allowed out was one of his weekly tasks (interviewed in 1996). Military metaphors abounded in the regulation of the encounters between the men and the "Comfort Women". Yoshioka, a former officer, reported that not using a condom was likened to 'entering into a gas chamber without wearing protection'. Disinfection after sex was likened to 'cleaning the muzzle after firing a rifle' (interviewed in 1996). Despite the regulation, Kim Tokchin, a former "Comfort Woman" reported that quite a few would rush straight to penetration without the use of a condom, saying they couldn't care less if they caught any diseases since they were likely to die on the battlefield at any moment (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 45). Others may have refused condoms in the hope that a venereal disease would gain them a passage back to Japan, or the strangest 'reason'

of all, because they were 'in love' with a "Comfort Woman" (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 105).

### **5.3.3 Regulation of the Comfort Stations**

The women, like the soldiers, were subject to control and regulation. Documents concerning the women's personal details were kept by the military police. An identification card as para-military personnel was issued to the "Comfort Women", for example at a comfort station for the navy in China (Hana, 1992, 70-71). They were under the control of the military authorities. There were military officers in some areas who were in charge of selecting agents to recruit new girls, and issuing permission to open, supervise or run, in some places, comfort stations. For example, when Ichikawa Ichiro arrived at his post in the military police in Manchuria, he was told by his commander that he was to be in charge of a comfort house (Dolgopol, 1994, 124). Military authorities issued permits to run comfort stations and collected tax (Yoshimi, 1992, 217). Military authorities drew up and distributed regulations for the use and running of comfort stations to the soldiers and managers of comfort stations. Regulations for soldiers included time allocation, cost, mandatory condom use, keeping military secrets, bans on drinking and fighting (Yoshimi, 1992, 229, 262). Regulations for keepers of comfort stations covered sanitation, working hours and working conditions for the "Comfort Women". When the soldiers wanted to go to a comfort station, they needed to buy a ticket from the corps headquarters (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 64). There was a service regulation for 'female special para-military' in Kuandong, covering payment and the supply of daily necessities (Yoshimi, 1992, 23).



The behaviours of "Comfort Women" were closely watched, and reported to the military police. Regulations of comfort station and hygienic supervision were conducted by the authorities. Yuasa, a former military doctor, told of his duty of regular examination of the women and attendance at regular meetings at headquarters to decide the price for the 'service' at comfort stations, and the time allocation for use of comfort stations for each unit. In some cases military doctors were in charge of abortion. Yusasa was asked to procure an abortion for one "Comfort Woman" as her pregnancy was 'a matter of the dignity of the Japanese Imperial Army' (interviewed in 1996).

The hygienic supervision by military authorities was primarily for the benefit of the soldiers, not to lose military efficiency by infection by venereal diseases (in Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Ichikawa Ichiro, 125). To some extent, the politics of military sex were camouflaged as merely the politics of soldiers' health. The results of checking the women were released to the forces in order to broadcast those with whom the soldiers could have safe sex. Suzuki recalls that he was told that 'these and those could be played with' or 'these and those should not be mingled with, as these had venereal diseases' (interviewed in 1996). Thus, the women were regulated as a part of the forces like 'civilians attached to the military' (Iwasaki, interviewed in 1996).

## **5.4 Violence**

The use of excessive violence, even for wartime, by the Japanese soldiers has been widely observed and reported. For example, tearing off clothes until fully naked and then whipping, cutting off breasts, cutting open stomachs, burning cigarettes on the bodies of the women, and shooting into the womb have been reported by the

former "Comfort Women" and prisoners of war (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 62; Dolgopol, 1994, 89-90). It could reach an extraordinary level, for example, eating human flesh or the brain of a human being has been reported, allegedly on the grounds of lack of food, or the myth that this practice cures syphilis (Nishino, 1992, 73; Dolgopol, 1994, 130). Others' pain might even be 'enjoyable'. Chong Hak-su, a former "Comfort Woman", reported such a case:

In Harubin, the men gang raped a Chinese woman and tortured her, and we were forced to watch it. In the end the men threw a bucket of petrol and burned the woman. The men *enjoyed* the woman's pain. After that, we could not dare to resist (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 160 - my emphasis).

Violence was used to get the 'service' the men wanted from the women. Violence was widely employed as necessary currency among the men, not only against the women but also their subordinates and the local populations. Within the forces, violence was institutionalised and sanctioned. Violence was employed by the agents of the state to produce 'indomitable men' or to boost their appetite for war. The soldiers became habituated to routines of violence. Any inhibitions they might have had were overcome. Violence was routine, remorseless, normalised, including sexual violence to the women.

Again, the use of military metaphor is striking. Sex for men was imagined as an act of assault and conquest. The penis was an instrument of attack, like a gun. Before going out, the soldiers were warned:

Wear a helmet when making an assault! Clean up your gun after a fight! Wearing a helmet means using a condom, and cleaning up a gun means the disinfecting of private parts after ejaculation (Yoshioka, interviewed in 1996).

Systematic control of opportunities for the men to have sex was disclosed in the narratives on mobile comfort stations. For some camps where there was no



comfort station in China, "Comfort Women" were regularly sent by truck to serve soldiers (Ito, pseudonym, interviewed in 1996). Many of the women were taken to mobile comfort stations, for example, tents were used to serve the soldiers who were stationed in remote areas (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Kang Yong Shil, 113; Kawada, 1992, 90; *Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 124; *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 57). Even during bomb raids the "Comfort Women" were forced to continue to have sex with the soldiers in caves (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Okpun, 101) or fox holes (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Yun Soon-Man, 80): 'if the bombing ceased, the men would set up make-shift tents anywhere, on dry fields or in paddies, and they would make us serve them' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993: testimony of Yi Yongsu, 92).

At the mobile comfort stations, the women were subject to intensive use over short periods of time, as soldiers were hungering for sex. A woman recalled that she could not manage to even stand up after the persistent assault. But they had to move heading for still more units (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 12). When the troops moved to another place, the "Comfort Women" were sometimes taken with the them. After finding a room, whatever condition the room was in, the "Comfort Women" were forced to serve soldiers (Goyama, interviewed in 1996).

## 5.5 Legitimation

The setting up comfort stations has been legitimated on several grounds. The most common was that the system was like any other system of prostitution. Substantial numbers of the men still assert today that the "Comfort Women" programme was one of prostitution. This allegation, in which an act of sexual violence is interpreted as an act of prostitution allowed the transfer of responsibility

to the women. The belief that the women were prostitutes was put forward as an excuse by the men who visited the comfort stations to get sexual 'service'. Dokoda Masari maintained this by saying that the comfort stations were nothing more than brothels on battle fields, exactly like ordinary brothels (interviewed in 1996). Another veteran repeated that 'it was a business. The women's attitude was 'please purchase and have me'. It was like that they tried to solicit as many men as possible' (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 272). Veterans, especially in the apologist camp, strongly asserted, that the women were paid: 'it was legal and they (the soldiers) paid for it (*ibid.*, 318). No guilt was felt. An already flourishing culture of state-regulated prostitution in Japan to which the soldiers were accustomed allowed them to understand the comfort station system as a continuation of prostitution at home in Japan:<sup>60</sup>

I also thought the women came over to China to make money. Thus, we had not felt any sense of guilt at using their services. We felt exactly the same as we did when we sometimes bought a prostitute on a red light street in Japan (Hara; pseudonym; interviewed in 1996).

'The atmosphere and setting at the comfort stations made the men feel at home' (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 271 - my translation). For example, the "Comfort Women" had to welcome the soldiers with the Japanese greeting, '*Iratshaimase*' in Japanese costume when the men came in comfort stations.

Secondly, the justification has been made that it was a war situation, by saying that it has universally happened under any circumstances of war. This essentially asserts that rape or prostitution is natural in war and that women are its natural

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<sup>60</sup> Another veteran made this critical comment because some of the surviving "Comfort Women" have been asking the Japanese government for reparation, saying that 'the women are materially minded nowadays as well as those days, (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 303 - my translation).



objects. Nakano emphasised that there has always been that kind of women who followed the troops during wartime, and *not only for Japanese forces* (interviewed in 1996). Many veterans justified what happened in the comfort stations by saying 'because it was in wartime'. These remarks implied that there was nothing particularly bad about the comfort station system in the Japanese army. Overemphasising the nature of war itself has been used to exempt the individuals from responsibility or blame for the sexual violence against the women: 'before going to the war, we were good husbands, good fathers, good brothers. So why did we change so much in the war? The Forces were a prison' (Nishino 1992, cited in Hicks, 1995, 53). Nakano assumed that it might be quite true that the nature of war itself was followed by insensibility and force: thus, women were needed in order to iron out this problem during a war. Yuasa defended the soldiers:

Some feminist scholars have blamed the soldiers, but they should consider the nature of war. It is a question of remaining alive or being killed on the battle field, rather than a gender issue. The problem is the war itself. The individual soldier was not that bad (interviewed in 1996).

The abuse was sometimes rationalised by blaming the whole system rather than attaching a responsibility to individuals. Yuasa argued that the soldiers never had any rights or opportunities to exercise their own will, or to refuse obedience during the war. The men were presented as victims of war without responsibility for the things they were ordered to do.

The Japanese government has insisted that comfort stations were set up in order to keep their soldiers from raping local peoples in the occupied areas. However, this explanation is to throw the responsibility or blame on to the soldiers. This is far away from the truth. The soldiers have not been given any freedom. So-called brutal war crimes were rewarded as bravery in the name of patriotism. The brutal behaviour of Japanese troops including myself was committed because of deceit and force by the state power of the Japanese Emperor System (Yuasa, interviewed in 1996).



Yoshioka recounted killing as an everyday routine for the soldiers: 'on a battle field at least men become like beasts, because they keep killing each other everyday. There is nothing but *killing, eating and sex*' (interviewed in 1996). This account seems to be used in justification of the soldier's brutal behaviours.

Legitimation in terms of men's 'natural sexual urges' was made by most of the men including the 'rehabilitated' group. In this sense, most of the men and the military authorities appeared to share the biological explanation. Uncontrollable male sexuality was employed to legitimise the comfort station system. This sexual need was described as the same as 'the need to eat, or to excrete' in a document issued by the 11<sup>th</sup> Division of the Signal Corps (Yoshimi, 1995, 222). This irrepressibility of male sexuality figured in a soldier's narrative in the report titled 'Unique Phenomena on Battlefields and Measures to Cope with These Problems': 'I had not seen any single woman for 50 days while on a military expedition. Consequently, the necessity of the comfort stations was fully realised, since male psychology showed itself in these abnormal circumstances' (Yoshimi, 1992, 228 - my translation).

In fact, the most important people are the "Comfort Women". Soldiers all go crazy or become beasts. To make them manageable, women like "Comfort Women" are greatly in need wherever it is, and if there was no comfort station, the local Chinese women were raped' (Yoshioka, interviewed in 1996).

The purpose of avoidance of rape was most often stated as a motivation behind the setting up of the comfort station system. The "Comfort Women" programme, however, itself constituted the sexual violence it was supposed to prevent. The "Comfort Women" programme was the rape of already colonised Korean women under the systematic control of the authority of the forces, rather than the rape of local women in newly-occupied Japanese territories, for example China, Indonesia,



Philippines etc., whose population currently was not yet subdued by the colonisers. In other words, the argument that the "Comfort Women" programme provided protection against sexual violence, conveniently ignored the fact that the programme itself represented particularly brutal forms of sexual coercion against the women whose bodies were hijacked for this purpose. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the presence of comfort stations helped to prevent the soldiers from engaging in acts of rape, according to Suzuki Yoshio (Dolgopol, 1994, 130). There was also a report from a General in Wuhan, China, in 1938 that rape happened even though "Comfort Women" accompanied the forces (Yoshimi, 1992, 95). Rape was tolerated, to some extent, in the Japanese military. A veteran reported that when the forces went out for plunder in turns two or three times a month in China, condoms were distributed (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 142).

Moreover, the "Comfort Women" served not only the 'unmanageable' rank and file soldiers. A veteran cynically commented on the corruption of the officers in the forces: 'officers could not have managed to carry on the war without the women. Even in an air-raid shelter, they were holding the women' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 144 - my translation).

Another justification drawing on the rape prevention theme was made in the name of keeping public peace and order in the occupied areas, a peace and order that had been broken of course by the invading army itself:

The programme of "Comfort Women" was really wonderful in terms of two aspects; one is to keep the soldiers from rape and being imprisoned, the other is not to provoke local peoples' anti-Japanese reaction caused by the attempted rape against the local women by the Japanese soldiers. If there was no "Comfort Women", many soldiers would have been put into prisons, and the local population must have resisted the Japanese military government... The women were among the most important in the Japanese forces. And owing to

them, military governing of the local population could go on smoothly. Thus, I would like to thank the women very much (Miyamoto, interviewed in 1996).

The protection of the women was even put forward as an excuse for the involvement of the force in the comfort station system by Miyamoto: 'the forces protected the women's safety from street gangs, or from bribery by the local police' (interviewed in 1996). The systematic involvement of the military was rationalised as providing protection for the women from exploitation by proprietors of the comfort stations, maltreatment from soldiers, bad health from catching sexually transmitted diseases, and from malnutrition. Another veteran insisted the military were looking after 'the starving girls' from Korea with 'well-paid and well-fed jobs': 'if they were in Korea, they would hardly have had any food to eat. But they ate white rice<sup>61</sup> and nice food there (at comfort stations)' (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 272 - my translation).

An attempt was also made to cover up the existence of the "Comfort Women" system after the war by disguising them as nurses:

When the war finished, comfort stations were to be closed. And all of the Japanese and Korean "Comfort Women" were allocated to hospitals as nurses, to keep the women from rape by the Allied Forces. Thanks to our protection of them, no Korean women were raped by the Forces (Miyamoto, interviewed in 1996).

Sexual violence in the comfort station was legitimised and sanctioned in the name of serving the nation, or the Emperor. When Yun Soon-Man, a "Comfort Woman", asked the Japanese why they were assaulting Korean girls, the soldiers responded by saying that they worked for the Emperor (Dolgopol, 1994, 79).

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<sup>61</sup> During the war, white rice represented good quality rice which was only available for the rich and those of high status. The vast majority of Koreans had to eat unpolished rice mixed with other grains.



There are substantial numbers of Japanese veterans who still believe that the war was fought for justice and liberation: that the war aim was the liberation of other Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma from Western imperialism (*Senkyuhyakunanajuni*, 1992, 307-308). This belief was revealed in a sense of 'imperialist nostalgia', evidenced by Miyamoto: 'we used to get on well and co-operate together. We used to be one. We considered Koreans as Japanese. Japan has done a great deal of work for Korean people. Why now are Koreans criticising us?' (interviewed in 1996).

To conclude, there is not surprisingly, a great disparity between the testimony of Japanese veterans and the "Comfort Women". The men stressed positive aspects in the "Comfort Women" system, on the one hand, while also insisting that the system was no more and no less than common prostitution, entered willingly by the women for gain. The only group of veterans who told the story differently were those who were able to distance themselves from their own wartime activities due to their experience of 'rehabilitation' in China after the war. Apart from this particular group, those veterans who recognised and acknowledged the sexual violence suffered by the women dissociated themselves from this gross violation of the "Comfort Women"'s human rights by speaking of it as something done by other soldiers in which they themselves deny having participated.

## 6 MILITARY MASCULINITY

In this chapter and the two that follow I will investigate the ways in which the "Comfort Women" system contributed to the construction of military masculinity in Japanese soldiers and enslaved sexualised femininity in Korean "Comfort Women", and how this system influenced national identities. This investigation aims to show how gender, national identity and sexuality were used in the construction of colonial relationships. My key questions in this chapter are, what kinds of masculinity were created in the Japanese militia, and how were they established through the "Comfort Women" system? Military forms of masculinity are paradoxical, incorporating as they do not only violence, destructiveness, sexualisation, hierarchy, but also self-sacrifice and obedience. Re-socialisation was involved in the army, in order for simultaneous processes of masculinisation and feminisation to produce both aggressive and submissive aspects of masculinity. To this end, promoting and regulating male sexuality was one of most crucial instruments. Finally, I will look at the way in which this gendering of the military assisted the Japanese war project. The particular form of military masculinity generated in Japan at this time lay behind the creation of the "Comfort Women" system, and this system reinforced military masculinity. The "Comfort Women" system was one of the major sites for its reproduction.

There has been an upsurge of interest in masculinities associated with the emergence, in the wake of feminism, of 'the men's movement' and 'men's studies'. The shift of emphasis within feminism from 'women's studies' to 'gender studies' has helped to license this development (Seidler, 1989, 1992, 1997; Weeks, 1985; Morgan, 1992). Much of this work has focused on the construction of dominant



class/race masculinities. This focus was certain, sooner or later, to lead towards the analysis of the relationship between these dominant masculinities and the Western imperialist project (Chapmann and Rutherford, eds., 1988; McClintock, 1995), and these studies have converged with work such as that of Sinha (1995) on the 'emasculatation' of the dominated, or colonised male other. The armed forces attracted attention, and the training which began in the Public Schools, spilling out onto the proverbial 'playing fields of Eton' and the sporting institutions of the dominant class (Mangen and Walvin, 1988), to find its apotheosis in the military socialisation of 'officers and gentlemen'. Any attention to masculinity must encompass the military and the training of men for warfare. War has provided the furnace in which the dominant forms of masculinity have been forged in many cultures, and some interesting work has been done on military masculinity (Dawson, 1994; Mosse, 1985).

The writing pays greatest attention to the masculinity of military officers rather than that of the rank and file. For the purposes of this study, one of the most important exceptions in this Western literature is Steedman (1988). She argues that the working class British soldier in the second half of the nineteenth century, like his counterpart in civilian life, the policeman on the beat, was engaged in practices which generated a paradoxical 'feminisation' of the uniformed working class in these most stereotypically masculine occupations.

My primary focus in this chapter will be on the form of masculinity in the militia forged in wartime Japan<sup>62</sup>. The main references will be to the literature on the

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<sup>62</sup> I am not intending to discuss all forms of masculinities in Japan at this period of wartime, but am looking only at the Japanese militia. The defeat of WWII led to changes in Japanese military masculinity. This thesis is concerned with the earlier period of war time.

provenance of Japanese military masculinity, in the context of the traumatic encounter between these military men and the "Comfort Women", particularly those who were subjected to colonisation in addition to brutal forms of sexual domination, as was the case with the Korean women of this study.

I will examine the relationship between masculine identity and militarism in the context of Japan before and during WWII. Historically in Japan there has been a close connection between masculinity and militarism, for example in what Cleary calls 'samurai machismo' (Cleary, 1992, 55). This samurai tradition was confined to men of the ruling class before 1868 and was only introduced for the male population at large after the forced opening of Japan by the West and the decision to pursue 'national wealth and military strength' by the ruling oligarchy (Tsurumi, 1970). Militarisation was also used as a form of social regulation after 'feudal' social relations were abolished. On top of the samurai tradition, a form of masculinity in which military values and military needs were enshrined was formulated by the war projects. Military service in the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy facilitated specific forms of gender identity, in which to be a soldier meant to be a real man. This may be illustrated in the case of the son of a village shopkeeper, an apprentice in an auto repair shop before the war, who was sent to Manchuria during the war for military service and who evaluated his experiences thus:

Usually people say that army life is hard to bear. But I think it did me good. In the army, we were beaten and we suffered from the discipline. But looking back I can see that *the army made a man out of me*. In the army I experienced the inside story of human life. Industry alone is not enough, neither is shrewdness. You should combine both in order to succeed in life. That is what I have learned from the army experience (Tsurumi, 1962, 155-161, cited in Tsurumi, 1970, 129 - my emphasis).



Tsurumi recognises the multiplicity of reactions of the military men to army discipline in her study of the military socialisation of Japanese soldiers during the war. Some of her respondents complained that the army was brutal, for example student soldiers; others from peasant backgrounds found army life easy in comparison with the hardship of making a living from the land. But while the effects of army discipline may have varied depending on the class origins of the recruits, they converged towards the production of a dominant model of manhood.

Men are often thought to achieve their manhood through military service in the army, especially through combat, and this is by no means peculiar to Japan. Plunder, rape, and incendiarism were to demonstrate their power or bravery (Nishino, 1992, 78). However, I argue that military versions of masculinity are deeply contradictory, in that masculinisation and feminisation are enacted simultaneously.

In addition to the strong military heritage from the samurai strata, the low level of development of capitalism increased the degree of aggressiveness and brutality in military masculinity in the Japanese militia during the war. Japan neither had a firm industrial base, nor industrial and technological resources to support the wars Japan waged. Duus describes this underdevelopment for war:

Japanese industry lacked the productive capacities to support their farflung forces in a war of attrition. Japan was economically outstripped to begin with, and steadily lost ground thereafter. Her military technology began to lag behind as the Americans developed and refined new tools of war (Duus, 1976, 230).

Compared with the western powers due to this lack of infrastructure, the conduct of war relied heavily on human resources. The 'samurai spirit' was extolled to compensate for this lack of resources. Thus, fighting spirit was extremely emphasised: the readiness and willingness to die. This spirit is rooted in the tradition

of *Bushido*, the way of the warrior, which refers to 'the determined will to die', which before 1868 was monopolised by the samurai class (Yamamoto, 1965, 23, cited in Tsurumi, 1970, 81). The fighting spirit was deliberately promoted to overcome financial and technological difficulties. The revised Infantry Drill Book exhorted the soldiers to overcome 'material forces' by means of 'spiritual forces' (Fujiwara, 1961, 111). Spiritual education was an essential resource for war in these circumstances. The Infantry Drill Book states that:

On any battlefield we should steel ourselves to winning glorious victory despite military forces and weapons inferior to the enemy's. Since we must be prepared for such a situation, it is self-evident that more spiritual education is necessary (Fujiwara, 1961, 111-114 - my translation).

The result was the brutalisation and dehumanisation of military life and of warfare.

While the form of masculinity inculcated in military men may be a special case, it occupies a privileged position in the social construction of masculinity in general. To excel in war is the epitome of masculine honour, especially during periods of warfare. The Japanese military man was the very prototype of idealised manhood. I will next illuminate the way in which the "Comfort Women" system made significant contributions to awaken and reinforce the military form of masculinity through daily practices in the Japanese military.

## **6.1 Characteristics of Military Masculinity**

The determination and analysis of the characteristics of the Japanese form of military masculinity are the subject of the following pages. It has stereotypical masculine aspects such as aggression, destruction, sexualisation, but also feminine aspects like obedience, and sacrifice, simultaneously. I argue that the military version of masculinity is deeply contradictory, in that masculinisation and feminisation are



enacted simultaneously. These contradictory characteristics are very closely related to each other.

Masculinity in its military form is destructive to the men themselves as well as others as Michalowski (1994) and Tylee (1988) argue. Tylee states that men's bodies and minds are bound to be mutilated by war (Tylee, 1988, 205-209). Becoming a violent and brave warrior eventually leads them into danger or injury, and into mental disorder, too. Thus, this is a self-destructive masculinity. It is also destructive towards others, including the "Comfort Women", whose bodies were violated, and often destroyed entirely, and whose identity was stripped away.

Military masculine identity is sexualised in violent forms, and this was clearly the case in wartime Japan. While this sexualisation of violence and violent sexuality were not unique to the Japanese militia, it was essential to them. The "Comfort Women", as we have seen, endured not only enforced sex, but sex routinely accompanied by violence. This construction of sexual intercourse as an assault is revealed in the name used for condoms: *totsugeki ichiban* means 'Attack, Number One' (Nishino, 1992, 85, 88). Behaviour and attitudes more appropriate to the field of battle spilled over into the comfort stations. The women were threatened like the enemy with swords, weapons of war.

If the warrior is the epitome of this particular type of masculinity, then it is given confirmation through sexuality. Enloe states that 'to be real men, soldiers had to satisfy their sexual 'appetites' (Enloe, 1988, 22). Defeat at the hands of the enemy is interpreted as loss of masculinity. Ibuse (1978) notes that Japanese men assumed that the Allied victory would mean the castration of Japanese men (Stietm, 1994, 586).

If masculinity in its military form in Japan at this period entailed the view of (hetero)sex as a right to which they, as 'real men' were entitled, then a corollary was that women were merely sexual objects: access to women was theirs by virtue of, and as evidence of their status as 'real men'. The sexual relationship is one of domination. A former Japanese military nurse during the wartime reports that they were sometimes treated like "Comfort Women" on the streets by the soldiers (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 29).

Sexualised military masculinity is associated with misogyny. It repudiates the feminine, showing contempt for women. The masculine identity was affirmed by sadistic treatment, by giving women pain. This form of masculinity is anchored in the creation and perpetuation of female otherness.

Finally, what I have interpreted as a contrasting feminine aspect of military masculinity may be seen in features such as obedience, submission, self-sacrifice, compliance, and discipline. To be a soldier means to be obedient and subservient. Steedman in her study of the uniformed working class in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century identifies the lot of the rank and file soldier with powerlessness and submission to the will of others (Steedman, 1988, 7-8). Military men are required to show absolute obedience to superiors in the military hierarchy. The rank and file soldiers in Japan were drawn from relatively powerless strata of Japanese society such as peasants, while the elite or the educated served as officers: 'The upper-class officer corps was composed of the graduates of the Military College, the Military Academy, and the Military Preparatory School' (Tsurumi, 1970, 90). Military hierarchies usually echo class hierarchies.

Sacrifice is another feminine aspect of military masculinity. The Japanese soldiers were also taught to subordinate their own needs, desire and comfort, even



their life, for the nation. A veteran, Yokota, reports that the search for a place to die for his country like in *Bushido* was his 'fervent desire and long-cherished dream' (Cook, 1992, 309). Sacrifice as the ground of the Japanese military was underlined by Hujiwara:

The army was set up with peasants who were in semi-serfdom, and were put through severe training and punishment. In this procedure, the human rights and lives of the soldiers were totally ignored. This is a particular characteristic of the Japanese Imperial Army. Therefore, the wars Japan waged were based on sacrifices of its soldiers (Hujiwara, 1977, 73-74 - my translation).

The identities of Japanese military men were forged under the circumstances of war and colonial expansion, in an overwhelmingly male dominated institution. While contemporary theories of masculinity recognise that it is complex and may take many forms: masculinities in the plural - in the Japanese military at this time a rather simple and brutal form was hegemonic. But this extreme form of machismo coexisted with the features noted above which are more commonly associated with femininity.

## **6.2 Re/construction of Military Masculinity through Practices**

From a psychological perspective the destructive and violent forms of military masculinity could be explained by Freud's concept of the death instinct (Freud, 1920). Janna Thompson considers Freud's positing of a destructive instinct as capable of explaining why men who are otherwise rational, willingly obey leaders and go to war without question, and why men participate in the group activity of war (Thompson, 1991, 68-72). But if the instinct exists it must be present in all men, yet not all men are equally willing to engage in warfare, to kill or be killed. Social and political conditions are also implicated in the motivations of soldiers in war. Even

though a close connection between masculinity and militarism exists, Enloe argues that masculinity is not inherently militaristic:

If masculinity as a social construct was identical to militarism, no state would risk its legitimacy with harsh conscription laws, and military institutions would not require extended 'basic training'. If masculinity were inherently militaristic, each would be redundant (Enloe, 1987, 531-532).

Enloe's view of masculinity and militarism as not isomorphic gives an opportunity to examine the work of re-socialisation carried on in the army to create the military form of masculinity, rather than seeing it as naturally given. Lynn Segal also denies an inherent masculine tendency towards warfare by stating that war does not occur because men are eager to fight; on the contrary, military aggression always requires carefully controlled and systematic propaganda (Segal 1987, 162-203, cited in Steedman, 1988, 271). In the Japanese army, formal and informal training procedures were involved to create or fortify masculinity in the military form. I will, therefore, examine how the military masculinity was established and reproduced through everyday practices in the Japanese army.

### **6.2.1 *Creating Stratification among the Men***

Discipline through military training plays the most crucial role for the re-socialisation of fighting men. The training was designed to make men tough and brave, on the one hand, and on the other to inculcate subservience and self-sacrifice. The first stage was to establish rigidly hierarchical relations. This was facilitated by superimposing military hierarchy on those of social class, especially between peasant soldiers and student officers<sup>63</sup>. Within the army, the superiors were proxies for the

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<sup>63</sup> A distinction could be made between recruits into the rank and file, who were drawn from the peasant class, and recruits of university students or of military academies into the officer class. Although 'students' do not compose a 'class', in fact students were representatives of a class in Japan before 1945, since those going on to (continues on the following page)



Emperor. Soldiers were expected to give absolute obedience to the orders of their superiors as if these orders were considered to come from the Emperor (Suzuki, 1992, 68; Cook, 1992, 74).

Pseudo-familistic relationships applied to the military hierarchy. This hierarchy is combined with familial ideology: in the army barracks the company commander was specially designated as a surrogate father, a subofficer as a surrogate mother, and new conscripts as their children.<sup>64</sup> The hierarchical order is modelled on the parent-child relationship in the *ie* system, the Japanese family system, which was a principle of social organisation in Japan. Hierarchical relations between superiors and subordinates in the army were obscured or made more acceptable, in this pseudo-familistic ideology. Relations of domination in the army were disguised under the form of voluntary filial piety.

Another ideological function of the family-state system<sup>65</sup> was providing an ethos of service for the nation. The idea of the family-state system placed special emphasis on the family as the foundation of the state and as the basic unit of the ruling order of the state. The nation was imagined as a family. This equated filial piety with loyalty to the Emperor, and exalted the Emperor as the father of all Japanese subjects in the family-state, *kazoku kokka*<sup>66</sup> (Uno, 1993, 297). Iizuka (1950)

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higher education were almost exclusively middle class. Higher education was one of the means by which class was reproduced in Japan before the war. In other words, being a student was strongly class-related. However, things were more complicated in the military. Recruitment up to the level of 'General' was open to competition, and therefore not class-based, but above that the upper ranks were closed, coming from elite military educational institutions, which was class-based (see Tsurumi, 1970, 90-91).

<sup>64</sup> On familial ideology in Japanese society, see Tadashi (1989) and Iizuka (1950).

<sup>65</sup> The family-state structure of the Meiji state first took shape in the 1880s, when family-state ideology advocated the merging of the individual stem family with state power and cast the Emperor as the great father of his subjects. This ideology was reflected in both the Meiji Constitution (1889), which defined Japanese people as subjects of the Emperor, and the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), which taught schoolchildren filial piety and loyalty to the state (Miyake, 1991, 270; Nishino, 1992, 145-146).

<sup>66</sup> The Emperor was simultaneously established as semi-divine father to the national community and head of state (Weiner, 1995, 449).



argues that inculcation of the two ideas, hierarchy and familialism, led the soldiers to internalise compulsion to such an extent that the individuals would feel that they were acting on their own volition while in fact they acted under compulsion. The unequal relationships in the military hierarchy were naturalised by the two tropes. The extensive use of violence by superiors on their subordinates was justified on the pretext that it was an expression of the parents' 'benevolent feelings', *on jo*, and would do the children good (Iizuka, 1950, 43-45; cited in Tsurumi, 1970, 98). Subsequently, the ideologies of hierarchy and familialism enhanced the creation of the submissive and sacrificial aspects of masculinity in the soldiers. Therefore, I argue that obedience and sacrifice, the feminine features of militarist masculinity support the trope of pseudo-family, and vice versa. The tropes provide the means whereby personal interests can be suppressed to obey hierarchical orders. The feminisation and infantilisation of military men in this figure of the family had been enacted through positioning the men as metaphorical children in relation to a stern but loving father. The common soldiers were placed in the inferior/dependent position as sons while superiors took the masculine position as heads of the pseudo-family. Thus, through the tropes of hierarchy and familistic ideology the 'feminine' features of the military masculinity became consolidated.

These pseudo-familial hierarchies lent themselves to certain ways of understanding and structuring the comfort station system. The comfort stations also were sites of pseudo-familial hierarchical relationships. Women occupy subordinate positions within patriarchal families, as daughters and wives. The model of the stern father disciplining wives and daughters 'for their own good', and feeling able to bully and maltreat them if they so choose, is very evident in the accounts in the narratives on the oppressive power over and violence exercised towards the women.



On the other hand, women in families also figure as powerful and loving mothers of sons. This aspect of the family sexual division of labour can also be seen in the "Comfort Women" system in the ways in which the men sought precisely, the 'comforts' of mothering.

Hierarchical relationships were sustained in the comfort stations through regulations such as time allocations, access to virgins and to younger, or to Japanese "Comfort Women". Sexual access was determined by power in the hierarchy, and this was a way of reproducing distance and superiority. Through these formal and informal practices in the comfort stations, hierarchical relationships were enacted and consolidated. In these ways, hierarchies among the soldiers, and between the soldiers and the "Comfort Women" were reproduced in the comfort station system.

### **6.2.2 Use of Violence**

Using violence was a major practice to create obedience, compliance and aggressiveness in the masculine identity. An intensive inculcation of 'aggressive spirit' among the soldiers was exerted. The Japanese military put soldiering and violence together systematically. A peculiarity of the Japanese army was that soldiers were frequently physically punished even for minor incidents rather like the disciplining of young children by stern fathers. In order to create or fortify submission, the military applied extensive violence towards the men in actual military training, for example beating for no reason in the so-called *jigoku* (hell) style of military training. In turn this treatment accelerated the soldiers' violence and aggressiveness. The strategies used in military training - harsh treatment, humiliation, coercion and punishment, were accompanied with violence. Humiliation was part of the regime: 'new conscripts were humiliated until they felt less worthy

than their horses' (Tsurumi, 1970, 119). A Japanese veteran considers the army socialisation as a process designed to strip humanity away from them, so they became 'devils' in human form (Nishino, 1992, 63). To produce goal oriented collective identity as warriors, a totalitarian disciplinary regime was instituted, in which individuality, privacy and humanity were denied: for instance, conversations were overheard and reported, soldier's diaries, memos, and any other personal writings scrutinised, and their letters strictly censored. On top of this, there was a taboo on the discussion of politics (Tsurumi, 1970, 96-97, 123). Tsurumi analyses this process as infantilisation: 'the absence of privacy and the subjection to humiliation, terror, and anxiety also helped to evoke childhood roles of dependence and obedience' (*ibid.*, 124). However, they were returned to a masculine position again in their relations with the "Comfort Women". Thus, the paradox of simultaneous masculinisation and feminisation in the military could be reconciled at the comfort stations.

As a consequence of extensive violence, the men became in turn more violent or brutal to their enemies or to those who were lower in the hierarchy. The whole procedure produced anger in the men, because of the denial of both self-control and vulnerability. This led them to find somebody on whom they could vent their anger. Violence was instrumental and purposive. The "Comfort Women" provided a safety valve for the effects of the extreme regimentation to which the soldiers were subjected. Violence, on the one hand, and the "Comfort Women", on the other, were two crucial axes of control of the men. Two contrasting aspects of military masculinity were facilitated in these practices: aggressiveness toward the outside, the enemy, and unquestioning obedience toward the inside, their superiors in the military ranks.



### 6.2.3 *Sexual Conquest*

Another practice was the ritual of going and having sex at comfort stations in a group, which was led by officers or senior-ranking soldiers. A former "Comfort Woman" reports that some soldiers were marched into her room singing a military song (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995: testimony of Ha Kun-ja, 70). This was a ritual which every group member was supposed to participate in. Peer group pressure to prove their virility was coerced in the men. The aforementioned psychiatrist of the Konodai army hospital during the war reported that those who did not go there were ostracised and regarded as insane<sup>67</sup>. Staying in line with peer group culture, 'mateship' seems essential to army life (Poole, 1985). Enloe argues that 'the men feel the need to have 'buddies' in the military to cope with the confusions and dangers of warfare through male bonding' (Enloe, 1988, 35). Common bonds in masculinity were promoted through sharing sexual experiences at the comfort stations. Male bonding as a member of the Japanese Imperial Army was created through attacking the weaker. Having sex with "Comfort Women" was a form of pressure on the men to 'perform' sexually, as well as their right, regardless of whether they had a sexual 'need', emotional feelings or not. There was pressure to conform to the standards of 'masculine' behaviours through sexual activity. Thus, sexual practice was one of the sites for the daily construction and reaffirmation of manhood in the military.

One of the most routinised practices was the enactment of sexual conquest of the women provided at the comfort stations. Here, masculine sexuality was a way of controlling and degrading women viewed as sexual objects. Misogynist and sexualised aspects of masculinity were produced through sexual conquest and hatred

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<sup>67</sup> Hayao Torao, 1939, *Senjoni okeru tokushugenshou to sonotaisaku* (Unique Phenomena On Battlefields And Measures To Cope With These Problems) cited in Yoshimi, 1992, 231-232.

towards women. Masculine identity as a member of the military became translated into sexual violence against the "Comfort Women". Perpetuating sexual violence gave the men a sense of exercising and retrieving their power as men. This sexual coercion was a political act of oppression exercised by the relatively powerful against the relatively powerless. I underline that the comfort stations were a sanctioned setting to reclaim masculine identity from 'feminisation' in the army, through sexual conquest. Diane Scully points out that rape affords them a sense of exercising both power and sexual pleasure (Scully, 1993, 234; MacKinnon, 1987).

By contrast, Folnegovic-Smalc argues that rape, especially gang rape, is a demonstration of power, and has nothing to do with the personal sexual satisfaction of the men (Folnegovic-Smalc, 1994, 175). However, as far as it provides an outlet for the sexual frustration of the men, it contains the aspect of sexual pleasure. In the military concept of masculinity, rape is deemed as sex and sex is rape. A sense of male solidarity tends to be in direct proportion to misogynist forms of masculinist soldiering, for example, the disdain for the "Comfort Women". Proving virility through sexual conquest was a way of attempting to assert and consolidate their masculinity. When the men could not get the sense of confirmation of their virility, masculine identity was affirmed in another way, which was violence: that is one of the reasons for the prevalence of violence at the comfort station. It is not just the expression of violence against those lower in the hierarchy, but represents an attempt to reinstate masculine identity through sexual activity - so the fact of its sexual nature, and the fact that the victims are women, are both central to understanding what is happening in the comfort stations. The men re-asserted their masculinity through both sexual activity and acts of sexual violence, thus, Folnegovic-Smalc's understanding of rape seems inadequate.



In the Japanese army, sometimes even acts of rape against women, especially Chinese local women, by the soldiers were tolerated firstly, in order to boost their fighting morale, and secondly to provide the men with sex as rewards. Violence against local people was theoretically banned, but nevertheless occurred often<sup>68</sup>. As shown in chapter 5, rape and plunder were committed and even led by officers in China. The existence of sexual violence was conveniently ignored for this reason, and even sanctioned through the "Comfort Women" project. The aforementioned report by a psychiatrist of the Konodai army hospital admits that rape was conveniently ignored by the military authorities: 'some commanders have overlooked rape against local women because they considered that it was necessary for soldiers to boost their fighting spirit' (Yoshimi, 1992, 228 - my translation).

Providing sexual access as a reward enhanced the recreation of the military form of masculinity. On the other hand, John Costello, who conducted research on sex and war, goes too far in his assessment of sexualised masculinity. He asserts that war made a very significant contribution to the sexual liberation of both men and women, giving as an example the relaxation of sexual suppression caused by the urgency and excitement of wartime. He reports 'sex as one of the few freely available wartime pleasures' (Costello, 1985, 9-20). He appears to romanticise sexuality in wartime. Accordingly, violent aspects of wartime sexuality especially rape against women is ignored in his study.

Next, I will examine the trope of uncontrollable male sexuality which rationalised the sexual practices of the military men at the comfort stations. A top-

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<sup>68</sup> Rape against Chinese local women was reported in the official log of the 9<sup>th</sup> brigade infantry, which was sent out by the chief-of-staff of the North China expeditionary army, Naosaburo Okabe (Lt. general of that unit), dated 27 June 1938 (Dolgopol, 1994, 31).

secret report by a psychiatrist of the Konodai army hospital in 1939 draws on the myth of male sexuality:

The army authorities established comfort stations in central China because they assumed that it was impossible to suppress the sexual urge of soldiers. The main purposes of setting up comfort facilities were to relieve soldiers of daily stresses by giving them a sense of sexual satisfaction and to prevent rapes which would damage the reputation of the Imperial Army from happening (in 'Unique phenomena on battlefields and measures to cope with these problems' in Yoshimi, 1992, 228 - my translation).

The formidable patriarchal myth of uncontrollable male sexual desire and the supposed necessity of women to provide sexual services had wide circulation in the military. The same assumption is found in the reasons commonly given for setting up comfort stations, the prevention of soldiers from raping indigenous and Japanese women.<sup>69</sup> Military masculinity is assumed to take the form of uncontrollable lust.

A fatal problem with this understanding of male sexuality is that it reduces a social phenomenon to a biological one, so that it appears inevitable and unavoidable. It has often been used to legitimate sexual oppression. Nature is always a powerful legitimating tool since nature is considered outside of human control. The myth that men have no control over the sexual urge has been used to keep women in a subordinate or victimised position. The acceptance of the irrepressible nature of male sexuality confers power on men which, in a circular way, motivates them to take up the position of sexual conquerors, as Hollway suggests (Hollway, 1984, 251). Moral and legal restraints on sex and even rape are readily suspended in wartime, since under extreme stress such behaviour is 'only natural'. This trope and the practices of

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<sup>69</sup> However, there was a report from the general in Wuhan, China, in 1938 that rape happened even though "Comfort Women" were company with the force (Yoshimi, 1992, 95).



military male sexuality reinforce each other, constituting a cohesive 'discursive practice'.

As well as the trope of 'uncontrollable male sexuality', there is the trope of 'maternal need' - the men as suffering children in need of maternal 'comforters'. This is another aspect of the sexual division of labour in the family, in which women figure not only as sexual objects, but also as maternal figures undertaking caring tasks. The hierarchy of brutal discipline places the men in three male familial roles: as stern and powerful fathers of sons; as sexual possessors of wives/women's bodies, but also as young children in relation to superiors/father-figures in the hierarchy. All of these aspects of the familial model were involved in the construction of military masculinity. The figure of the maternal women was one of the figurations invoked in the relationship between the "Comfort Women" and the soldiers, in addition to the figure of the whore/slut/sexual woman as shown in personal relationships in chapter 5. Thus, as well as the trope of 'uncontrollable male sexuality' rooted in biology, there was also the trope of 'maternal need' - the men as suffering children in need of maternal 'comforts'. It was no accident that the women were named "Comfort Women".

#### **6.2.4 *Using Military Vernacular including Sexual Language***

Another common practice was the use of military vernacular which is coarse or sexual, and is understood to be quintessentially 'male'. This served to amplify misogynist masculine identities. The 'thingness' of women was reinforced in the process, with the effect of dehumanising them (Cohn, 1989, 153-170; Carroll, 1993, 20). An example of such linguistic practice was the use of the metaphor of 'tasting women'. Women were represented as tasty objects to be eaten up. Military language

was accompanied with sexual words. These kinds of sexual metaphors which circulated in the army devalued women and celebrated a brutal, misogynistic form of masculinity.

### **6.2.5 *Drinking Alcohol***

Finally, alcohol was employed to inhibit cowardice or to boost military masculine prowess. It served as an opportunity for instant escape from the war conditions of danger, fear and loneliness. To some extent, getting drunk seemed to awaken the men's aggressiveness, so driving them into exerting violence. Concern about crimes caused by the drunken soldiers was expressed in a newsletter of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Unit in the army issued on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December in 1944 (Yoshimi, 1992, 324). Accounts of the drunken soldier at the comfort stations recurs in testimonies of the women. One of the typical patterns of behaviours was a drinking bout followed by a visit to a comfort station for violent sex.

To conclude this section, in addition to the trope of uncontrollable male sexual need, a second trope, also based on an appeal to nature can be seen, that of women's 'natural' maternal instincts and the need of men for 'maternal comforts' under the stress of war. Both of these needs were invoked in the rationalisation of the "Comfort Women" system. These rationalisations feed into the paradoxical juxtapositioning of masculinisation and feminisation in the socialisation of soldiers for military life, and the way that this is articulated with the sexual division of labour of the Japanese family system, and with the hierarchies of age and generation. These ideas become most effective as social forces when they are embedded in everyday practices in which masculinisation and feminisation of the Japanese soldiers are simultaneously enacted. Hence the concept of 'discursive practices' - these practices are about



establishing militarist masculinity, but also about enacting certain ideas, and making them seem the more true.

### 6.3 Contributions to War

In this final section, I will explore how the particular contribution which the comfort stations made to military masculinity served the cause of war. This question closely links to the way in which the "Comfort Women" system promoted the war through a complex articulation with patriarchal family positionings. I will examine the way in which the "Comfort Women" system fits in with the paradox of the extremes of feminisation and masculinisation. Tsurumi (1970) has done remarkable work on army socialisation in the Japanese forces,<sup>70</sup> but she does not address the "Comfort Women" system which this study has shown as deeply involved in military socialisation.

The comfort stations provided an environment where the men could re-establish masculine features of their identities as warriors, aggressive, violent, and sexualised. First of all, the soldiers could retrieve their masculine power, in the face of their enforced obedience, submission, and their fear: the 'feminine' aspects of military roles. The environment at the comfort stations was totally different from that of the battlefields. There, the men could control the women. Having sex against the women's will would give the men the power of self-assertion and control. This was a way to retrieve masculine power. The soldiers were not in danger of death in the comfort stations. The "Comfort Women" were weaker and more vulnerable than the men. For the common soldiers the women were their only subordinates in a punitive

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<sup>70</sup> Tsurumi highlights that war-oriented socialization for death exerted by the Japanese army depended upon imperfect communication. The Japanese army as the agency of socialization employed a structure of relationships which were on the whole nonrational, particularistic, functionally diffuse, intimate, dependently collectivistic, hierarchical, compulsory, secret, and exploitive (Tsurumi, 1970, 178).

hierarchical system. The women were the only people on whom the soldiers could exercise and demonstrate their masculine dominance and military power as soldiers in the 'comfortable' space provided for them.

On the battlefields the men were reduced to military ammunition for combat. However, the men could re-establish their own subjectivity through recovering their sense of agency as warriors in the war through domination over the women at comfort stations. The soldiers recovered not just any subjectivity, but a masculine subjectivity through sexual objectification of the women. Here sexual acts are represented as the locus of masculinity.

The provision of the "Comfort Women" as quasi maternal as well as sexual objects provided an emotional outlet for the military men in safe environments, enabling the men to release their own feelings of vulnerability and fear of death in war. Only in the comfort station is the subordination of needs and desire of the men laid aside.

Maruyama plausibly underlines 'the transfer of oppression', in strict hierarchical systems, such as the armed forces, whereby the suppressed affect of the soldier tends to be projected onto his inferior, whose suppressed affect is in turn directed toward his inferior, and so on until the chain reaction reaches the very bottom<sup>71</sup>. However, Maruyama does not give attention to the gendering of these hierarchies. Rank and file soldiers were not at the bottom of the military hierarchy: the "Comfort Women" were below them, and because they were women, they could serve at one and the same time as inferiors onto whom oppression could be safely transferred, and as sources of 'comfort', rather in the manner in which young

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<sup>71</sup> Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, p.18, cited in Tsurumi, 1970, 95.



children direct both rage and frustration, and feelings of dependency and need, towards their mothers. The violence and humiliation suffered by the soldiers was redirected as hatred, fear and aggression against the "Comfort Women", who had to play a subordinate role in the bottom of the hierarchical system. They functioned as a buffer in the paradox between masculine aggressiveness and feminine submissiveness inculcated in the military.

The provision of 'comfort' enabled the men simultaneously to ward off the stresses of military life, to revive and renew their identities as brave warriors. In an absolutely oppressive situation, an emotional and sexual outlet was provided to divert the soldiers' complaints, stress and fear of death. A veteran confirmed that 'sex at a comfort station could enable one to forget imminent death' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 69 - my translation). This strategy to channel and release stress was a deliberate one, considered as essential to keep fighting spirit and morale on a fairly high level, as may be seen in the report of an army psychiatrist: 'it may well be said that there is nothing better than providing the soldiers with women to comfort the men on the battlefields' (Yoshimi, 1992, 216 - my translation). John Costello reports that wartime research revealed that 'battle fatigue', or 'combat stress' is one of the critical factors in cases of mental breakdown (Costello, 1985, 135). Thus, the women provided additional caring services. It was taken for granted that women were sexual objects and maternal figures whose purpose was to foster men's psychological security.

Sexuality both regulated and expressed the aggressive aspects of masculinity and aggressiveness of the soldiers. There is surely some distinction to be drawn between the interpersonal and sanctioned violence of the battlefield and violent forms of sexual exchange, although it is possible to argue that they are connected and

that the one may lead to the other. On the other hand, not all Japanese soldiers who had engaged in acts of violence on the battlefield were violent in their interpersonal and sexual relations. It cannot be assumed that it is 'natural' that violence in the battlefield would lead to violence enacted against the "Comfort Women". It is possible to speculate whether there was an element of deliberation in the design of a system of military socialisation which linked these two things together. The comfort station system may have been designed to control the men's aggressiveness, for example, producing it before battle and taming it after combat at comfort stations. It is interesting to note that the comfort stations served two entirely opposite functions: the relief and the reproduction of aggressiveness and cruelty. The sex in comfort stations bolstered masculinity through confirming manhood. There was a pattern of violence is supported by accounts of the former "Comfort Women" and Japanese veterans as shown in chapters 4 and 5. The soldiers were displacing and projecting their own emotions onto the "Comfort Women" by constructing the women as their 'comforter' and simultaneously as sub-human 'whores'.

The "Comfort Women" system assisted the war by mollifying the men according them the right of access to women's bodies as a tangible reward for their services. The process of army socialisation crystallised in 'feminisation' and 'infantilisation'. Yet, masculinity was also heightened in an extreme form in spite of these feminising and infantilising effects. Placing the "Comfort Women" in a dual feminine position as sexual objects and as 'maternal comforters' was needed in relation to the process of army socialisation. The "Comfort Women" thus offered complex means of recovery from wounded masculinity. The privileges of hegemonic masculinity was provided in the form of enforced sex. The provision of opportunities



to have sex with the "Comfort Women" may thus be said to have contributed to the preparation of the men for death on the battlefield.

There were of course both similarities and distinct differences in experiences between the soldiers and the women. Some aspects of their situation and identity the "Comfort Women" may have, paradoxically, shared with the rank and file Japanese soldiers. The use of 'submission' and 'humiliation' echoes the language used about the "Comfort Women". Howes and Stevenson consider men as the main actors of war as well as the primary victims (Howes, *et.al.*, 1993, 209). However, on the other hand, conceptualisation of the warriors as victims like the women they victimised might risk obscuring the particular ways colonial and gender domination impacted on the lives of the "Comfort Women". There seems to be a similarity in the control and regulation of the women and the soldiers by the military authorities and the imperial state through such means as violence, humiliation and propaganda. However, the impact on the soldiers was different, in quality as well as in intensity from the impact on the women. The Japanese men were not the targets of systematic sexual violence, while the "Comfort Women" were. The men benefited in some respects from their relations with the "Comfort Women". There were no such rewards and benefits for the "Comfort Women".

Military life generates contradictory pressures and needs. Another example relates to the juxtapositioning of male bonding with an absolutely hierarchical order in the army. Male bonds were established through sexual acts. Masculinity or fraternity could be affirmed through sharing the experiences of dominative heterosexual at the comfort stations. This bonding may have helped to mitigate tensions generated through the absolutely hierarchical and segregated relationships of the military. As an offshoot, the collegiality among men helped to promote a totalitarian and

collective masculine identity. This fostered the solidarity required to collaborate in carrying on the war project. Male bonding functions to tie men together as members of a common army, while hierarchical order separates them sharply from each other in the different ranks. These contradictory horizontal and vertical axes meet at the point of comfort stations. The "Comfort Women" system provides a way of holding together these contradictory pressures.

The contribution of the comfort stations to the war project is clearly revealed, recognised even in Japanese military documents. It is said that providing opportunities for having sex was a means of relaxation and comfort, of regulation of military discipline, of diversion of soldiers' complaints and brutality and of an outlet from fear and tension from war (Yoshimi, 1995-a, 53). The support of the "Comfort Women" system for the war reveals the dependency of the military on women. The "Comfort Women" system was considered as an important component of the preparation for the war. The women were one of the mainstays which maintained the military organisation. Enloe draws attention to this dependency: 'the military needs women as the gender 'women' to provide men with masculinity - reinforcing incentives to endure all the hardships of soldiering' (Enloe, 1988, 214).

The enslaved femininity of the "Comfort Women" was located in the complementary positions required to accomplish or consolidate military masculine identity. The two complementary forms were translated into the political process. A regime of sexual regulation was introduced by the Japanese through the "Comfort Women" programme. It not only helped to buy off some of the resistance of the subjugated people, but also to regulate the Japanese armed forces themselves, so that the soldiers could be sent back to the battlefields to fight again. A former Japanese upper rank officer I interviewed admits the dependency of the military on the



women. The military form of masculinity does not stand alone, but is supported by its discursive partner, enslaved femininity. Thus, next I will examine the enslaved feminine identity imposed upon the "Comfort Women".

## 7 ENSLAVED SEXUALISED FEMININITY

In this chapter, I will investigate how the gender identity and sexuality of the "Comfort Woman" are contextualised by Japanese colonial, and Korean nationalist power. In doing so, I will explore the feminine subject-positioning imposed on them. The questions I will attempt to answer concern the kind of feminine identity that was constructed and consolidated, and how it was established through the "Comfort Woman" system. The femininity imposed on the "Comfort Women" was sexualised, promiscuous, contaminated, and submissive. I intend to show how the enforcement of this particular form of femininity was developed and utilised in the context of the comfort station system. The core discursive practice for this was the representation of the women as prostitutes in relation to the opposition between respectable, and 'loose' or sexualised femininity. Sexuality was an aspect of femininity and masculinity in this process. A gender-specific identity was consolidated and imposed on the Korean "Comfort Woman" in relation to the masculinity of the Japanese military man. The masculinity of the military men was constructed or reinforced through its 'opposite'. In addition, feminine identity was on a continuum of pre-existing Korean femininity in Confucianism and Korean nationalism. Sexualised, promiscuous, contaminated and submissive femininity was created, reproduced and imposed on the women through daily practices at the comfort stations. Finally, I shall elaborate the consequences of the feminine subject-positioning especially the way in which the establishment of this femininity assisted the Japanese war projects.



## 7.1 Enforced Feminine Subject Positioning

My first question is what kind of femininity is constructed and/or reproduced through the "Comfort Women" system, and what are the characteristics of this femininity? The Korean "Comfort Women" were forced to enact what I have termed, enslaved sexualised femininity. This imposed femininity was complementary to the military masculinity of the Japanese soldiers. The former was generated in relation to the misogynist, destructive, hierarchical, sexualised, violent and xenophobic<sup>72</sup> characteristics of the Japanese militia. This enforced femininity served to consolidate the military form of masculinity. These binary concepts of masculinity and femininity were mutually exclusive and interdependent. Their mutual positioning was scripted. Here, I will draw on the concept of 'sexual scripts' proposed by Gagnon and Simon (1973). The sexual script allocated to the "Comfort Women" is that of prostitutes, which was created in relation to that of the military men in the comfort station context. Marcus' contentious suggestion of prevention of rape by refusing the script of rape victim, discussed in chapter 2, is of limited value in the case of the "Comfort Women". The women were located in a situation where they had virtually no alternative but to act out the part allocated to them in the script in a captive setting. The women could only play the part of 'enslaved sexualised femininity'. Situations such as those the "Comfort Women" faced were clearly not in Marcus' mind, where extraordinary levels of serial sexualised violence become 'ordinary' matters of routine.<sup>73</sup> In the eyes of the women and their Korean families,

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<sup>72</sup> I will show the xenophobic aspects of the identity of the Japanese soldiers in chapter 8.

<sup>73</sup> The comfort station system is different from spontaneous war rapes in terms of the routinised and systematically organised aspects of sexual coercion. The rapes in comfort stations did not happen once, but repeatedly, over a long period of time. These were doggedly continued as an everyday routine till the end of WWII.

as well as those of the Japanese soldiers, the women were 'shamed', lost their 'respectability', even though the sexual scripts they enacted were forced upon them.

The script of femininity to which the "Comfort Women" were confined was firstly characterised by sexualisation. In order to keep the women in a condition of sexual objectification for the military man, an objectified and commodified form of female sexuality was attributed to them. Accordingly, negative connotations of the prostitute - mercenary, unclean, valuable solely in virtue of her sexual instrumentality for others was attached to them. The promiscuity of a prostitute was amalgamated with that of the "Comfort Women". They were considered as prostitutes who serve many men for financial benefit. Their feminine identity was tied up with the image of being a prostitute, that was being a "Comfort Woman" for the soldiers. The feminine subject-positioning was associated with their representation as sexually available to anyone who wants them.

Concurrently, an image of contaminated femininity was enforced. The women were deemed to be 'filthy things'. They were encoded in a 'dirty' image in terms of their sexuality by the masculine language in which they were described. Another source of this unclean image comes from a negative perception of women's menstrual blood. The soldier's reaction against the blood with anger and violence reveals the assumption of the fundamental contamination of the very female body itself. Menstrual blood carried the connotation of bad luck among the soldiers: using a soldier's gaiter for the women's sanitary purpose was regarded as ill-omen by the soldiers. Noddings argues that 'the menstruating woman' is thought to be infected with an evil spirit or to be paying the price for an essential evil spirit that is part of her nature' (Noddings, 1989, 37 cited in Ussher, 1991, 22). Especially, for the military man, menstrual blood portended death on the battlefield.



Finally, the contaminated image is associated with sexually transmitted diseases. Although the women were infected by sex with a diseased man, they were the one held responsible as the source of the infection and its spread. The contaminated image of femininity leads to the view of the women as contaminating the soldier with the diseases which might destroy his masculinity. The women were identified as the source of pollution.

In addition, the women were positioned in submissive femininity. The submissive character of their femininity is rooted in the power relations between woman and man, and the coloniser and the colonised. This latter aspect will be developed in the next chapter. To summarise, the images of femininity imposed on the "Comfort Women" are characterised as sexualised, promiscuous, contaminated, and submissive. The "Comfort Women" were positioned in terms of this form of femininity under surveillance. Regardless of their will, the women were obliged to act out enforced scripts what they had no part in drafting. On the other hand, although the form of femininity imposed on them is so demeaning and oppressive, the ability to impose it is also partly explained by its overlap with a traditional Korean concept of femininity. The Confucian concept of femininity in the Korean tradition paved the way for fostering the script of enslaved femininity, and I shall now go on to explore the pre-existing Korean and Japanese constructions of femininities.

## **7.2 Established Femininities in Korea and Japan**

Ideas of pollution, of purity and danger, focusing particularly on the bodies of women, are commonplace across many cultures as Mary Douglas powerfully

highlights in her book (Douglas, 1966). This opposition between purity and impurity can be found in Korean and Japanese cultures of 'respectability'.

### 7.2.1 *Femininity in Korean Confucianism*

First, I shall investigate existing traditional femininity in Korea to show the ways in which its internalisation by the Korean "Comfort Women" made them vulnerable in the situation in what they found themselves. Feminine subject-positioning in Confucianism and Korean nationalism, and Japanese colonialism overlapped. The Confucian ideology of womanhood and sexuality is replayed in Japanese colonial and Korean nationalist tropes and practices. Traditional Korean femininity is constituted by a Confucian definition of femininity. The definition highlights chastity, docility, submissiveness, acquiescence, self-sacrifice, and devotion. The *Choson* dynasty (1392-1910), the last kingdom of Korean history, saw the establishing of Confucianism as the ruling state ideology. It constructed an ideal Confucian society in politics, economics, culture and belief systems which divided it from the Buddhist tradition of the previous dynasty, *Koryo* (Min, 1987).

Women were deeply affected by the enforcement of cultural practices of Confucianism. The Confucian conceptualisation of womanhood is thought to have been absolute. Confucianism positions women in inferiority to man, subject to a man in every field of social action. A woman and a man are differentially positioned according to *neobob* in Confucian ethics, an inner world for a woman and an outer world for a man. These two positions are mutually exclusive (Han Young-woo, 1983, 65; Han Myung-sook, 1986, 38-39). The traditional division of labour between the public sphere for men and the domestic sphere for women is encoded in Confucianism. A Confucian text titled *Iching* (Book of Changes) describes woman as



evil and immature, man as heaven and woman as earth. Heaven is depicted as high and strong, earth as low and soft. An influential Confucian text titled *Lichi* (Book on Confucian Morality) defines woman's place and her role. It contains the basic rules between men and women as well as the moral norms of Confucian society. *Lichi* enjoins, firstly, sex segregation which begins from the age of seven. Secondly, it identifies three subordinations of woman (*samjongjido*): to her father before marriage; to her husband during marriage; to her son after her husband's death. Thirdly, it posits the seven evils of a wife who is expelled from her husband's home (*chilkojiak*): disobedience, infertility, lewdness, jealousy, disease, gossiping, and stealing (Kim, 1976, 52-53). Fourthly, it prohibits the remarriage of widows (Park Young-ock, 1985, 36-38). Woman's space and time through her whole life is regulated and bounded by Confucian positioning.

Confucian patriarchy in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, entrenched the doctrine of female chastity (Choe, Je-sok, 1983). Women were required to guard their chastity more dearly than life itself.<sup>74</sup> Self-censorship was imposed by the Confucian ideal of the 'virtuous' woman:

Upper-class women in Confucian Korea often carried a small dagger in an ornamented case as part of their attire as a signal of their willingness to take their own lives, if and when their bodies were violated by men other than their husbands, especially by invading foreign soldiers (Choi, 1992, 13).

Therefore, the Confucian ideology was embodied in an intense preoccupation with woman's sexual conduct. The ideology of chastity positions a woman,

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<sup>74</sup> There is a controversy about whether the ideal of chastity applied only to royal and upper class women or to the commoners as well, in Korean women's history. Kim Yung-Chung proposes that the influence of Confucianism on the commoners can only be assumed (Kim, 1976), while Lee Ok-kyung highlights the practice of the ideology of chastity across the whole social hierarchy (Lee Ok-kyung, 1985). Class might have been important here: splitting of sex and reproduction projected onto different classes of female - prostitutes and 'ladies'.

particularly her body and sexuality, as the property of one man, the husband, and this ideology defines the respectability of a woman. Accordingly, remarriage of widows was not allowed since a woman was supposed to devote herself only to one man through her whole life. To be a woman of true Confucian virtue, a widow must not remarry ever again even if she was very young. Special recognition was awarded to women who kept their chastity to the end of their lives.

Positive and negative sanctions on women to conform to this ideal were developed in the late *Choson* Dynasty (1392-1910) in order to institutionalise female chastity: for instance, women's adherence to chastity was essential for the growth and property of the family household, or for the rehabilitation of the family which had declined. Exemption from compulsory national service, and release from slave status were used as inducements to reinforce the chastity of women. Internalisation of this ideology of chastity was achieved through family and community. These inducements drove a daughter into self-sacrifice for her family. Through these inducements and punishments<sup>75</sup>, the ideology of chastity has been established and reinforced (Lee Ok-kyung, 1985, 45-52). These devices served to keep the women bound to the particularistic tradition of female sexuality of Confucianism.

In Confucian morality womanly virtue is solely constituted through the maintenance of her chastity. This ideology results in the classification of woman into two groups, the 'respectable' or the 'fallen'. The parameter of respectable femininity is the control of female sexuality. Sexualised femininity stripped respectability away from the "Comfort Woman", and inscribed her as the 'defiled' other; 'fallen'; a

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<sup>75</sup> In 1485, a new law was introduced regulating those who remarried, their offspring barred from government service (*Ewha Yojataehakkyo*, 1972, 122-123), keeping them from the higher reaches of society. Remarriage for widows was legalised in 1894 with the *Kabo* reform (Kim, 1976, 83-84, 213).



prostitute. Insofar as the Korean "Comfort Women" had internalised this Confucian training, they would have experienced their own sexual violation within its terms, at risk of losing self-respect, and interpreting their own rape by the soldiers as shameful. The opposition between 'virgin' and 'whore' regulates the sexual behaviour of women. To conform to the norms of respectability is to recognise the sexualised woman as degraded. Women are set against women: the 'good wife' against 'the prostitute'. The construction of respectability marginalises the other group of women. For a man the prostitute is available for sexual pleasure, his wife reserved for reproduction and patrilineal succession. Confucian patriarchal ideology permits a woman only a contingent identity as a wife and mother - that is, as an instrument that perpetuates the male line (Choi, 1992, 107).

In Korean tradition, there was a group of trained female entertainers for men with songs, dances, composing and reciting poems, and sex: a 'courtesan', known as *kisaeng*. Approaching the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, stratification among *kisaeng* was established with specialisation in singing, dancing, or sex (Lee Kyung-bok, 1986, 47). The *kisaeng* was not respectable in Confucian terms as she did not belong to only one man, a legal husband. The sexual double standard is starkly disclosed. The position of 'fallen women' is institutionalised as surely as that of the 'respectable wife'. No such dual classification attaches to the 'chaste' versus the sexually active man.

During the Japanese colonial regime (1910-1945), especially in the 1930s, the impoverishment of Koreans grew severe. Unemployed women increasingly turned to prostitution. The state-regulated prostitution introduced by the coloniser to Korea drove many more women from poor peasant families into this sexual trafficking.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> For more details about the introduction of licensed prostitution to Korea by Japanese colonialist, see Suzuki, 1994, 84-102.

State-regulated prostitution may have been the prototype for the comfort stations system. The woman's historian, Song Youn-ok (1997), links the two systems. She points out that the widespread networks and experience in the trafficking of women gained in the state-managed prostitution system enabled the mobilisation of Korean girls in great numbers as "Comfort Women"<sup>77</sup>.

Aso Tetsuo, an ex-military Japanese medical doctor, reported that more Japanese than Korean "Comfort Women" had venereal diseases as they were recruited from among prostitutes<sup>78</sup>. In contrast, the Korean "Comfort Women" remained disease free for longer as they were young sexually inexperienced girls when they were recruited: some as young as 12-13, who had not previously worked as prostitutes<sup>79</sup> (Nishino, 1992, 44, 50). Strict sexual norms for woman in Confucianist culture facilitated the supply of disease-free young single girls for Japanese soldiers since pre-marital sexuality was so strongly discouraged. Therefore, ironically, a 'clean' virgin body made these young girls especially valuable as recruits to the "Comfort Women" system.

Some of the existing characteristics of idealised Korean femininity such as docility, submissiveness, acquiescence and the dichotomisation between the 'respectable' and the 'loose' are maintained and consolidated in the colonial context through the comfort station system. The Japanese use of the "Comfort Women" combines Korean Confucian classifications of women as either prostitutes or wives,

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<sup>77</sup> For example, the operators' expertise in licensed prostitution was brought unchanged into the military system (Song, 1997, 203).

<sup>78</sup> Aso Tetsuo, '*Karyubyo no sekkyoku-teki yoboho* (Methods of Aggressive Prevention of Venereal Disease)', 26 June, 1939.

<sup>79</sup> This difference between the Japanese and Korean "Comfort Women" was maintained in testimonies by veterans and a former typist in the forces (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 26- 27). I do not intend to reproduce the dichotomy between 'virtuous' and 'loose' women which actually I am critiquing, by saying that the Korean "Comfort Women" were 'respectable ladies', the Japanese 'fallen prostitutes'.



and the young virgins who were the preferred source of recruits were destined for sexual slavery masquerading as prostitution, rather than 'respectable' wifedom. The polarisation between the 'virtuous' and the 'defiled' was applied between the Korean "Comfort Women" on the battlefields to minister to the soldiers' needs, and the Japanese women in the rear who reproduced the men's children. There is an overlap between the established Korean patriarchal femininity and the degraded femininity imposed by the colonial power. These indigenous patriarchal practices of womanhood came into play as the base of colonial exploitation and gender oppression.

### **7.2.2 Japanese Femininity**

There is a parallel between Korean femininity and Japanese femininity in terms of the dichotomisation between the virtuous wife and the prostitute. I now will sketch the Japanese version of femininity since this is what the Japanese brought with them in their cognitive structures. There is the same lady/whore binarism in Japanese femininity, too. This dichotomisation is reflected in the *ie*, a patriarchal family system developed in Japan in the Meiji period (1868-1912) (Kang and Yamashida, 1993, 67-69; Suzuki, 1993, 48; Nishino, 1995, 19-20). The entrenchment of Confucian patriarchy, together with the bureaucratisation of the dominant samurai class in the pre-Meiji period, effectively indoctrinated the concept of the female as 'inferior' to the male (Robertson, 1991, 91). Amongst the ruling class in the pre-Meiji period traditional Japanese femininity consisted of obedience, frugality, modesty, and purity, and this woman's role was best achieved in the context of marriage - that is, in service to her husband's family. In combination with national projects of war in the Meiji period and after, women were encouraged to use their

feminine virtues - modesty, frugality, hard work - to contribute to national goals, productive outside the home as well as within it (Bernstein, 1991, 5-7).

Japanese femininity is represented primarily by motherhood during the war times. Imperialist practice was pro-natalist: Japanese women were urged to have more children in order to provide future soldiers for the Emperor (Miyake, 1991, 278). The wartime mother-child protection law encouraged procreation for the empire and banned abortion of any eugenically sound foetus.<sup>80</sup> The twofold gender role of 'good wife, wise mother' (*ryosai kenbo*) was refined in the Meiji period, when pro-natalism was trumpeted by the state in the context of industrialisation.<sup>81</sup> In wartime, Japanese women were called on to raise large families to contribute to Japan's imperialist efforts (Bernstein, 1991, 13). Hayakawa Niroko, a Japanese woman historian, demonstrates that:

The mother's role which supports and conveys the Japanese Imperial tradition was fanatically stressed as an ideology integrating women and men into the war effort in the period of 1937 to 1945 (Hayakawa, 1996, 114-115).

Japanese women were mobilised to protect the family system, *ie*, and motherhood, to maintain a social stability and to meet the need to reproduce more men for combat and for colonisation. Thus, 'the family again became part of the public sphere, producing, reproducing, fighting, and dying for the state' (Bernstein,

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<sup>80</sup> The Ministry of Welfare issued two important mandates in sequence in 1940 and 1941. One was the National Eugenics Law (*Kokumin Yusei Hou*, established in 1940 and promulgated in 1941), and the other was the 'Outline for Establishing Population Growth Policy'. The National Eugenics Law demonstrated the state's determination to secure 'quality control' of the population by providing two significant stipulations: the sterilization of those identified as having hereditary diseases, and the prohibition of birth control for the healthy. The 'Outline for Population Policy' begins with a discussion of the urgent importance of increasing the quality of the population in the name of the imperial mission to construct the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' (*Dai toa kyoeiken*) (Miyake, 1991, 278).

<sup>81</sup> Mitsuda Kyoko, "Kindaiteki boseikan no juyo to henkei," in Wakita (ed.) *Bosei o tou*, 2:124-27, cited in Robertson, 1992, 94.



1991, 12). Propaganda urged Japanese women to support the war project with their bodies and femininity:

State propaganda exhorted women to contribute to the nation through their hard work, their frugality, their efficient management, their care of the old, young, and ill, and their responsible upbringing of children (Nolte and Hastings, 1991, 152).

The boundary of the traditional sexual division of labour seemed to be re-defined: 'women were treated either as mothers to be mobilised on a mass scale in patriotic associations or as draft labour to be organised in munitions factories. These two roles, however, shared the same origin: the state's definition of the woman's place' (Miyake, 1991, 269). All these practices enjoined on Japanese women echoed the state's injunction to women to be patriotic mothers for a 'sacred war'. For this, mystification and veneration of motherhood was endorsed by the state.

Japanese women were integrated into the national project of war on different terms from the men. The formulation of their national identity urged them to give commitment to their nation through motherhood. They were assigned the role of 'rearguards': firstly, producing and raising children, especially sons of the Emperor who will be future soldiers, who after her husband's death at the front, will carry on the traditional culture for them. Constructing women as mothers of the nation has 'the effect of placing their reproductive capacities at the centre of their service to the nation' (Hall, 1993, 100). Secondly, maintaining a national boundary through their personification of Japanese national identity was assigned to the Japanese women. For the government, the image of the mothers was a crucial tool to integrate both men and women into the war effort (Hayakawa, 1996, 110). Here, women are represented as ethnic markers or as symbols of national identity again.

Not only 'virtuous' women, but also the 'fallen' were supposed to participate in the war effort. In Japan, there had been a long tradition of licensed prostitution established since the Meiji Restoration<sup>82</sup>. Legalised prostitution under the Emperor system functioned as an apparatus complementary to the patriarchal family - by meeting the sexual needs of male soldiers (Yang, 1997, 58). This state-regulated prostitution system was planted in its colonies (Suzuki, 1993, 55; Kawada, 1995, 6, 47). There were *Karayukisan*<sup>83</sup> who were sold into debt bondage to brothel keepers throughout Southeast Asia and China mostly in the 1905-1930 era, as an integral tool of military expansionism (Hane, 1982, 218-222). *Karayuki* were the product of this convergence of rural impoverishment, the traditional devaluation of female children as expendable, government suppression of practices to limit family size and energetic overseas military and trade expansion into countries such as Korea, Manchuria, China, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore (Enloe, 1988, 31-32; Morisaki, 1986). They were sent abroad to sexually entertain the Japanese men who were also sent abroad for military and trade activities to promote colonialism (Suzuki, 1993, 221-222). Thus, Suzuki makes the point that modern Japanese power suppressed and controlled women's sexuality for the purpose of expansion and invasion of other countries (Suzuki, 1994, 14). This tradition of *Karayuki* and a pre-existing pervasive culture of officially sanctioned prostitution in Japan formed the backdrop to the "Comfort Women" project.

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<sup>82</sup> The modern Japanese licensed prostitution system began with a series of early-Meiji-period laws and ordinances: the Ministry of Popular Affairs Notice(1871), Finance Ministry Proclamation 127 (1872), the Order to Liberate Prostitutes and the Regulations Concerning Brothels and Prostitutes (October 1872), the revision of clauses concerning unlicensed prostitution in Article 267 of the National Law(1873), Council of State Edict I, and the Metropolitan Police Headquarter's proclamation of the Criminal Code for Prostitutes (1876) (Fujime, 1997, 137-8). For more details for state-regulated prostitution in the Meiji era in Japan, see Doke Seiichiro, 1928.

<sup>83</sup> *Karayukisan* literary means China-bound persons.



Japanese femininity and Korean femininity resemble each other in terms of the binary themes of the 'respectable' and the 'fallen'. The polarisation in these two femininities were brought into the conceptualisation of the colonial version of femininities, the 'respectable' mothers in the rear and the 'fallen' "Comfort Women" on the battlefields. The Japanese colonialist gender policy splits the roles of sexuality and reproduction not just between different categories of women within Japan - prostitutes and married women - but also along national lines, such that the role of the model Japanese woman is that of reproducer and mother of the future military labour forces, while the role of the model Korean woman is that of sexual object, prostitute, and comforter of the imperialist forces. The sexuality of Japanese women as 'mother of the nation' was primarily conceptualised as reserved for reproduction. To this end, the Korean women were required as sexual objects for their military men: for example, in Okinawa, Japan, "Comfort Women" were provided from outside in order to promote good relations with local people which would have been jeopardised by predatory sexuality. Korean girls were sent to Okinawa as "Comfort Women", to protect the local Japanese women.<sup>84</sup> The dichotomised images of Korean women and Japanese women, as sexual instruments and as 'national mothers', respectively, were enforced by the masculinist state power. The positioning of "Comfort Woman" as a 'polluted whore' reserved the position of 'respectable' wives, mothers and daughters for Japanese women in the rear in Japan.

This dichotomy served to deepen the ethnic hierarchy between the two. These features of traditional understandings of women that circulated in both Korean and Japanese societies, facilitated the imposition of colonial domination in the interests

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<sup>84</sup> For information on comfort stations in Okinawa, see Kawada, 1989.

of imperialist expansion through war. The Japanese military imperial state is able to benefit from the coexistence of these very similar ideologies. Paradoxically, Korean nationalism also feeds and draws upon the same opposition.

### **7.2.3 *Femininity in Korean Nationalism***

The colonial version of femininities converges in some respect with that of emergent Korean nationalism. Korean nationalist ideas inherit the Confucian ethics of womanhood. It is preoccupied with female virtue, and the traditional Confucian polarisation and fixity of masculine and feminine identities. Kandiyoti (1993) argues, the boundaries of feminine conduct are constrained within the context of nationalism. Her point is applicable to the Korean context: the Confucian ethics adopted for nationalist norms reaffirm the traditional boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist ideology (Kandiyoti, 1993, 380). Korean women have been channelled into the culturally acceptable image of women as chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal by its nationalist movement.

Korean nationalists regard the policy of state-regulated prostitution introduced to Korea during Japanese regime (1910-1945) as 'designed to destroy Koreans'<sup>85</sup>. They view the policy of prostitution to be essential to colonialism.<sup>86</sup> It is true that state-regulated prostitution policy was introduced into Korea by the Japanese colonial government, and it was a part of colonial policy, but the pre-existence of

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<sup>85</sup> 'Musekinin na Fusan keisatsu (The irresponsible Pusan police), *Donga Ilbo*, 3, July, 1925, cited in Song, 1997, 1998.

<sup>86</sup> The *Choson ilbo* railed against Japan as a nation for which prostitution is an overseas development policy (*Choson Ilbo*, *Choson Dailynews*, 23 August 1925, morning edition), and Japanese prostitutes are regarded the front-line troops of colonial policy (*Choson Ilbo*, *Choson Dailynews*, 30 August 1925, evening edition, cited in Song, 1997, 197).



prostitution in Korean tradition which could be the soil to implant the policy does not seem to be acknowledged by the Korean nationalist camps.

There is also continuity and discontinuity in Korean nationalist ideas in comparison with those of Japanese colonialists in terms of gender politics. The Korean nationalist ideology had been engaged in the process of identity formation of the "Comfort Woman". Nationalism has historically functioned as one of the most powerful weapons for resisting colonialism, as Castoriadis (1987) points out. However, the epistemology of Korean nationalism does not break from that of Japanese colonialism in terms of its positioning of women.<sup>87</sup> In this process of anti-colonialist reconstruction of representation, traditional ideals of femininity are often reinforced. The collective national identity makes icons of women, too. Yuval-Davis argues that 'women often come to symbolize the national collectivity, its roots, its spirit, its national project. Moreover, women often symbolize national and collective 'honour' (Yuval-Davis, 1993, 627).

This problematic symbolisation of women as markers of the boundaries of national belonging was superimposed on the familiar split between those women who were regarded as 'honourable', and 'shameful' to their nation: 'The depiction of the homeland as a female body' has been revealed in Korean nationalism. This trope of the nation-as-woman, of course, depends for its representational efficacy on a particular image of woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal (Parker *et.al.*, 1992, 6). The preservation of traditional femininity is believed to be the 'only way to resist foreign intrusion - a communal identity marker, against outsiders' within nationalist ideologies (Kandiyoti, 1993, 384). Nationalist tropes use representations

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<sup>87</sup> Pertaining to Korean nationalism and "Comfort Women" issue, see Yang, 1998.

of women's bodies to mark national or communal boundaries. The female body is continuously appropriated as a kind of national resource, or national threat by nationalists. As Chhachhi suggests notions of femininity are intimately bound up in the construction of communal identities (Chhachhi, 1991, 144-175).

Korean women are institutionally positioned as property in the masculinist rhetoric of Korean nationalist ideology, not only belonging to a man but also to their nation. In this nationalist rhetoric, the violation of the bodies of the "Comfort Women" is read as 'a matter of our national pride'<sup>88</sup>, or 'national purity'.<sup>89</sup> This trope of the female body as guarantor of national purity is linked to the image of the 'contaminated body' raped by the Japanese men, in Korean nationalist ideas. As Miyoshi Jager plausibly argues, female chastity and virtue are not so much a private issue between couples as a public one that involved the well-being of the state (Jager, 1996, 15). An institutional concern with chastity in this nationalist trope represents rape as the violation of chastity, or 'national purity', instead of the violation of human rights - so rape becomes an act that undermines the essential identity of the Korean nation. Choi (1992) draws attention to the fact that many former "Comfort Women" committed suicide upon returning to Korea, fearing allegations of promiscuity and the contempt of their own society. Underlying such acts was anguish over having lost their chastity and being dishonoured.

Feminine subject-positioning imposed by Korean nationalism is gendered, uncontaminated and homonational. Uncontaminated national values generate the image of the women who were raped by others, i.e., Japanese, as contaminated,

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<sup>88</sup> Editorial in *Donga Ilbo* (Donga Dailynews), January 16, 1992.

<sup>89</sup> Park You-me rightly maintains that the "Comfort Women" 'in the colonial space whose bodies become sites of colonial encounters, bear the burden of the signification of corrupted national purity' (Park, 1995).



defiled, or shameful. Such approaches continue to silence the women. Women's experience of rape is associated with national, communal and male dishonour. The theme of national honour has been thus tied up with the bodies of women. The bodies of "Comfort Women" become a site of contestation where Japanese colonialist and Korean nationalist stage their battles. Yet the Japanese colonialist endeavour to inscribe the women as prostitutes, and the Korean nationalist insistence that women's bodies are vessels of national purity, in fact mutually reinforce each other, in a paradoxical fashion. Women's bodies are paradigmatic sites in creating gender and national identities. Here I draw attention to the fact that in both Japanese and Korean nationalism, Korean women are represented as men's property. Japanese men's sexual coercion and use of Korean women daily enacted Japanese men's possession of the Korean nation and Korean men's inability to keep Korean women for their own use - thus, recapitulating Japan's dominance and superiority and Korea's subjugation and inferiority. It also represented the weakness and emasculation of Korean men in contrast to Japanese men.

Redefining femininity has been a regulatory practice of Korean nationalist power and Japanese colonial power. The Korean nationalist reclaims his masculine power stripped away by the colonialist, reinstating femininity in traditional Confucian terms such as chastity, docility, submissiveness, acquiescence, self-sacrifice, and devotion - while the construction of the women's identity as prostitutes by the colonist was enacted to destabilise Korean identity. The Korean constructions of femininity feed into the Japanese sexual double standard, and into the colonial construction of Korean and Japanese femininities, since the Korean nationalist rhetoric redeploys masculinist codes of female sexuality. Constructions of femininities by Korean nationalists and Japanese colonialists have a commonality in

terms of embroiling tropes of female sexuality, fertility and motherhood into the formation of national projects. Therefore, the femininities of "Comfort Women" have been metaphorised and restated in a doubly colonised way.

### **7.3 'Re-socialisation': Using and Transforming Traditional Femininities**

The positioning of the "Comfort Women" on the site of enslaved sexualised feminine identities was achieved through the everyday practices in the comfort stations. Firstly, the identity constitution process started with the prostitutionalisation of the young Korean girls taken to the comfort stations, naming their bodies with the language of promiscuity such as *Chosenpi* which means Korean 'cunt', or 'public toilets' (Yoshimi, 1995, 222). The women's bodies are turned into a metaphor of promiscuity, objectification for physical use, and contamination. The metaphorisation of the women's body represents it as for public use: for everybody, not just for one man, and secondly, as an excretionary object, finally as 'dirty', like a toilet. The term *Chosenpi* metaphorised the "Comfort Women" as mere sexual instruments associated with their nationality. In being called by the sexual organ, the woman came to be represented only by her vagina for sex. This practice of being identified with a single sexual organ also served to encode on her body a sexualised feminine identity.

The classification of the women as prostitutes took place in comfort stations to implant promiscuous and defiled feminine identity in them. Here, I shall look at the patriarchal power of naming. In a study of pornography, Dworkin identifies this power of naming and defining:



This power of naming enables men to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself (Dworkin, 1981, 26).

In the "Comfort Woman" context, her body, experience, and identity were named and redefined as 'prostitute' by masculinist powers. The 'loose' image, that of sexual availability, was created through categorising the woman as sexual object. Central to this process was the dismantling of respectability: literally, of self-respect. The opposition of 'respectable/defiled' in the patriarchal code of womanhood conjoins in the practice of this identity formation, to re-classify the women as 'loose'.

While Japanese femininity was primarily constituted by motherhood during the war, the Korean woman's motherhood and family system were not incorporated under the scheme of protection. The fertility and sexuality of the "Comfort Women" had been controlled through a separation of reproduction from sexuality. The woman's reproductive ability was seen only as an obstacle since her body is used solely for sex. The Korean "Comfort Woman" was deemed to be a disposable sexual being.

This enactment of prostitution is internally-contradictory: if 'the girls' were already prostitutes who volunteered in order to ply their trade, the process of prostitutionalisation with the intensive level of force and violence would have been unnecessary. The widespread practice of violence, and its threat undermines the attempt to implicate the woman in responsibility for the sexual acts in which she was obliged to engage. Numerous former "Comfort Women" have maintained that overwhelming fear paralysed them, preventing resistance. The sadism of the soldiers, recruiters, and managers: the use of humiliation, intimidation or psychological

domination of the women which is well-documented in chapter 4, transformed them into mere sex objects. Many resigned themselves to their fate, or gave up in despair, in the face of overwhelming violence. After constant repetition of this treatment, the fear of encountering humiliation and violence became ingrained within the everyday life of the women. Therefore, in such an enslaved environment of fear the women were compelled to act out the script of their own violation line by line, as though it was freely consented to. The slave-like subjugated and vulnerable feminine identity was forced on the women, and their subjectivity was denied in being forced to act out what was in fact rape, as though it was prostitution.

The sexually directed violence was the instrument for such humiliation and degradation that many wished for death. Scarry powerfully diagnoses the deprivation of the capability of control by violence in the setting of torture (Scarry, 1985, 46-47). This was the case in the comfort stations, too: pain in the body of the "Comfort Woman" is overwhelmingly present, while her voice, world and self are absent. Sexual violence as a means of conquest by superior force was experienced by some of the women as 'a living death'.<sup>90</sup> The ravaged body felt like 'a corpse'.<sup>91</sup> Severe physical violence removed the women's control over their world and their bodies. In this way, the integrity and subjectivity of the women were denied. Patriarchal Confucian ethics of feminine docility and submissiveness were redeployed, to play a role in the daily practices which positioned the women in such slave-like subjugation.

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<sup>90</sup> Testimony of Yi Okpun in *Hanguk chonsindae*, 1993, 168.

<sup>91</sup> Testimony of Choe Myongsun, in *Hanguk chonsindae*, 1993, 264.



In addition to this 'stick', there were 'carrots' offered as inducements to promote the collusion of the women in war projects, as shown in chapter 4. In sum, the gender-specific strategies produced the "Comfort Women" in the identity of prostitute, a stigmatised feminine identity. The bodies of the "Comfort Women" were defined solely in terms of sexuality. This re-socialisation of the women through their sexuality was central. Categorising the women as prostitutes functioned as an endeavour to alter their identity: to make them 'wanton' in the eyes of their own society and themselves, because women's value resides solely in their chastity.

#### **7.4 How Successful was the Process and with What Effects?**

Attempts to position the "Comfort Woman" in enslaved sexualised femininity helped the war projects in several ways, directly and indirectly. First of all, the creation of sexualised femininity degraded and destroyed the social position the "Comfort Women" previously held, and so reduced them to social outcasts. Scarry's discussion (1985) of the 'grammar' and logic of torture is very relevant here. The point of torture is not just to destroy an enemy, or to force him to yield important information, but also to force him to testify to the power and superiority, the 'rightness' of the torturer and his cause. While the actual bodies and mind of the women were being tortured, maimed and destroyed through repetitive sexual coercion, the power relationship between the conqueror and the conquered was established and acknowledged.

This procedure is accomplished through imposing promiscuity on those who had defined themselves in terms of the ideology of chastity. The aim was to nullify the women's identity, using the Confucian sexual norm in which she had been socialised. The violation of women's bodies is read as damaging the most

fundamental ground of the social belief system that sustains Korean feminine identity. Sexualised violence in this context is designed as an efficient political strategy as well as a sexual practice. Such serial rapes aim at destroying not only the personal self-identity or dignity of a woman but also the identity of the community to which she belongs, since her body is deemed to be a community possession. Scarry plausibly addresses the main purpose of rape in war: raping enemy women offers a quick and effective means of injuring the enemy (Scarry, 1985, 63-81). Despite the fact that Korea was not an enemy of Japan during WWII, Scarry's point is telling in the context of the "Comfort Women". The comfort station system fostered the imperial project as well as an imperial war. The Korean "Comfort Woman" became an outcast: a nationless body unacceptable to 'respectable' men, and to her nation:

Chastity involves not virginity as such, but rather that there is always a proper place where female sexuality belongs... Korean women's sexuality belongs to Korean men. This notion has already alienated woman's sexuality from herself by endorsing its belongingness to men and nation (Yang, 1998, 131).

The classification of the woman as a mere sexual object, a prostitute, plays another major part, firstly, in 'fixing' the identity of 'the tart', and in fixing certain women in that identity, so that it becomes difficult for her to ever escape that position. This process makes her position as a sexual object 'true'. Sexualised violence weakens her power to resist by moving her self-identity. The participation of the women for the war was fostered by such means. In relation to the Bosnia-Herzegovina context Copelon argues that 'rape is fundamentally violence against women - violence against a woman's body, autonomy, integrity, selfhood, security, and self-esteem as well as her standing in the community' (Copelon, 1994, 201). I have argued that rape is seen to function not only as violation of women but also of



the nation: the trope of the women's body as metaphor of the integrity of the nation is a dangerous one for women.

A substantial number of the "Comfort Women", in fact, chose not to return home to Korea after the war. Even though many of them returned, their use as "Comfort Women" was not publicised, for fear of sullyng Korean national honour. This personal sense of failure to conform to traditional norms, particularly chastity, felt by many of the women, could be labelled as 'renunciation of indigenous values and loss of cultural identity' (Tohidi, 1994, 127). Therefore, the "Comfort Women" have been kept silent for 50 years. Nobody, neither Korean nor Japanese, wanted to hear about the episode of the comfort stations. The cultural practices of Confucian and nationalist ideologies of womanhood explicate this 'collective amnesia'. The conceptualisation of 'chastity' and 'virtuous' female sexuality in relation to national purity permitted the silencing of the women. Korean national pride, and the sense of shame that many of the women themselves felt, combined to collude with the interests of the Japanese in denying what had taken place, in silencing the women.

The positioning of the "Comfort Women" as prostitutes transformed the act of rape into one of 'whoring' in which she shared responsibility. This seems to be more or less, a hegemonic discourse on "Comfort Women" of the post-war Japanese state: the women were viewed as prostitutes working voluntarily for private entrepreneurs<sup>92</sup>. It was easier for Japanese men if they allowed themselves to believe that the "Comfort Women" were 'only' prostitutes and that therefore the men had a right to sex with them. This rationalisation is bolstered by the dichotomisation

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<sup>92</sup> In June 1990 when Motooka Shoji, Senator, Socialist Party in Japan, demanded in the budget committee of the Japanese diet, that the Japanese government investigate the issue of "Comfort Women", the government responded that "Comfort Women" should be viewed as prostitutes.

between the 'respectable' and the 'defiled'. Not be respectable is to have little social value or legitimacy as Skeggs powerfully points out in her study on the concept in the context of British working class women (Skeggs, 1997, 3). It is assumed that a woman who lacks respectability does not deserve to be protected. The categorisation of the Korean "Comfort Woman" as a prostitute permits the legitimisation of the practice of sexual enslavement. In this way, the enforced subject-positioning of the "Comfort Women" in sexualised femininity by the colonialist served to confer the right to sex onto the military men.

Finally, in relation to military masculinity, enslaved femininity served to enact the colonial relationship of master/slave; coloniser/colonised. The women's bodies were provided as available to the military men, to provide 'comfort' for them: it placed other women 'off limits' to the soldiers' marauding sexual activities. The creation of subjugated femininity through sexual coercion reinforced the domination of men over women. Sexual mastery is the major means through which the men affirmed their masculine power. The military men elaborated masculine power in relation to the imagined powerlessness of the "Comfort Women". Promiscuous or impure feminine identity fortified misogynistic masculine identity, and submissive feminine identity created a superior masculine identity. Consequently, the sense of mastery of the Japanese military men was established through positioning the women as enslaved subjects. The bodies of Korean "Comfort Women" were of use to maintain the masculinity and the sense of national superiority of the Japanese soldiers. On the other hand, concurrently and paradoxically, the contaminated image of femininity was sutured onto the women as those who destroy masculinity. In this sense, the femininity created through the "Comfort Women" project has a contradictory double edge: it both boosts masculinity and at the same time places it



in jeopardy, through contact with bodies viewed as 'contaminated' and diseased. This dilemma could be reconciled by regarding the women as 'a necessary evil'. Therefore, interestingly, sexualised femininity both confirms and ministers to the men's masculinity, but also endangers it.

I have attempted in this chapter to show how the comfort station system redefined femininity through the control and regulation of the bodies and the sexuality of the "Comfort Women". The system may be seen as at once a patriarchal and imperialist instrument of war. It was an articulation of identity as colonised and as women. The colonialist and Korean and Japanese nationalists focus on the women's body and their sexuality in the constructions of norms of femininities serves their masculine and national interests. Accordingly, the construction of feminine identity is indissolubly tied to that of national identity. Particularly, in the issue of "Comfort Women", there is an inextricable connection between gender and national identity. I will look therefore at national identity in the next chapter.

## 8 NATIONAL IDENTITIES

I am dying to be back in Choson.<sup>93</sup> As long as I am in Choson, I have no further wish even if I die <sup>94</sup>(my translation).

In this chapter, I will look at the national identities of "Comfort Women" and the Japanese military men since one of the key components which is under attack in colonial domination is national identity. The Japanese construction of the Korean identity of the "Comfort Women" is characterised in terms of inferiority, (or pseudo-Japaneseness), subjugation and promiscuity. Contrarily, the Japanese construction of national identity of the Japanese military men is characterised in terms of the superiority to which their colonial dominance testifies, muscular patriotism, xenophobia, and collectivism. These two contrasting identities were produced and reproduced in the "Comfort Women" system. I shall investigate discursive practices in the comfort stations and in the military: for instance, spiritual education, propaganda, rituals for Japanese military men, and on top of these, the practices of de-culturation, assimilation and sexualised violence imposed upon the Korean "Comfort Women". Finally, I shall discuss the way in which the creation of these identities contributed to the Japanese war project. Exploring the ways national identities were formulated and maintained helps us to understand the significance of the "Comfort Women" system in Japanese imperialism.

According to Anthony Smith's definition, we may speak of 'national identity' when a named human population shares 'an historic territory, common myths and

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<sup>93</sup> *Choson* is an old name for Korea, and this is still used in North Korea.

<sup>94</sup> A former "Comfort Woman" Im Kum-hwa, she has remained in China since after WWII (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 109).



historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (Smith, 1991, 43). However, while national identities are, in Smith's terms, shared in a population, they are structured along lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender - there is boundary, hierarchy, and classification. Men and women of different social classes or ethnic groups share the same national identity and common culture in different ways. In terms of sharing history, culture, economy and common political destiny, Koreans and Japanese have distinct national identities even though the Japanisation of Korea was attempted in colonial endeavours from 1910 till 1945. In this chapter, I will draw attention to national identities structured along lines of ethnicity and gender.

## **8.1 Characteristics of National identities of the Japanese**

### **Military Men and the "Comfort Women"**

#### **8.1.1 *Characteristics of National Identity of the Japanese Military Men***

First of all, the national identity of the Japanese military men was defined in terms of colonial domination. It was that of 'a master race' or 'a superior race'. Japanese national identity based on ethnic superiority was a condition of the maintenance of their identity. What was emphasised was Japanese moral and biological superiority. There was a sense of pride in their own country as well as feelings of superiority over other peoples in Asia. The essentialist construction of racial superiority operated in conjunction with the dominant/subordinate power relationships between the coloniser and its colonies and with the task of bringing civilisation to the 'least-civilised' people of Asia.

Secondly, the identity was accompanied by a sense of muscular patriotism. The rhetoric of Japanese 'ultra-nationalism' in wartime also recalls affective relations,

bonding, familial loyalty, and self-sacrificing behaviours. The underlying ethical presupposition was that the individual should willingly die for the sake of the Emperor/the nation<sup>95</sup>. A great emphasis was placed on preparation for and performance in war as well as on glorification of death in battle (Tsurumi, 1970, 4). This sense of deeply-felt military patriotism is evident even in the expressions of remorse in the testament of Tojo Hideki, the army General and wartime Prime Minister in the face of the death penalty:

As a man responsible for the waging of the war, I deeply regret that the war ended with our defeat. Personally I am most disturbed by my death penalty. However, my responsibility to my countrymen is so deep that I cannot fulfil it even with my death..... I deeply regret what I have done and apologize to the Emperor and to my countrymen (Sugamo, 1954, 683).

Patriotic identity, as we see here, was closely connected to absolute loyalty to the Emperor.<sup>96</sup> The Emperor was defined as the symbol of national unity and became the ideological centre of the imperial state (Gluck, 1985, 73). This definition served to sustain Japanese identity. It became a source of common pride in terms of its participation in the 'great work of modern civilization' (Jansen, 1984), and the superiority of the Japanese race. It was an idea which circulated in the practices of the comfort stations, too. For example, assaulting Korean "Comfort Women" was regarded as working for the Emperor (Dolgopol, 1994, 79). The Japanese Emperor system was deeply implicated in constructions of Japanese national identity, and the creation of national loyalties.

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<sup>95</sup> The Emperor was simultaneously established as semi-divine father to the national community and head of state (Weiner, 1995, 449).

<sup>96</sup> Loyalty to the Emperor and filial piety to one's parents were justified by the Meiji elites on the basis of the feudal concept of *on* and repayment of *on*. *On* is translated by Ruth Benedict as 'indebtedness' (Benedict, 1946, 98-113). But, Tsurumi criticises Benedict's understanding of it, since *on* is really obligation as a result of receiving benevolence from the superior (Tsurumi, 1970, 93).



On the other hand, Hujiwara argues that the patriotic identity of the soldiers was forcibly imposed. He writes that 'the army was based on orders, force and coercion, by which the soldiers had to submit and became slaves, instead of voluntary involvement in the defence of their nation' (Hujiwara, 1977, 28 - my translation). Hujiwara's hypothesis is supported by some testimonies of Japanese veterans. But whether by force or not, patriotic fervour was firmly deposited in the Japanese national identity, legitimating aggression against other Asian peoples. Supposedly for the sake of the nation, brutal war crimes were acclaimed as bravery in the name of patriotism.

Another aspect in the context of 'ultra-nationalism' of Japanese national identity was that being patriotic was virtually equivalent to being xenophobic. Urging patriotism on the Japanese people went hand in hand with hatred against or disdain for other Asian and Western nations. Communalist sentiments of muscular patriotism were also directed against others. Stressing the distinctiveness of Japanese national identity resulted in racist exclusions of others who were not Japanese. An example can be found in the terms by which Koreans were called. Terms used for Koreans such as '*Hantojin*'<sup>97</sup>, '*Chosenjin*'<sup>98</sup> themselves have derogatory connotations: they carry a contemptuous image of the subjugated. This image imposed on the terms implies also the superiority of the Japanese as a master race. There are other ample reports from the women about xenophobic comments or treatment by the military men against the 'nationless' women as shown above and in

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<sup>97</sup> *Hantojin* means literally, people from the peninsula, Korea.

<sup>98</sup> *Chosenjin* means literally people from Korea, but it is a derogatory term to call Koreans. It would have a similar nuance to Paki for Pakistani, Paddy for Irish, or Chinky for Chinese.

chapter 4. The Japanese men's national identity was affirmed through the denigration of Koreanness.

The men's identity was rooted not only in a sense of racial superiority, but this racial superiority was expressed through a heightened 'masculine' sexuality, which positioned Korean men as 'effeminate', in a manner similar to that of the British positioning of Bengali men in India analysed by Mrinalini Sinha (Sinha, 1987). Park You-me (1995) has shown that the Japanese image of Korean men was as emasculated and infantilised: the image of a subjugated colony was feminine. The Korean state was feminised because of its subordinate position in relationship to the masculine and victorious Japanese imperial state. On top of this, the assumption of women as property of their men and nation led the Korean men to be feminised as not real men because of their inability to protect 'their' women.

Another characteristic of Japanese masculine identity was collectivistic, in contrast with western identities of individualism. The needs or interests of the community had a higher priority in politics than those of the individual.

The traditionalist ideas of social harmony, of duty and self-sacrifice, of loyalty to the Emperor and obedience to parents, and of the special character of the Japanese *kokutai*<sup>99</sup> were thoroughly embedded in the minds of most Japanese (Duus, 1976, 207).

The dependently collectivistic characteristic in Japanese national identity was also exposed in collective suicides in the military when their nation lost WWII as shown in chapter 5. The suicides were rituals of honour enacted on Japan's surrender. The feudal samurai ethic of dying honourably for the sake of one's lord was revived in the episode of killing themselves rather than being 'disgraced' by being captured by the

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<sup>99</sup> *Kokutai* means national polity.



enemy. The death could be considered as honourable death for the sake of the Emperor and wiped out the shame of defeat.

Comparing Japanese totalitarianism with that of the Italians and Germans, Edwin Reischauer observes that:

the Japanese people may have been more docile and more easily led, and the opponents of the new trends were not well enough entrenched in their liberal ways and ideologies to put up resistance... Japanese totalitarianism thus appeared less harsh and more moderate (Reischauer, 1970, 203 - 204).

Japanese totalitarianism may have been less harsh on the Japanese. In contrast, its colonial policies were very harsh and exploitative because of the primitive level of Japanese capitalism prior to WWII. Capital was accumulated through the exploitation of people and resources from its colonies.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the national identity of the Japanese had a specific gendered aspect. Japanese men were supposed to fulfil military duty, and the women their maternal duty for the supply of future soldiers under the slogan "Bear children and multiply".<sup>101</sup> Accordingly, women were supposed to serve the nation biologically, with their body. Kandiyoti argues that it was 'the purely instrumental agenda of nationalist policies' (Kandiyoti, 1993, 376) to mobilise women during national emergencies, as shown in the chapter 7. In this process, the myth of the common destiny or unity of Japaneseness was stressed to strongly urge responsibility for physical, cultural and social reproduction for the nation. Hayakawa, a Japanese women's historian, highlights the construction of Japanese women as 'mothers of the nation':

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<sup>100</sup> For discussions of exploitative aspects of Japanese colonial policy see Pak, Kyung-sik, 1986, Peattie, 1984.

<sup>101</sup> The pamphlet titled "The Outline for Establishing Population Growth Policy" issued in 1942, clearly presents motherhood politics during the war. See Uno 1993, 300; Miyake 1991.

The mother's role which supports and conveys the Japanese Imperial tradition was fanatically stressed as an ideology integrating women and men into the war effort in the period of 1937 to 1945 (Hayakawa, 1996, 114).

To some extent, those Japanese women who conformed to this ideology provided enabling conditions for the colonial state, rather than being just passive victims of patriarchal state power. Many of them were profoundly involved in colonialism, for example, by teaching, nursing, and writing (see for example Ryang, 1998). As Strobel and Mills point out in the context of the historical process of British expansion, the colonising women could benefit from the economic and political subjugation of indigenous peoples and shared many of the accompanying attitudes of racism, paternalism, ethnocentrism and national chauvinism (Strobel, 1991, xiii; Mills, 1994, 39). Japanese women could simultaneously constitute 'centre' and 'periphery'.

Summarising, the national identity of the Japanese soldiers was characterised by muscular patriotism, loyalty to the Emperor, xenophobia, and collectiveness. It is a gender-differentiated identity. In particular, the Emperor system played a crucial role in fortifying Japanese national identity. This identity was rooted in a combination of the Emperor system (*tenno-sei*) and nationalism. The hegemonic national identity of the Japanese men was colonialist, while that of the "Comfort Women" was anti-colonialist. This contrast stems from the fact that their national identities were created and reinforced within the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, the oppressor and the oppressed. The Japanese construction of Korean identity served to positively define their superior Japanese identity. Korean women's inferior ethnicity as 'uncivilised', sexualised and promiscuous, served to enhance the Japanese men's ethnic identity as superior, patriotic, civilised, and virile.



Phallic nationalism and muscular patriotism flourished in the soil provided by the suffering and degradation of the Korean "Comfort Women".

### **8.1.2 The Japanese Construction of Korean Identity of the "Comfort Women"**

One of the factors which plays an important role in the development of the national identity of the "Comfort Women", is an identity imposed on Koreans by Japanese colonialism. Koreans were basically regarded as 'an inferior race' under Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). However, as Mitchell acknowledges, centuries before colonisation, Koreans were historically deemed as the bearers of superior culture and technology. For example, Korean immigrants between the fourth and sixth centuries were welcomed by the native Japanese and were awarded a commensurately high status (Mitchell, 1967 cited in Weiner, 1994, 9). As a result of colonisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, this status disappeared and was replaced by that of the aforementioned 'inferior race', as uncivilised, irrational and unruly. For example, in Weiner's work on Korean labourers in pre-1945 Japan, he also reports:

Koreans were accused of being emotionally volatile, indolent and unstable, while the community was perceived of as being largely composed of ignorant, filthy and morally deficient paupers who were prone to criminal behaviour (Weiner, 1994, 214).

Women's situation was depicted as 'uncivilised', 'pitiful and sad, like that of barbarians', and as 'merely men's playthings', in the magazine, *Fujin shinpo*, issued in Japan in 1894. Consequently, Japanese women were urged to act as missionaries in guiding Asian women to civilisation and independence'<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> 'Shina fujin no shogai(2), *Fujin kyofukai zasshi*, No.14 (December 1894), 'Chosen no fuzoku', *Fujin kyofukai zasshi*, No.14 (December 1894), *Fujin kyofukai zasshi*, No.12 (October 1894) cited in Fujime, 1997,158-159.

It is because, like our country's current effort to assist their *civilization* by lending them military power and by helping with their independence, we want to help them by using as much as possible the power of our women in looking at this situation'<sup>103</sup> (my emphasis).

The Korean "Comfort Women" were framed, defined and understood as 'uncivilised' through the needs and projections of masculine Japanese colonialism. The Japanese construction of national identity imposed on the Korean "Comfort Women" followed the lines of racial prejudice. The women were positioned as inferior, subjugated and promiscuous by the colonialist.

The subjugation suffered by the colonised was represented and understood to be a particular quality characteristic of a people judged to be inferior by nature. Craven submissiveness was attributed to the Korean 'national character'. The newspaper, *Donga Ilbo*, reported that Japanese manufacturers in Korea preferred young Korean girls since they were docile and not difficult to handle according to a survey by the Japanese colonial government (*Donga Ilbo*, November 10, 1933). This pre-existing image of the subjugated Korean woman was employed in the Japanese construction of identity imposed on the "Comfort Women".

Finally, the women were identified as sexualised and promiscuous. The Korean female bodies were characterised as a ground of identity of the colonised by the coloniser. Sexualised and derogatory words against Koreans were used at comfort stations, usually with violence. For instance, the women often heard '*Ppagayaro! senpino kuseni!*', which literally means 'Idiot! nothing but a Korean cunt!'. The derogatory comments on the women carry sexualised and devaluing connotations of the colonised.

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<sup>103</sup> '*Chosen no fuzoku*', *Fujin kyofukai zasshi*, No.14 (December 1894) cited in Fujime, 1997,158.



The difference between the two races, Korean and Japanese, was constructed through markers of inferiority and superiority. Japanese superiority was exhibited by positioning the Korean "Comfort Women" as promiscuous and inferior and vice versa. Gender and nationality in the identity constitution of the women were interwoven, creating a colonised identity rooted in power relationships. The restructuring of the Korean identity of the women is allied with the patriarchal Confucianist gender relations in which they have traditionally resided.

The Japanese own constructions of the Korean national identity of the "Comfort Women" can be summarised as follows. First, the women were regarded as uncivilised and inferior. This fabricated inferior identity was embodied in the naturalisation of Japanese domination over the "Comfort Women". Second, the identity was promiscuously sexualised and contaminated: promiscuity was a colonialist and masculinist message inscribed on the bodies of "Comfort Women".

## **8.2 Practices for Establishment of National Identities**

I will examine how the national identities of the "Comfort Women" and the Japanese soldiers became established and consolidated through practices in the army and comfort station.

### **8.2.1 *Practices in Reconstructing National Identity of the Japanese***

#### ***Military Men***

The inculcation of national identity in the Japanese military men was continuously undertaken through everyday practices. First of all, patriotism was instilled through the ritual of reciting the whole text of the Imperial Precept to Soldiers and Sailors (*Gunjin Chokuyu*) at the start of each day, in which a heavy

emphasis was placed on loyalty to the Emperor, and submission to the superiors<sup>104</sup> (Nishino, 1992, 145-146). The text of the Imperial Precepts to Soldiers and Sailors specified five primary virtues for the military: loyalty, propriety, valour, fidelity, and simplicity. Among these five virtues, loyalty ranked first: 'fulfil your essential duty of loyalty, bearing in mind that duty is weightier than a mountain, while death is lighter than a feather'<sup>105</sup>. This text shows one-sided loyalty from the bottom towards the top. This is the obligation placed on recipients of benevolence 'on'. This theme of loyalty was widely circulated and gained importance in identity formation practices. It provides a motif of commitment for the Emperor and the nation, especially during the national emergency of war. Indoctrination in the army included the word-for-word citation of the text. It was supposed to fortify Japanese identity through inculcating in them the Emperor cult.<sup>106</sup> Everyday recitation of the Precept was like a metaphorical 'identity card' for loyal subjects of the Emperor, for Japaneseness (Tsurumi, 1986, 27). It was an ideological device which aimed to produce subjects ready to die for the sake of the Emperor, a key element in Japanese male identity: a national masculine ethos.

Secondly, Japanese national identity was fortified through 'spiritual education' and a strong sense of the nation under threat. Incessant claims were made that the sense of nation was perpetually in danger, never complete, or sharply on the decline

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<sup>104</sup> A series of textbooks for the ideological indoctrination of soldiers had been completed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The most important were the Admonition to Soldiers (*Gunjin Kunkai*), published in 1878; the Imperial Precepts to Soldiers and Sailors, issued in 1882; the Infantry Drill Book (*Hohei Soten*), a book of military strategy brought out in 1891; and the Rules of Domestic Affairs in the Army (*Guntai Naimusho*), a book of regulations for the private lives of soldiers adopted in 1888. Most of the ideological socialisation in the Japanese army consisted of verbatim memorisation and recitation of these code books (Tsurumi, 1970, 85).

<sup>105</sup> William T. de Bary, *et al.*, (eds.), 1958, 198-200, cited in Tsurumi, 1970, 122-123.

<sup>106</sup> The ideology of the Emperor cult was inculcated in the entire population in their formative years through compulsory moral education (*shushin*) based on the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890) (Tsurumi, 1970, 99).



(Gluck, 1985, 36). The suicidal attackers of the *Kamikaze* (Divine Wind) and of the *Kaiten* (Turning of the Heaven) by the Japanese human torpedoes were the final outcome of the spiritual education of soldiers<sup>107</sup>. The state destiny of Japan was perpetually stressed, to encourage a willingness for collective self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation was enshrined as 'the highest calling for any Japanese subject' or 'honorable service' (Humphreys, 1995, 49). 'The fighting spirit, the sentiments of blind and absolute loyalty, courage in the face of death, were prominent and highly prized'. Soldiers were told that 'they would become gods of the fatherland and would be worshipped in the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo. To be made a Yasukuni god is a special honour bestowed only on national heroes' (Tsurumi, 1970, 125). Honourable death for the sake of the Emperor was glorified. In fact, the men must have had no choice but to accept their fate (*ibid.*, 1970, 133). The Japanese soldiers' vulnerability when facing the prospect of death in battle, rather than any eagerness to die for the nation was observed by former "Comfort Women": 'they were so scared to go to fight or wept as they cried with the women' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 46, 75). The provision of comfort stations for sex was a reward for the Japanese soldiers for their endurance of hardship and the prospect of death.

Thirdly, an exclusive national boundary of superior Japaneseness was drawn by distancing the Japanese from others. Propaganda consolidated national identity and fuelled hostility towards opponents from outside these national boundaries. The Japanese were exposed to and imbedded in this propaganda since their childhood through the education system, mass media, local organisations and military training.

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<sup>107</sup> Only Japan, late in the war, turned to an official strategy of suicidal attack. This began with the organisation of a 'Divine Wind Special Attack Corps', the *Shimpu* or *Kamikaze Tokubetsu Kogekitai*, by the Imperial Navy during the Japanese defence of the Philippines. Escorted to their targets by fighters, the pilots were instructed to plunge their bomb-laden aircraft directly into enemy ships (Cook, 1992, 265).



A sense of ethnic superiority was reinforced by creating negative images of the "Comfort Women" by means of sexual domination by Japanese 'masters' of Korean 'sexual slaves'. The comfort station project was a material expression of this trope. There are ample examples presenting the trope of Japanese superiority.

The themes of superiority/inferiority are found explicitly articulated in countless written forms:

We, the Yamamoto race, are presently spilling our 'blood' to realize our mission in world history of establishing a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>108</sup> In order to liberate the billion people of Asia, and also to maintain our position of leadership over the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere forever, we must plant the 'blood' of the Yamamoto race in this 'soil' (Dower, 1986, 227, cited in Kim Hyun Sook, 1997, 89).

The assertion of ethnic superiority was internalised in the mentality of the Japanese, so that it helped to establish a Japanese national identity in privilege and dominance. The theme of a 'master race', was a particular way to represent Japaneseness. The differences were deemed to be immutable, biological and intrinsic differences between the superior and the inferior. Rooted in the ideology of ethnic superiority, tropes of both the great nation (*Taikoku*) and Japan as the uncontested leader of Asia (*Toyo no Meishu*) emerged. The ideology of exclusiveness of the Japanese predicated on a sense of belonging and fraternity always articulated that exclusiveness at the expense of others. The terms of Japanese nationalism such as *kokutai* (national polity), *kokusui* (national essence), *kokuminsei* (national characteristics) implied and also invoked powerful images of community, solidarity and exclusivity (Weiner, 1995, 445). As a result, it created an ethnic hierarchy.

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<sup>108</sup> The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere was an economic and military geopolitical bloc under Japanese hegemony (Duus, 1976, 229).



Relationships between Japan and other Asian nations were euphemistically figured as that of elder brother and younger brother or that of parent and child. For example, a colonel from the War Ministry in 1942 represented the Japanese as 'the guiding race':

Because Japan was best equipped to guide the backward societies of the southern region, the relationship between Japanese and local peoples must be that of elder brother and younger brother (in *Kokusaku Kenkyukai Shuho*, 18 April 1942, cited in Beasley 1987, 192, 244-245).

The trope of the Japanese as the 'leading race' provided the Japanese with legitimation in terms of a mission to 'civilise' the rest of Asia. The superiority of Japaneseness in the racial hierarchy was naturalised. For example, the annexation of Korea was legitimised by claiming that 'the Koreans can be slowly and gradually led in the direction of progress...' as Takeyoshi Yosaburo asserted (cited in Peattie, 1984, 95). The Japanese imperial mission to 'liberate' the rest of Asia from Western imperialists, and to construct the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere guided by the Japanese is also an example. Tojo Hideki, as Prime Minister said in his speech in 1942 that:

The object was to create an order of coexistence and co-prosperity based on ethical principles with Japan serving as its nucleus.... the whole of Greater East Asia, whether independent countries or newly occupied lands, must be made one with Japan, each being brought to contribute its own strength for the sake of Japan (Baba, 1983, 416-417, cited in Beasley, 1987, 235).

The concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere provided ideological justification for colonial expansion. 'Prosperity' was not 'shared', it was exclusively for the sake of Japan.

Finally, xenophobic sentiment was provoked and encouraged in everyday life in the army, for instance, through maltreatment of Korean soldiers and "Comfort

Women" and callous brutality against local people in the territories Japan occupied: most notably, the practice of treating women as sexual objects to be appropriated, conquered or disposed of, exacerbated contempt for and hostility against them. Thus, sexuality was used to escalate ethnic hostility and conquest. Anger and contempt were maximised in the soldiers by the extensive use of physical and sexual violence, while distress, fear, and humiliation were the consequences for the "Comfort Women". Here, one person's physical pain can be understood as another person's power as Scarry rightly indicates (Scarry, 1985, 37). Another's pain is even deemed enjoyable by some of the Japanese soldiers, as is seen in chapter 5. Colonial power had its foundation in violence. It facilitated a sense of Japanese superiority and of the contamination of Korean blood. Not only the "Comfort Women" themselves, but also any babies to which they gave birth at the comfort stations, were deemed polluted with inferior Korean blood. The few babies that survived were given Korean nationality. They were regarded as a 'disgrace' to the Japanese Imperial Army. As Choi rightly points out, 'planting Japanese blood through producing hybrid beings was not part of the "Comfort Women" project. The hybrid has been deemed as contaminated or dishonoured from both sides' (Choi, 1997, ix). Hybrid children were regarded as contaminated by both Korean and Japanese: contaminated by Korean blood for the Japanese, and by Japanese blood from the Korean nationalist point of view. Not only the babies, the "Comfort Women" themselves were deemed 'contaminated' and 'impure':

The troping of the "Comfort Women" as a raped nation is a powerful point. It strikes a deep cord of shame in the colonised and invokes nationalistic sentiments, that inevitably narrativize an account of "Comfort Women" as untainted virgins (Choi, 1997, x).



Korean blood was regarded as a sign of treachery. Abortion of the pregnancies of Korean "Comfort Women" was usually enforced with the comment from the Japanese men that 'we don't need the *Chosenjin*'s baby who would not dedicate their loyalty to the Emperor' (*Jainihon chosen*, 1992, 18). The vulnerability of the women was taken to mirror the nation's own 'effeminacy' in contrast to colonial masculinity embodied by power. The dominant Japanese identity of the men was constructed through such representation of the colonised. Ethnic inequalities were institutionalised and intensified within the "Comfort Women" system. For the Japanese military men, fortifying their national identity was arranged through everyday propaganda, spiritual education, punishment and reward.

### **8.2.2 *The 'Pseudo Japanese' Subjugated Identity of the Korean "Comfort Women"***

Ideological themes become most effective as social forces when they are embedded in everyday social practices. A degraded 'Koreanness' was imposed upon the "Comfort Women" by the Japanese in and through the daily routines of the comfort stations. First of all, the superior Japanese identity of the military men was expressed through sexual violence and extortion. Institutionalised sexual exploitation under the comfort station system stripped away the national Korean identity that the women had brought with them. As we saw in chapter 7, the routinised practice of sexual coercion and manipulation of Korean women's image as prostitutes played an important role in creating the Korean "Comfort Women" in the image of promiscuity, contamination, powerlessness, and subjugation.

Since the Meiji period, the Japanese state had strictly controlled the sexuality of its people, and this policy was employed in governing the colonies, too. Control of

sexuality aided colonial politics, where masculine and colonial dominance were associated in the "Comfort Women" project. As Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) rightly argue, the control of women through their sexuality is essential to national and colonial processes. The experiences of Korean "Comfort Women" demonstrate the ways in which sexuality was involved in the colonisation of Korea.

Humiliating xenophobic comment was rife<sup>109</sup>. Integrity and dignity as women and as Koreans were stripped away by enforced sexual slavery and the labelling of the women as prostitutes: a gender-specific strategy to destroy national identity through sexual debasement. Xenophobia and misogyny merged in the practice of routinised sexual violence against Korean "Comfort Women". The representation of ethnic hatred towards women was manifested in sexual violence. The sexualised violence at the comfort station was an expression of domination of men and colonisers, and an apparatus for creating a subjugated sense of self through terror and demoralisation. The identities of the powerless and subjugated and of the powerful, were forged together. The humiliation of the "Comfort Women" confirmed and reproduced the sense of power and superiority of the Japanese soldiers. Thus, the positioning of the bodies of the women as a sexualised and defiled site is an essential move in the power configurations of the coloniser and the colonised.

Secondly, a policy of systematic de-culturation was put in place. Korean culture was forbidden expression, Japanese culture was imposed upon the Korean women in daily life in comfort stations. Every effort to retain Korean national culture was suppressed at comfort stations to destabilise the identity of the women. The

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<sup>109</sup> A typist who worked in the military during the war reported the comment of a former Japanese officer made to her on the boat in which former "Comfort Women" were returning home, that: 'there was no need to consider those (the women) as human beings as they are less than beasts. They should appreciate only that they were allowed to get on board' (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 28 - my translation).



"Comfort Women" were subject therefore to not only physical but also cultural dislocation. Japanese obliteration of Korean national culture in language, songs, names, and clothes, and the imposing of Japanese culture was a core colonial policy. The ordinance banning the use of Korean surnames (*soushi kaimei*) and the Korean language was issued for the purpose of assimilation by the Japanese colonial government in Korea in 1940 (Suh, 1989, 33; Lee Yeounsuk, 1996, 246). It was compulsory for educational instruction in Korea to be given in Japanese. In addition, worship at Japanese shrines was made compulsory (Pak, 1986, 389-390; Kim Un-te, 1986, 500-501; Lee Ho-chul, 1987, 495). Weiner stresses that the construction of an ethnic hierarchical order involved the suppression of Korean institutions and language and strict adherence to patterns of thought and behaviour which encouraged obedience to the master race (Weiner, 1994, 31). De-culturation placed its colonies at the bottom of the pyramid of the Japanese family-state system under the umbrella of the Emperor system. The comfort station was not an exception. This devaluing and discarding of Korean culture at comfort stations reinforced the subjugated identity of the Korean "Comfort Women" as 'nationless'. The practice of banning Korean national culture was intended to destroy the base for solidarity of the women as Korean, in an attempt to impose common social values by enforced communication in the same language.

While Korean culture and identity were taken away from the women, an assimilation policy was simultaneously imposed. The policy was to implant a re-coded Japanese mentality in the "Comfort Women". According to the Japanese governor in Korea, Minami Jiro, who introduced the assimilation policy, it 'is for making the Koreans into good (law-abiding) people of Japan' (Pak, 1988, 345 - my translation). 'From a Korean perspective, assimilation ultimately demanded the

complete renunciation of their culture and eventually their language in favour of the values and institutions of the Imperial core' (Weiner, 1994, 155). The language policy served as a strategic instrument of domination which would provide the first step in the destabilisation of the social values of the colony and in the substitution of a pseudo-Japanese identity.<sup>110</sup>

The policy of assimilation was accompanied by propaganda of ethnic/racial harmony and ethnic/racial community within the frame of Japanese domination. A myth of common destiny under the Emperor was vigorously propagated through the mobilisation of Korean women for Japanese war projects. At the comfort stations there was a regular recital of the Oath of Imperial Subjects (*shinmin no seishi*) which is an imperial pledge, at every morning assembly. The Korean "Comfort Women" had to promise to be loyal to Japan, reciting the Oath, and singing Japanese military songs (Mun Pilgi, interviewed in 1992). However, a common identity as children of the Japanese Emperor by no means conferred the same rights on Japanese and Koreans. A paradox is involved in this procedure. In order to subjugate the women, they were refused all the markers of their 'Koreanness' - dress, speech, cultural expressions - and told that they were Japanese. On the other hand their differences from the Japanese were also never forgotten. If to be Japanese was to be superior, then the Koreans must be defined as 'other' to the Japanese. An uncrossable boundary of ethnicity was drawn in order to formulate and legitimate stratification and hierarchy between the coloniser and the colonised. In other words, their 'Koreanness' was at the same time *both* denied *and* affirmed. The women were supposed to serve for the Emperor, too: they were told to dedicate themselves to the

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<sup>110</sup> Lee Yeonsuk (1996) underlines the role of the Japanese language for assimilation as a core policy of Japanese colonialism.



Emperor with Japanese names (*Jainihon chosen minju*, 1992, 14). The women were forced to become 'pseudo-Japanese'. They were deemed to be 'children of the Emperor' when being mobilised for wars (Dolgopol, 1994: testimony of Yun Soon-Man, 79), but without thereby losing their inferior status as Koreans. The enactment of practices of de-culturation and assimilation, at the same time, anchored and enforced the tropes of Japanese superiority and Korean inferiority. The colonial power identified their subject peoples as passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-government, unruly, and uncivilised. Colonial endeavours were normalised, naturalised, and legitimated.

Thirdly, the Korean "Comfort Women" were seen as disposable. They were dispatched to the more dangerous front lines of battle fields, while their Japanese counterparts served in less dangerous zones (*Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992, 55). Concerns that local Chinese "Comfort Women" could release military secrets on the front lines and that Japanese women were placed in danger close to the front line, led the military authorities to put forward the idea of sending Korean "Comfort Women" to such front line stations (Yun Chong-ok, 1997, 291; *Jugun Ianfu Hyakutoban*, 1992; Bang, 1997, 236). In addition, the reproductive capacity of the Korean women was made dispensable. The use of the bodies of "Comfort Women", as sexual slaves, cleaners, entertainers, and even warriors can be seen as 'superexploitation' in Blaunt's term, which means exploitation to the point where reproduction of labour is barely possible, and even in some cases beyond that point (Blaunt, 1987, 165). The bodies of the women were used up and then discarded in the service of the Japanese war effort.

Fourthly, ethnic hierarchy was introduced among "Comfort Women" too, as shown in chapter 4. There was a hierarchical order among "Comfort Women" in

accordance with their ethnicity. Japanese "Comfort Women" were mobilised under the slogan of 'a final devotion for the nation', or 'for the sake of the Emperor' (Suzuki, 1992, 43). In terms of Japanese class and gender politics, their bodies were conceived as subjects to be offered for the nation in war time. They had become professional prostitutes before they came to the comfort stations (Yoshimi, 1995, 88). Many were forced into the sex industry for example, by being sold by peasant parents because of destitution. Economic hardship which impelled the women into prostitution constituted another kind of coercion. They were supposed to serve, or some of them had a sense of dedicating themselves, for their nation under the slogan hung in front of a comfort station, 'Service by dedicating body and mind of Japanese women!' (Yun Chong-ok, 1997, 292).

There are commonalities and differences in the experiences of Japanese "Comfort Women" and their Korean opponents. Both had their bodies used for colonial expansionism. The Japanese women were marginalised in terms of sexual politics along the lines of gender and class. There might be a sense of shared oppression in terms of sexual exploitation. On the other hand, they might share interests and benefits in maintaining a superior national identity as Japanese with men of their group, which may have led them to support the war project. For example, Shirota Suzuko, a former Japanese "Comfort Woman", recalled that she had an inclination to console the men who served the nation to the point of death, in addition to wishing to earn money (*ibid.*, 280). While the Korean "Comfort Women" were positioned as treacherous, damaging and polluted 'whores', Japanese prostitutes would perhaps position themselves as patriots, rather than degenerates, whose work was altruistic in serving their country. Any resistance of the Korean "Comfort Women" would mark itself not as a sign of womanly virtue, but as the refusal to be



'daughters of the Emperor', like the patriotic Japanese prostitutes<sup>111</sup>. This positioning reinforced ethnic hierarchy and vice-versa. The ethnic hierarchy of Japanese "Comfort Women" for officers and Koreans for rank and file created the illusion of different degrees of 'promiscuity'. This stratification along the lines of ethnicity and gender existed between the Japanese men and the women, and between the Japanese "Comfort Women" and other Asian "Comfort Women", stemming from masculine and colonial dominance.

In this section, I have examined the forced enactment of 'inferiority', degradation and submission to create and bolster the national characteristics claimed by the Japanese. These actual practices for restructuring identities show the relation of the women and the soldiers to the colonial power. McIntosh (1978) and Lovett assume the relation is 'much more often indirect than that of men... (W)hile men were directly controlled within the wider 'public' sphere, the state sought to regulate women indirectly through the language and authority of kinship' (Lovett, 1989, 28). This model does not fit in the case of the "Comfort Women" system. The Japanese colonial state directly controlled women in terms of their sexuality and labour in everyday life. The women might have been controlled in different ways, but the "Comfort Women" like the Korean soldiers, were still under the direct control of colonial power.

To summarise, the national identity of the "Comfort Women" was degraded and redefined through actual practices of everyday life: firstly through systematic and persistent use of rape and other forms of sexual assault, which created

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<sup>111</sup> However, I think that there has been stigmatisation attached onto the Japanese "Comfort Women" unlike veterans in post-war Japanese society, this might be one of reasons why the issue of Japanese "Comfort Women" has not been actively addressed.

powerlessness, inhuman-ness, subjugation and promiscuity of the Korean "Comfort Women". This imposed promiscuity combined with a sense of national dishonour had deeply demoralising effects. Political motives for rape in demoralising the colonised must have been strongly involved in the process of identity alteration. Secondly, de-culturation: the attempted obliteration of Korean culture stripped the Korean "Comfort Women" of an independent national identity. It served to destroy their Korean identity, their existence as Koreans. Simultaneous imposition of Japanese names, language and garb was one of the most obvious symbolic ways to plant the new subaltern Japanese identity, as a strategy for assimilation. On the other hand, ethnic hierarchy was still maintained. Finally, treatment of Korean "Comfort Women" as disposable, and the preservation of an ethnic hierarchy between Japanese "Comfort Women" and Korean "Comfort Women", maintained distinctions even among women who shared a situation of gross sexual exploitation.

The reconfiguration of national identities was instituted through everyday practices. Bodies, national/ethnic boundaries, violence, power, and sexuality were combined together in the identity formations of the colonial power. These practices were legitimated through ideologies of a 'natural' ethnic and gender superiority, expressed in a language of affiliation and loyalty. The cluster of ideas and practices combined to deprive Korean women of their identity and to reconstruct it as subjugated and pseudo-Japanese.

### **8.3 Identity Reformation as a Political Weapon**

In this final section I shall investigate the way in which the development of the characteristics of the national identities of the Japanese soldiers and the "Comfort Women" promoted the project of total war and Japanese colonialism.



Two contrasting national identities were created and maintained by a nexus of relations between the coloniser and the colonised which are in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination. The creation of the inferior, subjugated and powerless colonial identity of the women positioned the soldiers in superiority and power. The existence of these Korean "Comfort Women" allowed Japanese men to experience themselves as superior and more valued. The soldiers' ethnic pride as Japanese was created out of the relationship with the supposedly 'powerless' "Comfort Women". Their bodies were placed at the bottom of a pyramid of military organisation, 'in the dirt', and to give the other, the Japanese military men, a sense of superiority. One's powerlessness created the other's power. Colonial supremacy based on ethnic hierarchy and suppression of the Korean "Comfort Women" was naturalised in a circular way. Within the colonial context, re/production of superior Japanese identity could lead the Japanese soldiers, themselves often the victims of class domination, and serving as no more than 'cannon fodder', to share in colonial ideas of power and authority.

This identity politics ensured Japanese people believed their futures and the destiny of their nation as being heavily interdependent. The reinforcement of identity made it possible to facilitate voluntary activities prompted by patriotic concern to contribute to the war. Through this inculcation process, the soldiers could sympathise with the war project in order to 'civilise' and 'liberate' the rest of Asia. The collective national identity of the Japanese military men would lead to the shaping of their loyalty and obedience to the Emperor. Establishment of the Japanese national identity in the soldiers led them into the internalisation and naturalisation of their self-sacrifice for the sake of the Emperor's altar, so they could be ready to die for the nation.

For the "Comfort Women", the control of women, especially their sexuality was strategic in identity constitution. The attempts at depleting their existing national identity enhanced their demoralisation so that their resistance might be restrained. One of the key ways in which this was done was through the imposition of the image of promiscuity and dishonour to their nation onto the women. The association of the colonised nation with the female body metaphorises the sexual atrocity as national humiliation or violation of national honour by both the Japanese colonial power and the Korean nationalists. Additionally, imposing a pseudo-Japanese national identity onto the Korean "Comfort Women" was intended to promote collaboration from the women through giving an illusion of common destiny for their future and that of the Japanese nation. Therefore, the national identities of the Korean women and the Japanese men which were enacted through the "Comfort Women" system functioned to assist the war project.

The political process of encoding and decoding identities in order to serve colonialism produced a colonial version of national identities of the "Comfort Women". Nevertheless, in spite of these attempts to turn Korean women into pseudo-Japanese, the women resisted this imposition. They struggled in myriad ways to keep and develop their own national identity as Koreans. The identity imposed with such brutality upon the Korean women, and which they were forced to enact every day, on pain of death, did not entirely uproot the very different sense of identity to which many of the women clung in a variety of forms of resistance. There is always a gap between the positionings imposed on subjugated peoples by the dominant, and their own self-positioning, although, as may be seen in the eloquence of almost 50 years of silence about this sustained atrocity, the daily enforced enactment of subjugation, degradation, dishonour, inevitably sank deeply into the bodies and the selves of these



women. In the following chapter, I shall explore the ways in which the women manoeuvred to retain an alternative sense of selfhood and national identity.

## 9 CONCLUSION

In this conclusion chapter, I will show how the Korean women negotiated their own sense of identity in positioning themselves in relation to the Japanese constructions of gendered and Korean national identities, which they were forced to enact in their daily lives in the comfort station. The previous three chapters indicated the ways in which the "Comfort Women" were positioned in terms of national identity and gender identity. The female body and sexuality were exploited, most notably, through the ceaseless sexual assaults. This sexual degradation had powerful effects at the same time in producing the Korean colonial subject in inferiority and domination. The 'subject-positioning' of the "Comfort Women" was framed and bound by Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism. These presentations of women's bodies and sexuality built upon pre-existing Confucian ideologies of femininity. The bodies of "Comfort Women" were the contested terrain on which political regimes of Japanese colonialists and Korean nationalists were built and practised.

The stories of the "Comfort Women" reveal countless acts of resistance, deeply courageous attempts to maintain self-respect, to offer mutual support, to keep alive a different sense of their identities as Korean women. But the daily enactment of the debased femininities imposed on the women with such brutality constituted a powerful assault on their sense of self. Their attempts to maintain their self-respect in the face of this assault was partially undermined from within, by their own prior internalisation of Confucian ideologies of femininity. The testimony of the women reveals a strong sense of shame. To a degree, it seems as though the women



themselves judged what the comfort station programme had forced them to become by the standard of the Confucian 'good wife/ wise mother', a feminine identity now closed off to them.

## 9.1 Conformity: Internalised Femininities

The sexual regime of the comfort stations drew, as we have seen in chapter 7, upon the opposition found in both Japan and Korea, between the 'chaste and virtuous woman' and the debased, sexualised woman personified by the prostitute. The "Comfort Women" were forcibly positioned as the latter. What is particularly tragic and unjust is that this understanding of the feminine identity of the "Comfort Women" has been partially shared by other Koreans after the war, and by the women themselves. In their testimonies, the women draw at times on the language of prostitution in describing their ordeal. A substantial number of my women informants still refer to the soldiers as 'customers'. Pak Tu-li, a former "Comfort Woman" still calls the comfort station she was taken to as 'the house to sell a body' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 33).

The women's experience of 'being raped' in the first instance is interpreted by them in terms of 'losing virginity', which is very shameful. The cultural code of Confucianism serves to internalise the ideology of chastity in them. The 'castration and theft metaphors', described in Marcus' work: the understanding of the sexual organs as objects that can be taken or lost, is graphically illustrated here. Such losses dissolve the self (Marcus, 1992, 398). The losers present themselves as 'the ruined', 'the dead' or 'finished' (Yi Yongnyo's narrative in *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 146), since the occurrence of rape is evaluated in terms of the destruction of a self-defining chastity. The 'castration and theft metaphor' haunted the women through the whole of their lives: a life long sense of shame. Many of the women developed a sense of

self-loathing. It is a paradox that on one hand their testimonies strongly refuse to accept the label of 'prostitute' and, on the other hand, that a sense of their own defilement is equally strong. The testimonies show that many of the women have felt themselves to be morally and socially degraded or stigmatised by their enforced sexualisation. They suffered a form of social death. Former "Comfort Woman" Yi Okpun, used the metaphor of 'a rotting pumpkin left out in summer' in her self-representation (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 101). Pumpkin is used as a metaphor for an ugly woman in Korea. The smelly rotting pumpkin is a striking image therefore of a feminine identity which is 'defiled' and so ugly. The women's experience was viewed through a patriarchal lens, so they deemed themselves as 'dirtied' by rape, 'not clean' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 115). Their bodies are identified as not quite 'decent' in terms of the double standard of sexual morality they have themselves internalised. The opposition between virgin as the paradigm of the good woman, and whore as the bad has controlled women most effectively when it has been deeply internalised. The promiscuous sexualised identity forced upon them at the comfort stations deprived them of respectability and integrity, turning them into 'vulgar' women. Furthermore, their impaired reproductive capacity as a consequence of serial sexual coercion from an early age, reinforced the sense of themselves as 'unworthy' women, not entitled to get married. Womanhood is conceived of being accomplished by reproducing a child within marriage, especially a son to continue the patrilineage, in the patriarchal Confucian code. Thus, being unable to reproduce induced a sense of disqualification, or guilt for 'ruining' their men's lives, if they could not give them sons.

Virgin and fertile bodies are essential to this ideological construction of 'decent' feminine identity. Being a wise mother and good wife was the only



respectable existence recognised for women in Korean codes. These patriarchal Confucian codes of chastity and motherhood had formed the self-identity of the former "Comfort Women". They judged their own existence at the comfort stations in terms of these codes. They have developed a sense of an immutable difference from the other, the 'respectable' Korean women.

Taking up the masculine language, common to colonisers and to Korean men, by which their bodies are defined as contaminated, unacceptable and unwelcome in their community, led the women to handle the living conditions they had to endure, with resignation, or to give up the wish to return home 'with a dirtied body' after the war (Ha Kun-ja's narrative in *Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 75). There seemed to be no position for them to go back to, despite their strong attachment to their nation. The patriarchal and Korean nationalist ideology established in their society, endorsed in many respects by the women themselves, may have limited their ability to resist and silenced them after their return home.

Much of the resistance offered with such courage by the "Comfort Women" was resistance against their enforced positioning as sexually degraded: as 'bad' women. Yet such resistance leaves the opposition between 'good wife/wise mother' and 'whore' in place. Many feminists have insisted on the need to challenge this fundamental opposition which recurs in many forms in many very different cultures and which serves patriarchy so well.

There is some evidence that the 'pseudo-Japanese' identity which was pressed on the women may have had some effect. A few women seem to have accepted this 'pseudo-Japanese' national identity, either because they believed colonial propaganda, or more commonly, to avoid the shame with which they were viewed in Korea after the war. Some of them expressed the wish that Japan had won the war, as

they believed this was the only way they could survive, and put an end to their sexual objectification.<sup>112</sup> The women may have understood that their boats had been burned so far as achieving the identity they wished for in terms of being 'virtuous' Korean women was concerned. It might be thought that there would be less shame attached to 'becoming Japanese'. One of the common effects of oppression is the desire to become members of dominant groups through sharing the dominant identity. It can be said that the construction of a particular kind of subordinated national identity creates its opposite in the form of the taking on of cultural and social characteristics of the dominant. 'Doubleness' is most characteristic - a gesture through which the subjugated Korean "Comfort Women" learn to see themselves both in the terms in which they are viewed by the dominant, subjugating group, and in opposed self-derived and more self-respecting terms.

## 9.2 Resistance in the Comfort Stations

While the women may adopt the subject-position offered by institutionalised social scripts for the duration of the exchange, it does not mean that this is necessarily part of their 'core-identity' retained outside of that interaction. Some of the enforced subject-positioning was taken up by the women when they saw themselves as dirty and impure and thus not fit to return home, as shown in the previous section. The women have been rendered invisible, silent, and powerless. However, even in such adverse circumstances they were never entirely reduced to the position of passive or defenceless victims. Certainly there is evidence in the women's testimony, of a bitter struggle between the Japanese colonialists and the Korean

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<sup>112</sup> This statement was given by Jin Kyung-peng, and Kim Bok-dong (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1997, 24, 93). Most of the women thought that if Japan lost the war, then they would all be killed as well, according to Choe Chong-lye, a former "Comfort Woman" (*ibid.*, 1997, 221).



"Comfort Women": the former finding every means in their power to deny the subjectivity of the women, the women to cling on to it and to use it as a weapon of resistance. Their counter-actions constitute resistance to their positioning by the Japanese as colonised objects, and also at times to the patriarchal codes themselves which informed Korean as well as Japanese patriarchy.

In some cases, they used their bodies to resist enforced promiscuity, their bodies were a means of resistance as well as of imposing positionality: refusing sex by pretending they were menstruating or had caught venereal diseases. A braver form of resistance was to refuse to 'serve' the men's request directly. The women who fought the soldiers were ready to die, like Hwang Kumju:

I shouted at him: 'I'd rather eat your shit than suck you!' This made him very angry. He beat me and threw me about, shouting '*Konoyaro koroside yarouka*', something like 'I am going to kill you, you bitch' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 76; interviewed in 1995).

Although such resistance could not be sustained for long in the conditions of sexual slavery in which the women were held, this direct form of resistance nevertheless, presents her refusal to be exploited as a promiscuous sexual object .

Another strategy adopted by the "Comfort Women" to retain their self-respect was to reverse the judgement made by the men. They viewed the women as degraded, contaminated. But many of the women strongly expressed in their narratives the view that it was the soldiers who were 'filthy' and defiled. To label the men as 'filthy' was to challenge their pretensions to masculine and colonial power and superiority.

Another social and natural reaction to sexual objectification was becoming mad. Ussher convincingly proposes that madness stems from women's powerlessness and it is the inevitable outcome for women within a culture of

incarceration and oppression (Ussher, 1991, 20, 299). This madness might have been a way to protest against their enforced promiscuity and powerlessness. Through madness the women could control the situation where they were ceaselessly forced to have sex in a confined setting, the comfort stations, and could remove themselves from control by the masculine power. Madness may be viewed as a form of expression of opposition from those who were unable to protest their stigmatisation in other ways.

Finally, suicide could be regarded as an extreme form of resistance or revenge to sexual exploitation. Phyllis Chesler views women's suicide attempts as a sign of their powerlessness and psychological martyrdom. She argues female suicide attempts function not so much as calls for help, than as 'the assigned baring of the powerless throat, signal of ritual readiness for self-sacrifice' (Chesler, 1972, 49). Donaldson argues self-imposed death, in the context of *sati*, as an assertion of resistance rather than defeat and as providing a presence that counters the invisibility of women (Donaldson, 1992, 30-31). Suicide in oppressive situations means more than just refusal to go on living. The suicide attempts of the "Comfort Women" can be seen as a way to announce their resistance through terminating their imposed role as promiscuous and powerless sexual objects in the comfort stations. This ultimate and shocking step can be seen as a last outcry and attempted revenge.

The attempts to impose a pseudo-Japanese identity on the Korean women were resisted by every means in their power to counter. They overtly and covertly refused positioning in inferiority and subjugation. They kept alive a strong sense of their own national identification as Koreans. For example, Ha Kun-ja, a former "Comfort Woman", recalled her protest against negative comments on Koreanness, saying 'do



you know *donggarashi* (chilli). I am a *Chosenjin*<sup>113</sup>' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 69). Here, *donggarashi* (chilli) represents a distinction of Koreanness. It is used for Korean dishes only, not for Japanese. The strong and hot taste of chilli represents a firm, strong aspect of Koreanness. Emotional attachment to their origin and culture revealed itself in the longing for home and mothers, the maintenance of Korean culture through songs and speech which testified to their origin. The collective efforts at the preservation of their identity gave strength and resilience to the women, to help them to survive their ordeal. Their collectivity and solidarity created strong bonds among the women. This solidarity was based on the consciousness of ethnicity and gender, and common oppression. The significance of the attempts to dismantle and degrade Korean identity is revealed by the strength that the "Comfort Women" gained from sharing this identity with others.

The sharing of their suffering was a further source of their strength. They were strongly tied together through the whole period of brutal sexual slavery in the comfort stations. They practised sisterhood through looking after each other. Solidarity and ethnic awareness were clandestinely anchored to their everyday lives, to distinguish themselves from the Japanese. Yi Yongsu, a former "Comfort Woman" recalled:

One day, one of the older girls who normally hardly spoke a word to us announced that she, too, was Korean. She told me, in Korean, that the war was over. We hugged each other and wept with joy. She held my hand tightly and told me I must return to Korea (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 93).

This solidarity was empowering in the face of the massive pressure deployed by the Japanese to strip them of their identity and national self-respect. In comfort

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<sup>113</sup> *Chosenjin* is a derogatory term to call Koreans.

stations, the women maintained their Korean identity by constantly fuelling, on one hand, a sense of anger, on the other hand, connectedness and cohesiveness against the colonial endeavours to dislocate and de-culturate them. I argue that expression of anger can be an instrument of empowerment for the subalterns, breaking their subdued silence.

The national identity of the "Comfort Women" was developed and reinforced in opposition and resistance to the colonial endeavours to destroy or redefine their identity as the promiscuous inferiors. The counter-identity, unsurprisingly, contained a highly anti-Japanese sentiment. This, therefore, can be called a 'reactive' national identity emanating from the colonial encounter, but one founded upon a prior sense of being distinct 'people'. The "Comfort Women's" own identification had been profoundly affected by the experience of colonisation and sexual oppression. They still retain strong sentiments of anti-colonialism and anti-Japanese resentments to the present day. Expression of anger against Japan is very common in their narratives and tends to fortify their own Korean identity. Yun Turi, one of the former "Comfort Woman", stated that, 'even when I see the national flag of Japan, my anger against Japan still pours out' (interviewed in 1993). The Japanese flag is still regarded as a symbol of Japanese colonial power by which they consider their life has been ruined.<sup>114</sup>

### **9.3 Reconstitution of Identities After the War**

There could be no simple return to pre-war identities for those "Comfort Women" who survived their ordeal to return to Korea. Few of them could take up the

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<sup>114</sup> Another former "Comfort Women", Chang Chun-wul, who has remained in China, comments that 'only if there had been no Japanese colonialist, or no war, would I not have ended up in China' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1995, 121).



social identities and roles for which their gendered childhood socialisation had prepared them. Some felt a deep repugnance towards sex with men, and a reluctance to marry. For some, this was cast in terms of their own sense of shame: the belief that they were 'spoiled' - no longer fit for normal marriage. For others it was a more radical refusal. I distinguish this practice of refusing marriage or relationships by the former "Comfort Women", from the view of themselves as unfit for normal marriage for reasons ranging from the loss of chastity to venereal disease to uncertainty about the ability to have children, thereby giving up any chance of marriage or a relationship through a self-shaming mechanism.

In the Korean code of their generation, refusing to embark on marriage was a radical step indeed. Belonging to a man was a condition of social belonging for most women, a condition of acceptability in a patriarchal society. A former "Comfort Woman" described the single woman as being like 'a dog without an owner' (Lee Sangwha, 1997, 263), with nobody to belong to and no 'protector', even though man as a protector might be a myth. One alternative life strategy was cohabitation without official marriage in spite of the attendant loss of 'respectability'. But many who entered sexual relations with men again, inside or outside marriage, experienced sex only as harassment. These women were reluctant to have sex with their partners. One woman even says that she felt thankful when her husband had an affair with another woman (*ibid.*, 266). It is possible to suggest that their experiences had led to a questioning of some of the basic premises of Confucian patriarchal ideology.

Why has the silence lasted for so long? On top of the silence of the Western Allies and the Japanese governments, as we have seen in chapter 1, the politics of not talking about and forgetting the past has been enacted, especially by most of pro-

Japanese military governments in South Korea before 1990<sup>115</sup>. Issues over Japanese colonial history and the war including that of the "Comfort Women" have often been deemed as 'matters of the past' which implies that it would not be sensible to raise them in the present.

It has been argued, for example by Chung (1994), that most of the documentary evidence about the "Comfort Women" was destroyed by the Japanese when they were defeated in 1945. Even the scanty information that had been kept was ignored before the "Comfort Women" campaign. Research related to the Japanese colonial regime in post-war Korea has been focused on the independence movement. A leading dissident South Korean historian, Kang Man-gil, admitted that 'Korean historiography has made slow progress in research on the history of victims like the "Comfort Women", since conducting research and educating on the issue of the independence movement were more urgent'.<sup>116</sup> Focusing on the history of resistance may succeed in reclaiming masculine power and Korean national identity that were stripped away by the colonial power. This enhances Korean men's recovery from 'emasculatation', by showing the existence of the struggle and the resistance of Koreans against the colonial power. In this masculinist and nationalist rhetoric, the issue of the violation of the bodies of the "Comfort Women" by Japanese soldiers, is read as a matter of 'national shame' as shown in chapter 7. This issue, therefore, is repressed and substituted by the 'national hero' narratives pertaining to the independence struggle against the colonial power. Post-war Korean

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<sup>115</sup> The last military government in Korea was replaced by civilian administration in 1993.

<sup>116</sup> Kang Man-gil said this at a panel discussion session at a Korean and Japanese cooperative conference on the issue of "Comfort Women", on the 18th - 19th December 1993.



society maintained the silence over the 'shameful' issue of the "Comfort Women" for half a century by this substitution of hegemonic masculinist narratives<sup>117</sup>.

Another reason for the silence can be found in the social power of the sexes to represent. Choi (1992) argues that the reason the issue has been suppressed for so long has to do with the relationship between Korean women and the men who possess the legal and social power to 'represent' them (Choi, 1992, 98). This helps to explain why among the issues over the war raised in post-war Korea, those of the male war dead and the former forced labourers<sup>118</sup> emerged as a public issue earlier than the issue of the "Comfort Women".

The question remains of why the women allowed themselves to be silenced for 50 years, and for some of them, even until now? The former "Comfort Women" participated by their silence in the politics of forgetting, the practices of forgetting have been one of the survival strategies for the women. After the war, on returning to Korea, silence and forgetting might be a way of self-protection in the face of the return to ideologies and practices of 'respectability' and chaste womanhood which the women themselves had deeply internalised as young girls and women. This internalised conception of the respectable female body engendered shame at their own 'defiled' bodies. Even when indignation and anger were stronger than this sense of shame, when their own families and community also viewed them with shame, it was extremely difficult to defy strong pressures from those closest to them to keep silence. Thus, the "Comfort Women" issue was embarrassing and emasculating for Korean men, and shameful and painful for Korean women. In the aftermath of the

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<sup>117</sup> I have taken this idea of 'silence by substitution' from Carol Gluck's talk titled 'Past Obsession: War and Memory in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century' at the University of Leipzig on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1999.

<sup>118</sup> These issues have been raised by members of the Fraternity of Pacific War Victims' Families of Korea (*Hanguk tepyongyang yujokhoe*) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

war, the stories of the "Comfort Women" were excluded from the history of Korea, and the long period of silence, which lasted for fifty years, began.

In order to speak out, these familial, communal and internalised pressures for silence had to be overcome - pressures to keep the 'shameful' secrets hidden for the sake of family and kin. But as the "Comfort Women" campaign gained momentum, to provide a collective and supportive forum in which it was possible for the first time to speak publicly, the strength of what had been kept silent and repressed for so long, burst forth upon Korea, Japan, and the world.

#### **9.4 Breaking the Silence: The "Comfort Women" Campaign**

The process of breaking the long silence to give testimony concerning appalling suffering is a deeply painful process, since it involves re-living that suffering, re-experiencing bitterness, anger, pain and humiliation. But these long repressed emotions erupted in the "Comfort Women" campaign which emerged in 1990.

Grassroots organisations and the re-emergence of the women's liberation movement in East Asia were crucial to transforming the personal experiences of the "Comfort Women" into a public issue. In the late 1970s, the campaign against sex tourism by Japanese men in Korea was raised by the 'second wave' feminist movement in Korea and Japan<sup>119</sup>. It was out of this campaign that the "Comfort Women" issue later emerged, with the realisation that sex tourism had a more sinister historical antecedent in the context of Japan's colonial relationship with Korea. In the

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<sup>119</sup> In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, many Japanese men went on sex tours to Taiwan and Korea. This sex tourism expanded to Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines and Thailand. See Murata (1996) and Matsui (1987).



1980s, pioneering work was conducted by Yun Chong-ok, a former Korean professor who is a contemporary of the "Comfort Women". She made investigation trips to Japan, Thailand, Papua New Guinea and China where there were comfort stations during WWII, and exposed the issue by making presentations at public forums (interviewed in 1996). In July 1990, she contributed to the setting up of the Korean Researchers for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (*Hanguk chongsindae yonkuhoe*), and the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan (*Hanguk chongsindae munje taechek hyopuihoe*) in November 1990, consisting mainly of post-graduate Women's Studies students and members of the Association of Christian Women (*kyohoe josong jonhaphoe*).

When the Japanese government denied any responsibility in 1991, a former "Comfort Woman", Kim Haksun, first made her past public in August 1991 in South Korea, and challenged the denial of the Japanese government and the politics of forgetting:

How can the Japanese government deny its role in the comfort station system, as here I am as a living witness. I have lived so far burying my horrible past in the deepest bottom of my heart, but I cannot stand any more that Koreans forget the past (interviewed in 1992).

Her courageous decision provided other former "Comfort Women" with courage to break the long silence. By the end of 1991, four women had identified themselves as former "Comfort Women": Kim Haksun and Mun Okchu living in Korea, Noh Soobock in southern Thailand, and Bae Bong-ki on Okinawa. Accordingly, the practices of forgetting in post-war Korea were interrupted, and the younger generation has learned more about the issue and become active in the campaigns.

The first lawsuit by former "Comfort Women" was launched in Tokyo District Court in 1991. Rallies have been held on a weekly basis by the surviving "Comfort

Women" and their supporters since January 1992 against the Japanese government, in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, Korea. They are most insistent on a formal apology and reparation from the Japanese government and punishment of the 'perpetrators'. They have urged a campaign of education of the Japanese public concerning the colonial government's wrongdoings, and demanded compensation for the surviving victims.

Increasing numbers of former "Comfort Women" found the courage to break their 'collaborative silence'<sup>120</sup> (McIntyre, 1993, cited in Pettman, 1996, 191). Making their story public turned them from individual survivors into collectivities for resistance: making solidarity with other Asian women, and between Women of South and North Korean. North and South Korean "Comfort Women" met for the first time together at the annual forum on the issue in 1992. They resisted the silence which both colonial oppressors and male Korean nationalists had preferred.

Refusing to be silenced represents a form of resistance against the social stigmatisation and 'national dishonour' attached to them. Kang Tokkyong drew attention to the insult whereby their sexual oppression was seen as 'a shame of the nation, Korea': 'there are still some who say that what we did is shameful (a shame of our nation), but they are indeed ignorant people' (*Hanguk chongsindae*, 1993, 184). The act of speaking out their experience is a means of empowerment, through which dignity and self-respect may be recovered. Women do not always remain acquiescent, obedient and invisible. What is quite remarkable in this new period of resistance is that this time the former "Comfort Women", fought against their own,

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<sup>120</sup> By February 1993, 103 women in South Korea had identified themselves as surviving former "Comfort Women". It is reported that 123 former "Comfort Women" are also alive in North Korea (Yang, 1998, 136-137).



the Korean society, and not just against their Japanese tormentors at the comfort stations.

The former "Comfort Women" made an important challenge to their exclusion from the ranks of those who had been war victims, out of a sense that their ordeal was a source of shame, in their request to be buried in *Manghwyang-ui-dongsan* (The Hill of the Missing Home) the national burial ground and monument to the dead. Consequently, some former "Comfort Women" who died recently were buried there, for example, Kim Haksun, and Chun Kumwha. This gesture has great significance in challenging the stigma of national dishonour. Being buried at the national burial ground transforms the 'defiled prostitute' into a 'national heroine'.

With the emergence of the high-profile public actions of the "Comfort Women" campaign, resistance moved on from mere survival strategies to providing a possible basis for re-constructing new feminine anti-colonial identities which differed significantly from the old ones in which they had been socialised as 'good' Korean women. The "Comfort Women" campaign permits the emergence of more radical challenges to patriarchal femininity.

I suggest that the definition of resistance needs to be broadened to recognise actions which may be read as 'collusion', as actions which may also be read as forms of resistance. In this broadened definition of resistance, apparently collusive 'survival strategies' as well as active resistance can be included, especially in oppressive circumstances. Survival itself should be seen as a form of resistance. Within this broader definition of resistance can also be included passive resistance and the affirmation of subjecthood. This redefinition of resistance could overcome the representation of women as defenceless victims of male violence and consequently, as silenced beings shamed by sexual atrocity. The contestation,

resistance, challenge and numerous survival strategies by the "Comfort Women" to masculinist colonialism and Korean nationalism show that they constantly strove to position themselves as subjects rather than only becoming the powerless objects of violence. This affirmation of their subjecthood poses a direct challenge to the simple dichotomy between the victim versus agency approach to women's experience.

Thus, there are variations and shifts in the self-positioning of the former "Comfort Women" in between conscious agency and passive subjectivity. A unitary concept of gender and national subjectivity cannot accommodate the complexity of self-subject positioning that took place in and against the patriarchal and colonial contexts. Exploring these multiple subject-positionings allows us to challenge unitary concepts of identity which represent subjectivity as monolithic, fixed and non-contradictory.

In summary and in brief, this thesis has examined firstly, the ways in which the development of feminine, masculine and national identities are used to construct masculinist colonial relationships. Secondly, the ways the "Comfort Women" coped with this social and political process of identity re/construction has been surveyed. The positioning of the women and their own counter-positionings, took place within the parameters of the intersecting relationships of colonialism and patriarchy. Japanese colonialism was constructed by the development of gender and national identities. The "Comfort Women" system helped to produce and reproduce Japan as an imperial state with power over the lives and human resources of the colonies: particularly, the maintenance of the military system depended on the circulation of these concepts of masculinity and femininity. The regulation of masculine and feminine sexuality and identities through the comfort station system was a crucial means through which the war projects were able to expand Japanese colonialism.



The multifaceted forms of resistance developed by the "Comfort Women" during the war, culminating in the public campaign of the 1990s, may be understood as an important and neglected contribution to Korea's anti-colonial nationalist struggle, and potentially, an equally important challenge to the patriarchal domination which has continued into the nationalist period.

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# 11 APPENDIX

## List of former "Comfort Women" and Japanese Soldiers interviewed for this thesis

### 1. Former "Comfort Women"

Name	Place taken to	Year interviewed	Year of birth	Residence after WW II
1) Kim Haksun	China	May 1992	1924	South Korea
2) Mun Okchu	Burma, China	May 1992, March 1995	1924	South Korea
3) Mun Pilgi	China	November 1992	1925	South Korea
4) Chun Kumwha	China	January 1993	1924	South Korea
5) Kim Eunrae	China	September 1992; March 1995	1926	South Korea
6) Kang Tokkyong	Japan	April 1992, March 1995	1929	South Korea
7) Yi Sangok,	Palau	February 1992	1922	South Korea
8) Yi Yongsu	Taiwan	August 1996	1928	South Korea
9) Hwang Kumju	China	April 1995	1922	South Korea
10) Song Shin-do	China	July 1996	1922	Japan
11) Yun Turi	Korea	June 1992	1928	South Korea
12) Choe Myongsun*	Japan	July 1992	1926	South Korea
13) Pak Sunae	Rabaul	July 1996	1919	South Korea

The names marked with \* are pseudonyms. Of the "Comfort Women" only informant 12) explicitly requested the use of a pseudonym.

**Informant 1)** was the first in South Korea to testify in public that she had been forcibly taken as a "Comfort Woman" by the Japanese military, in 1991. She filed a lawsuit against Japan in the Tokyo District Court, for damages and other compensation in 1991. She died on the 16th of December 1997 at the age of 73.

**Informant 2)** died on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August in 1996. She was very talented in playing *Changku*, a Korean traditional percussion instrument, and singing. When she sang *Arirang*, one of songs the "Comfort Women" secretly sang in comfort stations, all her regret, anger and pain poured out through her voice.

**Informant 3)** left home in the hope of studying and earning some money, as one of her neighbours promised who collaborated with the Japanese police. She was sent to a comfort station in Manchuria, China. She has been actively taking part in the "Comfort Women" campaign.

**Informant 4)** died on the 12th of March, 1994 as a result of cardiac failure.

**Informant 5)** was born in 1926, but in her official registration papers it was stated that she was born 10 years later.

**Informant 6)** was initially sent to Japan with the first group of the *Yojachongsindae* (the Women's Volunteer Labour Corps) to the Hujikoshi aeroplane plant in



Toyama-ken, Japan in 1944, and was later taken to a comfort station. She died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February in 1997. She left some paintings in which she depicted her life at a comfort station.

**Informant 7)** was from a relatively well off family, since her father was the mayor of the town she lived in. Due to her command of Japanese, she later worked as a nurse in a military hospital in Palau, and assisted in examining other "Comfort Women" too, except for 'serving' the soldiers as a "Comfort Woman".

**Informant 8)** still remembers the Japanese military songs she learned at the comfort stations in Taiwan. She mainly had to 'serve' a commando unit.

**Informant 9)** has been internationally active to give her testimony and to publicise the issue of "Comfort Women".

**Informant 10)** was pregnant twice at a comfort station in China, and gave birth to a son there. Since the end of WWII, she has lived in Japan.

**Informant 11)** was taken to a comfort station in Pusan, Korea.

**Informant 12)** used a pseudonym. She married and had children after returning to Korea.

**Informant 13)** was married and had a son before she became a "Comfort Woman". She was sold to a job agency in 1941 by her violent husband, who had always been suspicious of her chastity. She applied for a job for the Japanese army, which she was told would be something like a cleaner. She was sent to a comfort station in Rabaul in New Britain.

## 2. Japanese veterans

Name	Place stationed	Year interviewed
14) Yoshioka Tadao	Taiwan	June 1996
15) Nakano Takashi	China	July 1996
16) Miyamoto	Indonesia	July 1996
17) Dokoda Masanori	China, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma	July 1996
18) Yuasa Ken	China	July 1996
19) Ebado	China	July 1996
20) Mita Kazo	China	June 1996
21) Goyama	China	June 1996
22) Miki	China	July 1996
23) Iwasaki	China	July 1996
24) Ogawara Goichi	China	July 1996
25) Wada	China	June 1996
26) Suzuki Yoshio	China	July 1996
27) Ito*	China	June 1996
28) Sato*	China	July 1996
29) Hara*	China	July 1996
30) Matsumoto*	China	July 1996

For some of the veterans, only the family name is provided, since they did not give their personal names. The names marked with \* are pseudonyms

**Informant 14)** was a former Japanese military officer drafted from the University of Tokyo. He served in the south part of China during WWII and used to be a



newspaper reporter in Japan, and later a lecturer at a university in Korea. He died in 1997. I had three interviews with him.

**Informant 15)** a former Japanese military officer drafted from the University of Tokyo who served in China during WWII. He used to be a professor in Anthropology after he returned to Japan after the war. He wrote his autobiography as well.

**Informant 16)** was one of the highest ranking officers in Indonesia during the war. He dealt with military affairs in Indonesia after Japan lost the war.

**Informant 17)** was a former Japanese military officer in China and Pacific Islands during WWII. He was held in Russia as a war criminal after WWII, and then returned to Japan.

**Informants 18) - 30)**, the 'rehabilitated' group of Japanese veterans, were all members of the *Chugoku kikansha renrakukai* (The Association of Returnees from China). 'a voluntary group of those arrested as war criminals and held in the People's Republic of China after the war. Some were first confined in the Soviet Union, before being handed over to China. By 1964, all had returned to Japan. ...unlike most Japanese who served in that war, they write of their acts as 'victimisers' and speak out about their crimes. They also openly raise what they consider to be the war responsibility of the Showa Emperor' (Cook, 1992, 145). All of them took part in a 'rehabilitation' programme in the People's Republic of China.

## **List of "Comfort Women" whose narratives are already released and appeared in this thesis**

**Bae Bong-ki** had lived in Okinawa in Japan, and was found dead on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October in 1991 in her home.

**Bae Chok-gan** was born in 1922, and was in a comfort station in Hang Zhou, China from 1938 till 1945.

**Chang Chun-wul** was born in 1919 and was a "Comfort Woman" in Wuchang and Guangshui, China between 1936 and 1945. She has remained and lived in China since the end of WWII. Another strong wish of the former "Comfort Women" who remained in China is to return back to Korea, in addition to the resolution of the issue of "Comfort Women".

**Chang Su-wol** is a former "Comfort Woman" of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). She was born in 1924, was taken to Chichi Haru in north China as a "Comfort Woman" at the age of 17.

**Choe Chong-lye** was born in 1928, and was a "Comfort Woman" in Hunchun, China from 1942 until 1945.

**Choe Il-lye** was taken to a comfort station in Manchuria, China in 1932, at an early stage of the comfort station system.

**Chong Song Myong** was born in 1924, and taken to Tai Kudara comfort station in Rangoon, Burma. She is a former "Comfort Woman" of North Korea.

**Chung So-un** was born in 1924 was taken to a comfort station in Jakarta.

**Ha Kun-Ja** was taken to a comfort station in Hankou, China in 1944 and remained in China.

**Ha Sunnyo** was born 1920, and had to serve as "Comfort Woman" in Shanghai.



**Hong Ejin** was born in 1928, and was in comfort stations in Shanghai, Harubin, Hankou in China (1942 - 1945). She has stayed in China since.

**Im Kuma** was born in 1923 and taken to a comfort station for the Japanese Navy in Hankou, China in 1939. She has lived in China since then.

**Jin Kyong-paeng** was born in 1923, and taken to a comfort station in Taiwan in 1939.

**Kang Mu-Ja** is a pseudonym. She was born in 1928, and was in comfort stations in Palau and Saipan between 1941 and 1945.

**Kim Sang-Hi** was born in 1922, and was taken to comfort stations in Sozu, Nanking and Singapore.

**Kang Soon-Ae** was born in Tokyo in 1928, as her parents had migrated there to work, and returned to Korea in 1936. At her age of 13, she was taken to a comfort station on Palau Island.

**Kang Yong Shil** is a former "Comfort Woman" of North Korea. She was born in 1924, and was taken to comfort stations somewhere on the Chinese/Russian border, the name of the place she did not know.

**Kim Bok-tong** was born in 1926, and was in comfort stations in Kuandong, Hongkong, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia from 1941 till 1945.

**Kim Pun-son** was born in 1922, and was in comfort stations in Taiwan and Manila between 1937 and 1945.

**Kim Soon Duk** was born in 1921, and was taken to a comfort station in Shanghai in 1937.

**Kim Taeson** was born in 1926, and taken to a comfort station in Burma in 1944.

**Kim Tai Il** is a former "Comfort Woman" of North Korea. She was born in 1916, and taken to the Den Nogi Hospital in Osaka, Japan, as a labourer, and later she was sold to a comfort station in Manchuria, China. She moved with the 6<sup>th</sup> Division of the Japanese Imperial Army to Nanking, Singapore, and other places.

**Kim Tokchin** is a pseudonym. She was born in 1921 and was in a comfort station in Shanghai between 1937 and 1940. She returned to Korea in 1940 with help of a Japanese officer.

**Kim Un-chin** is a pseudonym. She was born in 1932, and was selected as the Women's Volunteer Labour Corps (*Yojachongsindae*) amongst her classmates and sent to the Hujikoshi aeroplane plant in Toyama-ken, Japan in 1944. Later she was taken to comfort stations in Aomori-ken and Shizuoka-ken, Japan.

**Li Kyung-seng** is a former "Comfort Woman" of North Korea,

**Li Pong-wha** believes she was born in 1920, but her identification card issued by the Chinese government shows her year of birth in 1922. She was in comfort stations in Fengtian and Hankou, China between 1933 and 1945. She remained in China after the war, and lives there.

**Noh Soo-bock** was born in 1921 and taken to a comfort station in Singapore in 1942. After the war, she gave up returning home and ended up in Thailand.

**Oh Omok** was born in 1921 and taken to a comfort station in Manchuria, China in 1937.

**Pak Tu-li** was born in 1924 and taken to Taiwan in 1940.

**Pak Yoni** is a pseudonym. She was born in 1921 and taken to a comfort station in Kuandong, China in 1938.

**Ri Po Pu** is a former "Comfort Women" of North Korea. She was born in 1921, and was in a comfort station in China.

**Son Pan-im** was born in 1924, and was in comfort stations in Rabaul, New Guinea, and Borneo between 1941 and 1945.

**Yi Okpun** was born in 1926, and was in a comfort station in Taiwan from 1937 until 1945.

**Yi Sunok** was born in 1921 and was in comfort stations Kuandong, and Singapore between 1938-1945.

**Yi Tungnam** was born 1918, and was in Hankou, China from 1939 till 1945.

**Yi Yongnyo** was born in 1926, and was in a comfort station in Burma (1942-1945).

**Yi Yongsuk** was born in 1922, and was in a comfort station in Kuandong (1939-1945).

**Yun Soon-man** was initially taken to a textile factory in Japan and then taken to a comfort station in Osaka, Japan.

**Maria Rosa Henson** is a Filipino "Comfort Woman". She was born in 1927, and was involved in an anti-Japanese guerrilla organisation. In January, 1944, she had been held captive as a "Comfort Woman" for nine months in a Japanese garrison.