

## Nationalism and Gender in the Comfort Women Issue

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Almost twenty years have passed since Korean women first began to raise the issue of comfort women before public opinion in the early 1990's. During this time, the issue has become part of the larger stream of the international women's movement, and has come to be viewed as part of the sexual violence occurring in areas of military unrest worldwide. Also during this time, women throughout Asia who have survived their ordeals as comfort women have finally begun to speak out about their experiences after maintaining a long silence since the war.

Among these survivors, however, Japanese women still maintain their silence. Despite the fact that many of the women forced to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military were in fact of Japanese origin, these women have not been addressed in the effort to identify survivors or in support movements.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Japanese survivors had already begun to speak out as early as the 1980's, before the support movement for comfort women had come into full swing. Shiota Suzuko (1921-1993)<sup>2</sup> strove to make her voice heard to convince the government to build a memorial for comfort women. Although her wish was granted and a memorial was built, her story never reached society properly. And in the 1990s, when Korean women began to speak out, the plight of Japanese comfort women continued to be largely ignored both within the support movement and within society.

In this report, I wish to address how this opacity with regards to Japanese comfort women had come about. In recent years, encouraged by the resolutions passed in the US Congress and European Parliament, movements have begun in Japan toward the establishment of laws and resolutions in Japanese municipal councils.<sup>3</sup> I believe that in order to position the

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<sup>1</sup> The first time the issue of Japanese comfort women victims was discussed publicly in movements since the 1990's was at the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal in December 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Shiota Suzuko: Born in Fukagawa, Tokyo. At the age of fourteen her mother died of illness, and her home was seized for payment of debts. Dropping out of Kyoritsu Women's Vocational College, at age 17, (1938) she was sold by her father to serve at a geisha house in Kagurazaka to pay off his own debts. Here, she became a geisha and became badly infected with gonorrhoeae. Under a three-year contract, she accumulated a debt of 500 yen. She was then sent to naval comfort stations in Taiwan, Ma gong, where she accumulated a debt of 2500 yen under a three-year contract. She returned to Japan but finding herself in hardship, she went to work at a restaurant in Garapan, Saipan, where she accumulated a debt of 3,000 yen. In 1941, she traveled to the Truk Islands, and returned briefly to Japan after two years. In 1944, she traveled to Palau. After the war, the U.S. military arrived at Koror, and she was sent back to Uraga, Japan in 1946 on a U.S. naval ship. After this, she worked as a prostitute at brothels for Japanese and the U.S. military in Japan.

<sup>3</sup> The activities of the Kansai Forum ([http://www.jca.apc.org/ianfu\\_ketsugi/](http://www.jca.apc.org/ianfu_ketsugi/)) is one such example.

comfort women question as a gender issue, it is necessary to resolve the missing links with regards to Japanese comfort women,<sup>4</sup> and to address all comfort women survivors regardless of nationality.

First, I will discuss the comfort women system itself, and secondly the role of Japanese comfort women. Third, I will address how obscurity around the issue of Japanese comfort women had come about, by looking at post-war accounts on comfort women, as well as characteristics of social movements since the 1990s. Lastly, I will conclude with my own views on the importance of addressing the Japanese comfort women issue.

## **1. The Comfort Women Issue**

### **The Comfort Station System**

Military “comfort stations” were established for the purpose of satisfying the sexual urges of the Japanese military during the Asia Pacific War begun in 1931. These stations were built when women being raped by Japanese soldiers in occupied territories became a large problem, and to prevent the debilitating spread of venereal disease among the soldiers who were turning to local brothels. It was also said that the comfort stations provided relief for the soldiers under the duress of duty and not knowing when the long war would end.

Comfort stations were established as part of the state prostitution system (government-regulated prostitution system) of Japan and its colonies, and many of the same methods of recruitment and management of workers were applied in the administration of comfort stations. However, the reality of comfort stations differed largely according to whether they were situated near a commissariat, zones passed regularly by the military, or the front lines. At the average comfort station positioned near a commissariat, the workers were divided into a hierarchy according to race and ethnicity, reflecting the strictly hierarchial system of the Japanese military.

A large number of comfort women were recruited for these stations. First, the women recruited were mostly those already employed as prostitutes in Japan. When their numbers proved insufficient, women were brought from colonies in Korea and Taiwan, as well as occupied China. As the Japanese invaded Southeast Asia and the south Pacific, women from these areas were also recruited as comfort women. Many of these women were transferred along with the troops, from China to Southeast Asia and to the south Pacific.

The main characteristics of Japanese comfort stations were that they were built in large numbers across many territories, that the comfort women came from a variety of regions,

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<sup>4</sup> In March 2008, the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace hosted a symposium entitled “Shirota Suzuko Speaks About What was Done to Japanese Women who Were Forced to Become Comfort Women: The History of Okinawa and Suzuko Shirota.” The event played an important role in bringing Japanese comfort women to awareness.

that they were established according to the government-regulated prostitution system, and that the military were both directly and indirectly involved in their administration.

### **The History of the Comfort Women Issue**

Comfort women, subject to provide “comfort” under the Japanese military, were in fact forced into sexual slavery. Some were killed, or died due to terrible living conditions. Of those that survived, many were abandoned and unable to return to their homes. And even if they were fortunate enough to return, once it became known that they had served as comfort women, they were dishonored and treated with shame in every country. Scarred both physically and psychologically, these women were forced to stay silent and grieve their past alone.

Interest in the comfort women issue grew in Japan and Korea within the women’s movement of the 1980’s, but it was Korean women who first took the initiative to break the heavy silence. The direct catalyst was provided in May 1990, when a women’s organization addressed the Japanese government in a formal request to bring the issue to light. This stirred women throughout Asia into action. By the 1990s, comfort women survivors from all the affected countries except Japan had come forth and identified themselves.

These victims requested a formal apology and compensation from the Japanese government for the violation of their human rights, as well as a proper enquiry into the issue. The government failed to provide a straightforward response to these pleas, and insisted that all problems between Korea and Japan had been resolved in the 1965 Treaty of Basic Relations. For this reason, instead of accepting legal responsibility, the government of Japan chose to acknowledge moral responsibility by creating the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) in cooperation with the people of Japan. This effort provided medical assistance and financial aid to some of the victims, and the Prime Minister of Japan issued a letter of apology. However, the unofficial nature of the AWF was criticized by victims and support groups insisting on legal settlement and compensation, and the fund was closed in 2007 without having achieved substantial results.

For this reason, although the comfort women issue has been addressed for nearly 20 years, it has remained unresolved. There are still those that deny Japanese responsibility and indeed refute the very existence of the issue in history, stating that comfort women were employed as a legitimate part of the government regulated prostitute system. On the other hand, those insisting the Japanese government accept responsibility argue that these women were captured by force. Either way, it is clear that the question at hand is a complex aggregation involving international politics, domestic politics, and issues regarding gender, nationalism, and sexual violence. In addition, the U.S., Holland, Canada, EU, and Korea have recently passed resolutions urging the Japanese government to accept legal responsibility.

## 2. Japanese Comfort Women

### Overview

During this time, among the historical research on the comfort women issue, no research has been conducted on the Japanese comfort women. This does not mean, however, that they did not exist. In records discovered by historians, mostly Japanese, there are many testifying to the existence of Japanese comfort women, just as there were Korean and Chinese comfort women.

For example, among the numerous published collections of source material on the comfort women issue,<sup>5</sup> there are those including a variety of military reports citing the existence of Japanese comfort women. Also, in the various reports written on the topic, it is mentioned that there were Japanese comfort women along with those from other countries.<sup>6</sup> There are also memoirs of ex-soldiers, as well as accounts from the victims themselves, although few [Shirota 1979; Uehara 1979; Takayasu 1979].

In the early 1990s, the comfort women telephone hotline (comfort women 110) created by an NGO received many calls and gathered much information [Comfort Women 110 Editorial Committee 1992; 1992 Kyoto, Let us know! The Comfort Women Hotline Editing Committee 1993; Niccho-kyokai 2005]. Most of the callers were ex-soldiers, and many mentioned the presence of Japanese comfort women. Also, although few in numbers, the hotline received calls from a few women who were comfort women themselves.<sup>7</sup>

How many Japanese comfort women existed, then, and when and where were they stationed? No statistics are available so far as to the backgrounds of comfort women, whether Korean, Chinese, or Taiwanese. For this reason, no overall picture has been formed with regards to the reality of Japanese comfort women, and we cannot but draw from the available sources and testaments. Having said this, a look at records from the regions and years where Japanese comfort women were said to have existed, namely in most comfort stations from the early 1930's to the end of the war, provides evidence to the existence of Japanese comfort women.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Some examples are: [Takasaki 1990; Gum 1992; Yoshimi 1992; Asian Women's Fund, 1997; Suzuki 2006].

<sup>6</sup> Some examples are: [Senda 1973–74; 1981; Kawada 1993; Tanigawa 1986; Yamada 1991; Sugawara 1997].

<sup>7</sup> Kawada Fumiko followed up on one such caller [Comfort Women 110 Editorial Committee 1992: 76–79], and was able to learn more about her, which she wrote in chapter four of the aforementioned book [Kawada 1993: Ch. 4 “At Japanese Comfort Stations”]. Also in the aforementioned pamphlet by Niccho-kyokai, it is mentioned that Japanese comfort women did call the hotline [Niccho-kyokai 2005: 72 “I was a Japanese comfort woman”], but no follow up was undertaken.

<sup>8</sup> From ex-soldier's accounts, [1992 Kyoto, Let us know! The Comfort Women Hotline Editing Committee 1993] and ex-comfort women's accounts, there were Japanese comfort women in Manchuria, various locations in China, Taiwan, Bangkok, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Burma, Macau, Saipan,

No figures on the number of comfort women are as yet available. It is said that many of the Japanese women were stationed at big cities such as Hankou, China, and that in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, local women were the majority; however, records show that Japanese women were also sent to these regions along with Koreans and Taiwanese [Yoshimi et al. 1995: 6]. This signifies that although it can be said that Japanese comfort women numbered fewer than the Koreans and Taiwanese, they were by no means a rarity.

### **Characteristics of Japanese Comfort Women**

There are largely two methods by which these Japanese women were recruited. The first was recruitment from brothels in Japan, whereby prostitutes already employed there were sent to comfort stations in the war zones.<sup>9</sup> The second method, mostly employed in the Korean peninsula, involved the abduction of women via a form of recruitment fraud.

One case from 1932 exemplifies the latter. Here, fifteen women residing in Nagasaki were promised high wages if they would come to work at military canteens and cafes or as helpers at military comfort stations, and were henceforth taken to a naval comfort station in Shanghai to work as comfort women.<sup>10</sup> The Supreme Court ruling on this case was held in March 1938, and all ten of those put on trial were found guilty. Directly preceding this ruling, the ministry of internal affairs sent orders to prefectural governors.<sup>11</sup> According to these instructions, women to be transferred to China were required to be already employed as a prostitute, over 21 years of age, and free of venereal and other contagious disease. However, in reality, minors<sup>12</sup> and those employed in work other than prostitution were swindled into being recruited as comfort women.<sup>13</sup>

We must also take note of the differences between Japanese comfort women and those from elsewhere. Foremost, Japanese comfort women originated from the colonizing

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Truk, Palau, Borneo, Rabaul, Okinawa, and various locations in Japan.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the 11th Troop in 1938 built a large-scale comfort station at Hankou, which mostly housed women who were transferred from brothels in Matsushima in Osaka, Hida, Fukuhara in Kobe, and Haneda Besso in Hiroshima [Yoshimi et al. 1995: 36].

<sup>10</sup> On this case against abduction and unlawful expatriation, the Nagasaki District Court, February 14, 1936; the Nagasaki Prosecution Court, September 28, 1936; and the highest authority on this case, the Supreme Court on March 5, 1937 ruled similarly. The results are recorded in [Totsuka 2008].

<sup>11</sup> "The treatment of women traveling to China by sea," February 23, 1938 [Yoshimi 1992: 103].

<sup>12</sup> In Shirota Suzuko's case, when she was sent in 1939 to a naval comfort station in Magong she was 18; and Girl A (b.1926?), who was sent from 1941 to 1942 from Japan to Taiwan, and then from Taiwan to comfort stations in Manila, was only 15 or 16 [Niccho Kyokai 1992: 72]. Also, a girl known as Tami, who was sent to a comfort station in Mobara, Japan in 1944, was 17 years old.

<sup>13</sup> In one case (Atonement), girls were told that they would be employed as naval infirmary helpers and dancers, but sold to North China and Shanghai instead; in another, it was discovered right before boarding ship that a girl would be working as a barmaid, and her parents called the police for help [Yoshimi et al. 1995: 195]. There were other cases in Tokyo and Osaka where girls answered newspaper ads recruiting military nurses, only to be sold as comfort women [Tomizawa 1988].

nation, and were “local” women for the Japanese military. They were fluent in Japanese, and were able to offer the Japanese atmosphere of home for the soldiers. There may even have been significant encounters between soldiers and Japanese comfort women sharing similar backgrounds. Also, some of these women may have been aware of “serving their country” through their work. Moreover, if the woman in question had had previous experience as a *geisha*, they would have had some knowledge of how to entertain men. The men themselves also would have felt more at ease with one of their own, with no need for fear. For such reasons, in Chinese cities and rear regions, Japanese comfort women were reserved for officers, whom they were likely expected to serve in much the same way as prostitutes and *geishas* back home in Japan.

Comfort stations aimed at officers were modeled after teahouses in Japan, and were the most “luxurious” among the other stations. Women who were transferred here from their employment as prostitutes and *geishas* in Japan also brought their previous employers a high advance for their transfer, consequently raising their “product” value.

Recruiting, or “stocking” comfort women in the colonies was less expensive than “stocking” women in Japan. Even when Korean women employed under the state-regulated prostitution system were transferred, their advances were far less than those paid for similar women in Japan and consequently, their “product value” was not as high.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it was cheaper to deceive young girls from poor families by telling them that they were being recruited to work as factory workers or servers and maids at canteens since the amount of money paid by intermediaries and agents to the women and their families as preparation fees could be far less. Also, as these frauds and abductions grew more rampant, the less concerned the police became.<sup>15</sup>

It can be said that the shift from recruiting Japanese comfort women towards recruiting Korean and Chinese women occurred under such market conditions. In other words, Japanese women were for higher-ranking officers, and Korean and Chinese women were assigned to the lower ranks and the prices charged were adjusted accordingly.<sup>16</sup> This was not only because of ethnic discrimination but because they cost less in the first place due to these “market conditions.”

However, whereas the recruitment of young Japanese girls undermined the self-respect

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<sup>14</sup> Advances paid for Korean Japanese prostitutes were far higher than those for Korean prostitutes [Suzuki 2006].

<sup>15</sup> It is evident from newspaper articles that human trafficking was rampant in Korea from the mid-1930's to the early 1940s. As some newspaper editorials state, even though abduction was common, the police force did little to stop them, interested only in issues of national security (Tōa Nippō 1939 (Mar. 29): Yūinma no bakko (Epidemic of Kidnappers) in [Suzuki 2006: 831–832]).

<sup>16</sup> For example, at comfort stations of military stations in Changzhou, the prices were as follows: Chinese, 1 yen, Koreans, 1 yen 50 sen, Japanese, 2 yen for soldiers; double this price for officers [Yoshimi 1992: 207].

of the imperial army, they had no qualms as to recruit young girls from other countries; in this, there was discrimination. At the comfort stations, Japanese women were not subject to discrimination, but were themselves in the position to discriminate against women from other regions.

### **Women with Backgrounds in Prostitution**

However, despite such differences in treatment between Japanese comfort women and the others, the Japanese women at the comfort stations were no less victims of sex slavery.

This is because comfort stations were established with the purpose of using women against their consent as outlets for the soldiers' stress. The work expected of women at comfort stations was none other than sexual service for soldiers. Regardless of whether the women were Japanese "locals," they were there to serve the soldiers sexually. Many places differentiated between Japanese women and others by reserving Japanese women for higher officers and assigning Korean and Chinese women to lower ranks, and the women sent to the most dangerous front lines were mostly Koreans. However, any difference in their treatment was merely a difference in quality and not the nature of the work, and the fact that all were sexual slaves remained unchanged.

This was because the "state-regulated prostitution system" on which the concept and establishment of comfort stations, as well as the recruitment, treatment, regulation, and administration of comfort women were based, was to begin with a system involving the trade of women, legalizing slavery under the false premise of "free consent."

Those comfort women with previous experience as prostitutes grew up in poor households, and were sold by their parents to brothels and *geisha* houses. They were made to accumulate debt in the form of expenses, and thus forced into servitude. They were not prostitutes of their own choice, but victims of human trade, sold as merchandise, and forced into sexual slavery to pay off debts. When prostitutes were sent to comfort stations, it was usually to pay off massive debts.

Moreover, the stigma of being "dishonorable women" never left even after all debts were paid and the comfort women had become "free," making it difficult to escape the life they had known. For this reason, many Korean comfort women survivors were released from comfort stations only to return to work as prostitutes for the U.S. military, and most found it difficult to have a "normal" married life. It can be said that Japanese comfort women also faced the same difficulties.

## **3. Post-war Accounts of the Comfort Women Issue**

### **Post-war Attitudes Toward the Comfort Women Issue**

In Japan after the war, issues concerning comfort women and comfort stations were rarely discussed openly. However, the topic began to gradually appear in war novels by Tamura Taijiro and similar writers,<sup>17</sup> reports and nonfiction writings, as well as journals and magazines aimed at a male readership. What these publications had in common was that they were all written for men, from a male soldier's perspective, and that very few actually questioned the comfort station system. In magazines the portrayal of comfort women was more vulgar, primarily aimed at titillation of the male sexual curiosity.

During this period, Senda Natsuki and Kim Ilmyen were two authors who addressed the subject seriously in their books *Comfort Women* [Senda 1973–74] and *The Imperial Army and Korean Comfort Women* [Kim 1976], respectively. These publications were bought in large numbers mainly by ex-soldiers who were familiar with comfort women, but there was no actual response from them.<sup>18</sup> Previously, the comfort woman survivor Shirota Suzuko's memoirs *Ode to Mary* was published in 1971, but it was difficult to get this published, and very few copies sold.<sup>19</sup> There was much resistance to having a comfort woman's personal experience publicized.

Thus, post-war accounts of comfort women were recounted mainly for the pleasure of men and their wartime memories, while the truth of the matter and personal experiences of comfort women themselves were largely ignored. Ex-soldiers and men born after the war read and reproduced androcentric accounts of comfort women. And when Japan began to thrive economically, Japanese men traveled—as civilians this time—on brothel tours to Taiwan and Korea.<sup>20</sup>

### **Opacity of the Japanese Comfort Women Issue**

In the 1980's, Shirota Suzuko, now residing at “Kanita Women's Village,” a rehabilitation home for prostitutes, requested the head of the institution that a monument be built in memory of comfort women, and her wish was granted. While initially built in wood, it was rebuilt in stone the following year at the request of Ms. Shirota. Around this time, Shirota wrote letters to the Prime Minister saying that the souls of the comfort women must be prayed for, but

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<sup>17</sup> [Ishikawa 1945; Tamura 1947] are some examples.

<sup>18</sup> Senda's book sold some 500 thousand copies, and although it is not known how many Kim's sold, it was reprinted 10 times within 13 years. Senda writes in her foreword that ex-soldiers who had experienced comfort women were shocked to read the truth about these women, and put the books away at the back of their bookshelves.

<sup>19</sup> Two revised editions were printed in fourteen years. These books were difficult to get published, and first Fujin Koron was planning to publish excerpts as “Poems from the Fallen,” against the writer's intent. A publisher willing to publish the text in full was then found, but it was discovered that their intent was to titillate male readers. The United Church of Christ in Japan finally agreed to publish the books, but since they sold badly they soon went out of print [Shirota 1971: Foreword].

<sup>20</sup> Korean men are no exception.

these letters were never sent by the head of the Women's Village.<sup>21</sup>

However, there was a significant response from society with regards to the memorial having been erected. Ex-soldiers began to write letters to the Women's Village and to submit articles to newspapers. Also, while accounts of comfort women had previously been written by men for a male audience, now women and ex-comfort women gradually began writing from their own perspectives as well. Japanese and Korean feminists began to address the comfort women issue along with the movement against Kisaeng sex tours which began in the 1970s [Yamashita 2008: 54], and the account on Korean comfort women survivors in Okinawa *The House of the Red Roof* by Kawada Fumiko [Kawada 1987] and the documentary film *The Arirang Song* by the Korean Japanese Park Sunam was also released. Women of Japan and Korea grew interested in the comfort women issue, and began to visit Shirota at the Women's Village from the end of the 1980s.

With such heightened awareness, the East Asian comfort women issue finally became publicized in the 1990s. This time, there was newfound awareness of the need to question state responsibility. Ironically, however, the problem of Japanese comfort women had receded from view amidst public opinion and various movements of the 1990's.

The main reason for this was that the comfort women issue publicly discussed in the 1990s was divided into those requesting that the state take responsibility for its actions, and those denying the state's responsibility: Asia the victim versus the perpetrator Japan, nation of war and colonialism. The comfort women issue was placed within the context of whether Japan needed to admit responsibility and atone for its wartime acts.

The movement can officially be said to have started in May 1990, along with the Korean women's demand that Japan be accountable for the issue of Korean comfort women, but Japanese comfort women were not included in this statement. June the same year, Motooka Shoji, member of the House of Councilors, discussed the topic with the Diet, but only in the context of Koreans who had been forcibly taken away. In summer of 1991, Kim Haksun and other Korean ex-comfort women spoke out to the Japanese government demanding recompense for the war. Also, in 1992, an appeal was made for the first time to the United Nations, but only with regards to the Korean comfort women.

This movement spread to countries affected in the Pacific War, and in December 1992, an epoch-making international public hearing took place. Here, comfort women survivors and organizations supporting comfort women were invited from South Korea, North Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and Australia. However, Japanese ex-comfort women were not invited. Even though Shirota Suzuko may not have been physically able to attend, it would have been possible to send a message or video, and at least acknowledge her presence. It may

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<sup>21</sup> When I went to Kanita Women's Village in 1991, I was informed by the present head of the Village, Father Fukatsu.

be that the organizers of the event were unaware of the existence of Japanese comfort women. On the other hand, it may be that Japan wished to acknowledge only foreign victims.

Moreover, the primary issue of contention here with regards to comfort women was, on the premise that “prostitution is an act of free will,” whether the women had offered their services voluntarily, or if they had been forced. Japanese conservative opinion insisted that the women were not coerced, but had participated of their own will in the state prostitution system, and that the Japanese government was not at fault. To this, Korea declared that comfort women were not prostitutes. Here, it was even mentioned that Korean comfort women who were abducted against their will were sex slaves, but that Japanese women who with backgrounds in prostitution were not.<sup>22</sup>

While there were Korean and Japanese academics who claimed that even Japanese prostitutes working under the state system were sex slaves when working as comfort women,<sup>23</sup> little actual effort was made in support of these women. When the Japanese government and civic efforts created the AWF in 1995, Japanese women were not included as eligible for support. Even in the legislation submitted at this time to promote a resolution of issues concerning wartime victims of forced sex, Japanese women were expressly excluded from the list of victims of wartime sex crimes.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Japanese comfort women have so far been excluded from support movements. Despite Shirota Suzuko having spoken out before Kim Haksun, no efforts were made to support her pleas or aid Japanese comfort women survivors. Fujime Yuki says, “In looking at experiences in history of women forced into sexual slavery, we Japanese women deeply feel the pain of our elderly Asian sisters. At the same time, however, a barrier has been built to prevent us from forging sympathy for our fellow Japanese women who have suffered under the state prostitution system and as comfort women” [Fujime 2001: 210-211]. It can be said that the barrier “built to prevent [them] from forging sympathy” is nationalism itself.

Because Japanese comfort women belonged to the nation perpetrating the crimes, because they were accused of voluntary participation to support their own country and had had previous experience as prostitutes under the state system, the violence committed against Japanese comfort women has been trivialized and largely ignored. In other words, their

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<sup>22</sup> From the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, on the Kono Dialogues of August 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Primary examples are Suzuki Yuko, Fujime Yuki, Son Yonok, Kim Puja, and Yamashita Yeong-ae.

<sup>24</sup> In this legislation, it is stated that “wartime victims of sexual assault” signifies women who were sexually assaulted, and who were not holders of Japanese family records according to the previous family record law of 1913, Article 26.

suffering was ignored for the very reason that the men viewed them as compatriots. The heavily patriarchal nature of Japanese nationalism is painfully evident.

The comfort women issue involves not only the sexual violence and wartime cruelty committed against foreign women, but is also a problem of regulating the male and female sexual abuse which then leads to violation of human rights perpetrated by the state against women. When Japanese comfort women are excluded from the group of victims, the problem of Japan's sexual violation of human rights is excluded from discussion. In other words, as long as Japanese comfort women are not rightly recognized as victims, it will remain impossible to refute the conservative argument, and the issue will remain unresolved.

In order to properly recognize Japanese comfort women as victims, not only is it necessary to dissolve Japanese nationalism towards other countries, but it is also necessary to dissolve the nationalism festering within Japan itself. This is not an easy task.<sup>25</sup> But when both sides share an awareness of this difficulty and cooperate with each other, the process of resolving the comfort women issue may be key to overcoming nationalism itself.

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<sup>25</sup> It is known that Korean comfort stations existed during the Korean War; however, the fact that this issue has not been adequately addressed in Korea shows similar difficulties.

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