

Comfort Women of the Empire and the Politics of Memory

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Abstract | In this article, I discuss the controversy surrounding Park Yu-ha's *Comfort Women of the Empire* in terms of the "politics of memory." Park offers problematic perspectives in *Comfort Women of the Empire*, denying the Japanese state's legal responsibility regarding its military's use of "comfort women" in the Asia-Pacific War, emphasizing the particularity of Korean comfort women as women from a Japanese colony, and viewing wartime sexual slavery as prostitution and sex work. Both Japanese and Korean scholars have criticized the book from international legal, historical, and feminist perspectives. Since the 1990s, spurred on by the end of the Cold War and the rising tide of democratization, historians all over the world have pursued alternative forms of bottom-up historiography. In this context, the intellectual genealogy of *Comfort Women of the Empire* can be located at the intersection between post-structural, postmodern historical epistemology and neo-nationalism. As stipulated in the book's subtitle, "Colonial Rule and Struggles over Memory," the work also deals with the competing memories of various agents regarding the issue of comfort women. The manner in which Park arranges, describes, and interprets these memories is a distinctly problematic aspect of the book. In this article, by introducing feminist, literary, and international political approaches to the issue of comfort women, I criticize Park's representation and narrative pertaining to comfort women.

Keywords | politics of memory, *Comfort Women of the Empire*, Park Yu-ha, Japanese military comfort women issue, neo-nationalist historical discourse, post-structural epistemology, international reconciliation

Introduction

Comfort Women of the Empire: Colonial Rule and Struggles over Memory (*Cheguk üi wianbu: singminji chibae wa kiök üi t'ujaeng*), by Professor of Japanese literature at Sejong University Park Yu-ha, was published in August 2013. In June 2014, nine elderly women living together at the "Sharing House" in

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Kwangju City, Kyōnggi Province filed a criminal defamation suit and two civil suits—one pertaining to a damages claim for psychological pain and the other an injunction prohibiting sale of the book—against Park. In February 2015, regarding the demand to prohibit the book's sale, the Seoul Eastern District Civil Court ruled that publication would be possible only if thirty-four of fifty-four passages designated by the plaintiffs were removed. In January 2016, the court also ruled that the plaintiffs each be paid ten million won (ninety million won in total). In January 2017, in the first trial pertaining to the criminal defamation suit, Park was found not guilty, but the verdict was reversed in an appellate court in October 2017 and Park was fined ten million won. She is currently appealing this verdict.

In June 2015, in accordance with the court ruling, a second edition of *Comfort Women of the Empire* was published, with thirty-four passages removed. In late January 2016, wishing to leave judgment up to readers, Park established a website offering free, downloadable versions of the second edition as well as a previous work, *For Reconciliation (Hwahae rül wihaesö)* (<http://parkyuha.org>). Meanwhile, the controversy took a turn when fifty-four Japanese intellectuals (Pae Kük-in 2015) and 191 Korean intellectuals (Hö Hwan-chu 2015) signed a petition, in November and December 2015, respectively, opposing the prosecution of Park on the grounds of freedom of expression and conscience. Then, a Korean-Japanese diplomatic delegation announced a “resolution” to the comfort women issue on December 28, 2015. Since 1991, when Kim Hak-sun became the first Korean former comfort woman to testify about her experience, the comfort women issue in Korea had involved mostly feminists and civil rights associations. With the “resolution” in 2015, however, it moved into the national public sphere.

Korean society's fierce opposition to *Comfort Women of the Empire* provides a stark contrast with the book's reception in Japan, where it received the *Mainichi Newspaper's* (*Mainichi shinbun's*) Asia Pacific Award (July 2015) and the Ishibashi Tanzan Memorial Journalism Award (November 2015). It is superficial and deceptive, however, to attribute differing interpretations and perceptions in Korea and Japan regarding *Comfort Women of the Empire*—and, more broadly, Japanese colonial rule and war crimes—to an “ethnic divide.” In Japan there exists both support for and opposition to *Comfort Women of the Empire* (Yun Hūi-il 2016), while in Korea, opinion is divided on how to deal with the comfort women issue (Cho Chōng-hun 2016; Kim Hyo-chōng 2016; Yi Wōn-tōk 2016). In this sense, any East Asian historical “settlement,” particularly pertaining to forced mobilization under imperial Japanese rule and wartime sexual crimes, is complicated by the entanglement of official responses at the government level, collective and cultural representation at the social level, and

memory, testimony, and civic movements at the level of groups and individuals. As reflected in *Comfort Women of the Empire's* subtitle, *Colonial Rule and Struggles over Memory*, the book also deals with the competing memories of various agents—the wartime, postwar, and post-Cold War memories of Japanese soldiers, Japanese comfort women, and Korean comfort women—regarding the comfort women issue. What is especially problematic about the book is the way in which Professor Park arranges, narrates, and interprets these memories. In any case—or perhaps precisely because this is the case—like a flare illuminating the battlefield in the dead of night, the controversy over this book has served to expose the uneven topography of Korean and Japanese discourse regarding the comfort women issue, reminding one that the ghosts of the past continue to haunt East Asia.

The *Comfort Women of the Empire* Phenomenon

1. The Content of *Comfort Women of the Empire*

Comfort Women of the Empire's controversial arguments are threefold. First, Japanese soldiers did not “directly” forcibly mobilize comfort women, and only private brokers who used physical force may be held legally accountable. This means that Japanese soldiers are merely indirectly and morally responsible for tolerating or overlooking dishonest recruitment and illegal management practices. Also known as the “broker culpability interpretation,” this perspective denounces colonial collaborators who participated in the mobilization of Korean comfort women. Even while pointing out that colonial rule itself was the root cause of national division, Park argues that if one asks Japan to apologize and take responsibility, then one must also ask that Korean pro-Japanese collaborators—those who actually carried out the recruitment of Korean comfort women—apologize and take responsibility.

Second, Park emphasizes the particular identity of Korean comfort women, who originated from a Japanese imperial territory. She divides the Japanese military's sex crimes into three categories—one-time rape, abduction and sexual assault, and managed prostitution—placing Korean comfort women in the third category (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 110). Comfort women came from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Netherlands, and according to Park, their experiences varied depending on their nationalities. In other words, depending on where they were from, comfort women's experiences fell into one of the following categories: (1) “simple prostitution,” which existed in designated

brothels in military camps; (2) “comfort” on the battlefield and “rape within the comfort system”; and (3) “simple rape” (of women belonging to enemy countries; Park Yu-ha 2015a, 264). More specifically, comfort women from “enemy country” the Netherlands or “occupied country” Indonesia were subjected to rape or abduction and sexual assault. In these cases, Park acknowledges Japanese soldiers’ use of forced mobilization. Korean comfort women, however, experienced managed prostitution and rape within the comfort system. As colonial subjects of the Japanese Empire, Park argues, these women were subjected to “national mobilization” rather than “forced mobilization.” Thus she views Korean comfort women not as categorical victims but contributors to the war effort, who maintained “comrade-like relations” with Japanese soldiers.

The relationships between Japanese soldiers and Dutch, Indonesian, and Korean women were fundamentally different. To Japanese soldiers, Dutch women were “enemy women,” while Indonesian women were “women of an occupied territory,” and Korean comfort women were as comrades on a similar level with Japanese women. ... The reason why compensation has been complicated in Korea and Taiwan, above all, is that these two countries were each Japanese colonies in the past. One simply cannot view “Korean comfort women” in terms of victim versus aggressor. While they were “victims of empire” as far as they were mobilized under colonial rule, their existence was complicated by their role as “comrades” who, structurally, ended up cooperating [in the war effort]. (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 264-65)¹

This passage reveals the book’s problematic understanding of wartime sexual crimes, obscuring whether “comfort” on the battlefield and rape within the comfort system are actually crimes, and the distinction between prostitution and rape. Even accepting Park’s categorization, which asserts the existence of “volunteer comfort women” (prostitutes), the fact remains that the recruitment and management of comfort women was carried out primarily through coercion and fraud. And even if some women voluntarily participated in the recruitment process, this does not necessarily preclude their becoming victims of rape. Just looking at the memoirs of Japanese soldiers cited in the book, unlike Japanese comfort women, Korean comfort women largely appear as victims of rape within the comfort system, in contrast to their Japanese counterparts. Nonetheless, omitting such ethnic discrimination and sexual violence, Park portrays Korean comfort women as comrades, collaborators, and patriots of the empire.

1. The underlined parts were removed in the second edition by court order.

Third, Park Yu-ha (2015a, 246) stipulates that “Comfort women basically fell within the bounds of prostitution.” Understanding comfort stations in the context of Japanese traditional licensed prostitution, she views comfort women as prostitutes and sex workers. According to this line of argument, comfort women and comfort stations were an example of the diverse forms of licensed and unlicensed prostitution facilities that existed across Asia at the time, and Japanese military comfort stations represented a special form of licensed prostitution.

In this narrative, denying forced mobilization by Japanese soldiers and forming the logical basis for the broker culpability interpretation, Korean comfort women are classified not as victims of wartime sexual violence but sex workers who voluntarily participated in prostitution because they were poor. The root cause of this situation, moreover, was not the Japanese state’s militarism and inhumane wartime acts, but the patriarchal and capitalistic social structure inducing poor women into prostitution.

In order to uncover the essence of the “comfort women,” it is first necessary to recognize the fact that “Korean comfort women’s” pain was basically little different from that of Japanese prostitutes. While it is true that discrimination existed, poverty, male-supremacist patriarchy, and statism engendered comfort women’s misfortune more than ethnic factors, and thus “Korean comfort women” emerged much the same as Japanese comfort women. Behind this was the institution of licensed prostitution’s transplantation to Korea with colonization, whence private brokers emerged. (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 33-34)²

Explaining comfort women and comfort stations in terms of the Japanese tradition of licensed prostitution and the extenuating circumstances of war, Park obscures the difference between voluntary prostitution as a sex worker and violent, criminal rape. Despite the existence of a clear legal basis for judging the difference between prostitution and rape, throughout the book she differentiates between them merely in terms of whether remuneration is granted or not (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 143-44). Park writes: “‘Comfort women’ were also coerced into ‘unpaid’ labor in this way. Notably, it was very unlikely they were paid for the rape by officers they experienced as a kind of rite of passage upon arriving at the camps” (145). She also writes: “‘The labor of Korean comfort women,’ who endured rape while in transit and had to service hundreds of men, was an unimaginably extreme form of labor” (147).

2. The underlined parts were removed in the second edition by court order.

2. Criticism of *Comfort Women of the Empire*

Criticism across diverse fields including law, history, and feminist studies emerged in Korean society immediately following *Comfort Women of the Empire's* publication (Yi Chae-sŭng 2013, 2015; Yun Hae-tong 2014; Pae Sang-mi 2014; Chŏng Yŏng-hwan 2015, 2016b, 2016c; Kim Hŏn-chu, Paek Sŭng-teok, Chŏn Yŏng-ok, and Chŏe U-sŏk 2015; Sin Ũn-hwa 2015; Sin Tong-kyu 2016; Kang Sŏng-hyŏn 2016). These criticisms can be arranged into the following categories.

(1) *The Issue of Japanese State Responsibility*

First, from a legal standpoint, there is the problem of Japanese state responsibility pertaining to institutions for the wartime mobilization of comfort women and management of comfort stations. Here, the issue becomes one of who mobilized the comfort women and whether they used coercion. Yi Chae-sŭng was the first to voice sharp criticism in this regard. As a legal scholar, he focuses on Park's argument that the "Japanese government bears no legal responsibility regarding the mobilization of comfort women."

Differentiating between "structural coercion" and "actual coercion," Park charges the private brokers as those who used physical violence, i.e. actual coercion, in mobilizing comfort women. She thus views private brokers as the criminally responsible parties in the mobilization of comfort women. Meanwhile, she condemns as illegal the violence against women of Japanese wartime enemy states such as China, the Netherlands, and nations in Southeast Asia. Yet she argues that discriminatory laws and institutional and structural violence—the Brokerage Agent Regulatory Provisions (1922) and Korean Brokerage Agent Ordinance (1940), which weakened Korean criminal law provisions—carried out through the colonial mobilization system were "legal." In this respect, the private brokers practicing actual coercion were merely the executors of mobilization.

However, this does not absolve the Japanese war command of responsibility. The idea of structural responsibility must serve as a tool for strengthening and clearly imputing rather than nullifying and obscuring legal responsibility. Furthermore, the Japanese government and military command must bear direct legal responsibility as actors. Park denies the direct involvement of the Japanese state in the recruitment of comfort women by private brokers. Through the Japanese military document "Cases Pertaining to the Management of Military Comfort Stations" (1938), she argues that the Japanese government fulfilled its basic legal duty in prohibiting the illegal recruitment of comfort women, and that it should take responsibility only for the inadequate implementation of this

law. However, based on Han Hye-in's research, Yi Chae-sŭng argues that the purpose of this document was not to monitor private brokers' illegal behavior, as Park understands it, but rather to enable the military and government to deeply intervene in and legitimize private brokers' recruitment of comfort women (Han Hye-in 2013, 372-73, 395-96).

Yi Chae-sŭng, in particular, criticizes the "duality and duplicity of colonial law." "If one pays attention to the dualistic, discriminatory legal system, Park's perspective regarding collaborators as imperial citizens appears truly unjustified," he writes, returning the comfort women issue from the social to the legal sphere. Compared with regulation in Japan, the Government-General of Korea's regulation of the comfort women recruitment system was rather lax. It passed the Brokerage Agent Regulatory Provisions (1922), enabling brokers to outmaneuver and evade the law, and the Korean Brokerage Agent Ordinance (1940), enabling comprehensive government control over the mobilization of laborers in Korea as part of the total-war mobilization system. In marked contrast to the Brokerage Agent Law in Japan, which banned brokers in the business of prostitution, Korea's Brokerage Agent Ordinance included provisions specifically allowing for the brokering of prostitution (Yi Chae-sŭng 2013; Han Hye-in 2013, 377-81, 395-96).

According to Yi Chae-sŭng, under Korean laws imported from Japan (Prohibition of Human Trafficking through Capture and Abduction, Articles 226 and 227) and international laws (the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade [1904], the International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade [1910], and the Slavery Prohibition Convention [1926]), to which Japan was subject, the comfort women system was a case of illegal human trafficking. Even if the Japanese government and the Government-General of Korea "legalized" comfort women through a legal system discriminating against colonial territories based on a formal legal logic, they cannot avoid their culpability in managing sexual slavery, a crime against humanity. Yi Chae-sŭng rebukes the denial of legal responsibility and affirms ethical and humanitarian responsibility, demanding that Japan make a formal apology once the government acknowledges and fulfills its legal responsibility.

(2) *The 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty and Responsibility for Colonial Rule*

Chŏng Yŏng-hwan, a historian residing in Japan, locates *Comfort Women of the Empire* within Japanese comfort women discourse in terms of its historical understanding of the properties and limitations of the "1965 system." He criticizes the book's arguments with the specific aim of pointing out its academic

and methodological shortcomings.

Chŏng Yŏng-hwan first focuses on the continuity between *Comfort Women of the Empire* and Park's earlier work, *For Reconciliation: Textbooks, Comfort Women, Yasukuni, and Tokdo* (*Hwahae rŭl wihaesŏ: kyogwasŏ, wianbu, Yasukuni, Tokto*, 2005).³ A recipient of the *Asahi Newspaper's* (*Asahi shinbun's*) Osaragi Jirō Literary Award, *For Reconciliation* garnered considerable attention in Japan. Immediately following publication, it also aroused criticism and controversy, which is generally divisible into three categories. First, there is the issue of the forced mobilization of comfort women. Referencing Kim Puja (2008, as quoted in Chŏng Yŏng-hwan 2015), who has offered the most systematic criticism of *For Reconciliation*, Chŏng Yŏng-hwan criticizes the very basis of Park's historical revisionism, which reframes the comfort women issue in terms of a "narrow conception of coercion." Second, there is the issue of the purpose of comfort stations: "naturalizing" soldiers' sexual desires. Park interprets the establishment of comfort stations as inevitable and as serving to suppress the rape of ordinary women. In this manner, she portrays comfort women as structural "sacrificial lambs" for ordinary women. Third, there is the issue of evaluating the Asian Women's Fund that the Japanese government attempted to establish in 1995. Chŏng Yŏng-hwan argues that the fund revealed the motivation of a former colonizer to avoid legal responsibility for colonial rule. Following Sŏ Kyŏng-sik (2010, as quoted in Chŏng Yŏng-hwan 2015), he criticizes Park's argument that Korean nationalism—in the form of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (hereafter the Korean Council), which rejected the fund—is the cause of "discord" between Korea and Japan. For Chŏng Yŏng-hwan, this is violence disguised as reconciliation.

Chŏng Yŏng-hwan focuses in particular on Park's understanding of the Korea-Japan Claims Agreement, evident in *Comfort Women of the Empire*, which he sees as historically inaccurate and biased. Contrary to Park's interpretation, the "claims providing a final resolution" in the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty remain controversial. According to a number of studies, the agenda between Korea and Japan at the time was the "unpaid wages of conscripted laborers" and not comfort women. Furthermore, the central issue of the treaty negotiations was not questioning responsibility for colonization or postwar compensation, but Korea-Japan economic cooperation for the development of the Korean economy to strengthen the Korea-US-Japan anti-communist bloc during the Cold War. Incidentally, a series of new rulings by the Korean

3. Heibonsha published the Japanese version in 2006.

judiciary regarding the Korea-Japan Claims Agreement in the early 2010s⁴ undermined the 1965 system, which had been a provisional measure established under Cold War conditions without any reflection on colonialism.

Linking the basic problems in *Comfort Women of the Empire* with those in the 2005 book *For Reconciliation*, Chŏng Yŏng-hwan understands *Comfort Women of the Empire* as an attempt to critically intervene and protect the threatened 1965 system. In *For Reconciliation*, Park states that it was irresponsible for Korea to deny the 1965 system and demand renegotiation and compensation. In *Comfort Women of the Empire*, while comprehensively criticizing the Constitutional Court's 2011 decision, she argues that it was the Korean government that gave up Korean comfort women's rights in negotiating a claims agreement. In *Comfort Women of the Empire*, regarding the Japanese military comfort women system, she denies the Japanese state's legal responsibility, interpreting the facts through the broker culpability interpretation. On this basis she makes three arguments: (1) Comfort women have no claim to damages; (2) Even if such a claim did exist, the Korean government gave it up while negotiating normalization; and (3) The Korean government's reception of economic cooperation served as compensation for Japan's actions with regard to Korea during the Asia-Pacific War.

Chŏng Yŏng-hwan asserts that this logical framework is based on serious methodological errors. First, Park erroneously cites Yoshimi Yoshiaki, Aitani Kunio, Kim Ch'ang-rok, Chang Pak-chin, and other existing studies, distorting this research for her own ends. Second, she uses the concepts of "compensation" and "reparations" based on the principle of legal liability to confuse the issue when discussing the Asian Women's Fund and 1965 economic cooperation (it is precisely because the Japanese government explicitly denies legal responsibility that Sŏ Kyŏng-sik and comfort women activists oppose compensation). Third, engaging in conjecture as to the identity (comrade-like relations) of comfort women from the Japanese colonies of Taiwan and Korea, as opposed to comfort women from occupied territories such as China and Indonesia, through the testimonies of Japanese soldiers, she arbitrarily selects and interprets testimonial evidence, ignoring its particularity. "This manner of writing ... usurps the 'testimonial evidence,'" and reveals a "'method' that abandons the tension

4. On August 30, 2011, stating that the 1965 Korea-Japan Claims Agreement provoked an interpretive dispute as to whether Japanese military Korean comfort women's claims had been nullified, the Korean Constitutional Court ruled that the Korean government's inaction to resolve this dispute according to Article 3 of the agreement was unconstitutional. On May 24, 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the right to claim damages due to the inhuman and illegal actions of the Japanese state was not subject to the "final resolution" clause of the Claims Agreement.

between the ethics of historical narration and the subject,” writes Chŏng Yŏng-hwan (2015, 476).

In spite of such serious methodological errors, why did Japanese intellectuals—especially self-professed “liberal” intellectual critics (Akira Iriye, Ueno Chizuko, Tanaka Akihiko, Wada Haruki, etc.)—evaluate the book so favorably? First submitting this question in a 2015 article, Chŏng Yŏng-hwan explores it more deeply in his 2016 book.⁵ According to Chŏng Yŏng-hwan (2016c, 30-32), the primary reasons why Japanese society extolled such widespread praise for Park’s *For Reconciliation* and its 2013 successor *Comfort Women of the Empire* were: (1) its criticism of Korean anti-Japanese nationalism; and (2) its positive evaluation of “postwar Japan.” Specifically regarding the comfort women issue, this meant the book’s criticism of the Korean Council and support for the Asian Women’s Fund.

Chŏng Yŏng-hwan traces Park’s view supporting the broker culpability interpretation and denying Japanese soldiers’ responsibility to Hata Ikuhiko, who argued that comfort stations were no more than “battlefield licensed prostitution facilities” (i.e. comfort stations were established according to soldiers’ demands but were basically sites of private prostitution). This attempt to minimize Japanese soldiers’ responsibility is one example of the diverse responsibility-avoidance discourse prevalent in Japanese society since 1991, when Kim Hak-sun became the first Korean comfort woman to come out and speak of her experiences (Chŏng Yŏng-hwan 2016c, 7, 47-60).

According to Chŏng Yŏng-hwan, *Comfort Women of the Empire* presents a “dual historical revision,” satisfying both the Japanese nationalist conservative/rightist logic of the “Great Japanese Empire” and the centrist majority and media’s overestimation of “postwar Japanese repentance.” Park distorts victims’ voices and presents to Japanese society a historical revisionist account of the comfort women as “true memory.” Her advocacy of reconciliation, in particular, exempts the Japanese government from responsibility and emphasizes the need to contain calls by the Korean Council and other victims to assign responsibility. However, Chŏng Yŏng-hwan’s position is that without efforts by the “Japanese government to reflect, repent, provide legal compensation, uncover the truth, and implement measures against recurrence,” there can be no resolution to the Japanese military comfort women issue. In this respect, regarding the December 28, 2015, Claims Agreement between the foreign ministers of Korea and Japan, “One cannot but call this an ‘agreement’ to contain and exclude other voices,”

5. Chŏng Yŏng-hwan (2016c) is a Korean translation of the Japanese edition (Chŏng Yŏng-hwan 2016a).

something “far from a resolution” (Chǒng Yǒng-hwan 2016c, 171-74).

(3) *The Patriarchal State System and the Wartime Sex Crime Issue*

In *The Politics of Memory Surrounding Comfort Women* (*Wianbu rŭl tullōssan kiōk ūi chǒngch’ihak*, 2014), Ueno Chizuko points out how the comfort women issue emerged as a post-Cold War phenomenon in the 1990s. Several elements were important in this regard: constructivist theory in the fields of history and sociology (historiography as a discursive struggle in which representation and memory are ceaselessly reconstituted); a paradigm shift in understanding Japan’s prewar period (discontinuity, continuity, and neo-continuity interpretations); and the new orientation of feminism since the 1980s (with its emphasis on women’s agency, women’s participation in war not as victims but aggressors, and women’s willing wartime cooperation).

As a feminist, Ueno criticizes the patriarchal nationalist paradigm that reduces women’s sexuality to a discussion of men’s rights and property. She rather investigates women’s conscripted labor and the comfort women issue from a perspective transcending the “nationalization” (*kokuminka*) of women and deconstructing the nation state through gender. Regarding comfort women’s damages claims, which began with Kim Hak-sun in 1991, Ueno criticizes the government’s position that any claims to damages were resolved in the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty as based on patriarchal logic. She further asserts that the Japanese military comfort system did not simply exist in the past, but remains present as a set of three crimes that “we [Japanese society] continue to commit today.” These are: (1) the crime of wartime rape; (2) the crime of forgetting these crimes in the postwar era; and (3) the crime of denying the accusations of the female victims (Ueno 2014, 25-48, 97-99).

One must acknowledge Ueno’s contribution to revealing the complexity of the “divide-and-rule dynamic of the comfort women issue, which, surrounded by the nation state and imperialism, colonial rule and racism, patriarchy and discrimination against women, and gendered double standards, turns women against each other” (Pae Sang-mi 2014, 275). However, some progressive Japanese scholars and Korean feminists criticize her transnationalist feminist argument. This is because one might plausibly understand her analysis as focusing solely on women’s solidarity, to the exclusion of differentiating between wartime aggressor and victim states, colony and empire, and nationalities.

In terms of how Park includes discussion not only of Korean but also Japanese comfort women in *Comfort Women of the Empire*, on the surface she shares Ueno’s critical perspective on nationalism. Emphasizing that it was Korean men who mobilized Korean comfort women, however, she reverts to

reducing the issue of gender to nation. Furthermore, she emphasizes that Korean comfort women received better treatment and a better “labor environment” than comfort women from occupied or enemy countries. However, comfort women had to perform sexual services during the war without freedom of movement. Furthermore, one should rather critically understand Japanese soldiers’ “good treatment” of Korean comfort women, who were in a state of confinement, as the patriarchal discipline of the Japanese military and a strategy for designating women’s inferior place within this hierarchy. “In order to expedite reconciliation between Korea and Japan, a comprehensive critique of the social structure enabling war and the comfort women without relation to nationalist is necessary,” as Pae Sang-mi writes. But instead, Park “fixates on Japanese, Korean, and American nationalities, failing to appreciate the fundamental problem and abandon a superficial patriarchal logic degrading women” (Pae Sang-mi 2014, 272-74).

The Politics of Memory

Comfort Women of the Empire: Colonial Rule and Struggles over Memory serves as the courtroom within which Park presents her postmodern “historical retrial,” calling forth Korean comfort women and pro-Japanese collaborators as accomplices to Japan’s imperialist war. While constantly emphasizing historicity, her book is nonetheless academically inaccurate. While constantly emphasizing testimonial evidence and memory, her analysis is arbitrary. While criticizing the modern state as a patriarchal war machine, she absolves imperialist racism, colonial exploitation, and wartime sex crimes, hastily attempting to settle the contradictions and conflict they engendered. While examining the comfort women issue in terms of an immense timescale, she does not acknowledge the basic values and norms of universal feminist and human rights that have developed since 1945. While approaching the past from an extremely legalistic perspective, she argues that the law is unimportant in resolving the comfort women issue. Criticizing the centrality of power in international politics, the American “imperialism” that engendered the Cold War, and progressives in both Korea and Japan for promoting international pressure with respect to the comfort women issue, she expresses concern about the “politicization” of the comfort women movement and suggests inducing the conflicting parties to participate in a process of agreement but does not put forward any concrete criteria or measures by which such a conflict could be moderated. How might one interpret these inconsistencies?

Comfort Women of the Empire presents East Asian history as a site of memory struggle. Park repeatedly argues that official collective memory, framed by the category of the nation, is socially constructed through a process of politicization (of which she is critical), and beneath this formalization of collective memory lie suppressed individual memories.

These women do not abandon their valued memories by choice. This is due to the pressure of “society,” which is the “problem.” One might also understand this as the subconscious acknowledgement of the potential for such memories to produce fissures in the “Korea as victim” narrative. However, was not the obliteration and forgetting of those memories that might have allowed these women to forget the pain of the comfort stations also a kind of violence against them? (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 68)

1. The Entanglement of Post-structural Epistemology and Neo-nationalism

Ueno (2014, 13) writes in the opening to *The Politics of Memory Surrounding the Comfort Women Issue*: “All this began in the 1990s.” With the fall of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc in Eastern Europe, and the advent of the post-Cold War era, the demand for liberalism, democracy, and nationalism expanded internationally. Academically, a reflective mood prevailed pertaining to the Cold War and the modern state, provoking more basic questions and debate regarding the nature of history. In South Korea, democratization progressed in the late 1980s and the Korean Council formed in the 1990s as the feminist movement became more active. Meanwhile, in 1991, Kim Hak-sun became the first Korean comfort woman survivor to come forth and speak of her experiences and appeal for reparations from Japan. The comfort women movement and related research thus entered a new phase.⁶

Yoshino Nozaki’s (2015) overview of Japan’s comfort women controversy is useful for tracing the genealogy of *Comfort Women of the Empire*. First, prior to when victims’ testimonies began to surface in 1991, records pertaining to comfort women had emerged only in piecemeal fashion, consisting of men’s individual reports, diaries, memoirs, and novels. Senda Kakō’s 1973 book was the first work to approach the comfort women issue critically. His account was mostly based on the memories of men who had received sexual “service,” and discussed the memories of only a few Japanese comfort women. The two Korean comfort women Senda interviewed remained silent. The book became a bestseller, and his choice of terminology, “army-accompanying comfort women,” became quite

6. For a historical overview of Korea-Japan comfort women diplomacy, see Yi Hunmi (2017).

widely used and later greatly controversial.

In 1991, having come across Kim Hak-sun's testimony, Japanese historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki discovered evidence at the Japanese Self Defense Forces archive that the Japanese military had directly participated in the organization of comfort stations. Yoshimi reported these findings through major newspapers in 1992, and Japanese prime minister Kiichi Miyazawa eventually officially apologized to Korea. In 1993, fifteen more Korean comfort women testified as to their experiences. Late that year, the "Kono statement" emerged, acknowledging the direct involvement of the Japanese military in the comfort women system. In 1997, nearly all school textbooks in Japan discussed the issue. However, neo-nationalists soon began to speak out against the Japanese government's apology and recent research on the comfort women issue.

Thereafter the historical controversy pertaining to the comfort women issue progressed as follows. First, there is the struggle between neo-nationalist and progressive feminist historians. Neo-nationalists insist that comfort women victims' testimony is unverifiable while scrutinizing it for "mistakes." For example, they focus on the fact that "army-accompanying comfort women" was not a term used at the time, and on the degree of brokers' intervention and coercion. Despite the fact that progressive feminist scholars have prevailed in the empirical and analytical struggle, neo-nationalists disseminate their arguments through popular mainstream media. Consequently, many 2002 middle-school textbooks removed any mention of comfort women.

Second, there is the epistemological struggle between post-structural feminist theorists and progressive feminist historians. Ueno views the post-Cold War conflict between neo-nationalists and progressive feminist historians as rooted in the empiricist historical perception that acknowledges only written records as historical material, criticizing this position from a post-structuralist perspective. The core of her critique is that the empiricist historical approach "denies victims' testimonies as evidence and mistrusts the 'reality' of victims' firsthand experience or what they heard." She emphasizes "diverse history" or "pluralistic history" representing the differing realities of disparate individuals over selecting a single history.

Regarding Ueno's criticism, progressive feminist historians such as Yoshimi question the argument that there are no "facts" or "truth" in history and that reality is reconstructed according to perspective. Yoshimi asserts that historical facts can be reconstructed through official and unofficial written documents, testimony, and many other sources. In particular, she emphasizes that historians subject oral history to careful evaluation, integrating diverse forms of evidence.

As epistemological debates continue among feminists, neo-nationalists

borrow from postmodernist discourse to narrate Japanese history for the purposes of national unity and from a Japanese perspective. Criticizing “masochistic historical consciousness,” they deny the forced mobilization of comfort women. Their postmodernist line of argument blurs the distinction between fact and fiction and is a discursive strategy for producing an idealized history of a pure Japan and for rationalizing the war ideology of the prewar Japanese empire. They emphasize the fallibility and impossibility of verifying testimonial evidence and focus criticism on minute historical details. Meanwhile, they argue that historical facts do not arise from empirical research and testimonial evidence but “narratives” selected from among diverse narratives with varying epistemological merits.⁷

2. The Diversity of Memory and Postcolonial Historiography

In *Comfort Women of the Empire*, Park questions the credibility of surviving Korean comfort women’s testimonies, viewing them as having been politicized by the Korean Council. Furthermore, through the voices of Japanese soldiers and Japanese comfort women in Senda’s book and various novels, she reframes the memories of Korean comfort women who were silenced. In this respect, despite the fact that she shares a postmodern epistemology with progressive feminists such as Ueno and Yoshimi, one can trace her intellectual genealogy to Japanese neo-nationalism. The popularity of *For Reconciliation* and *Comfort Women of the Empire* in Japanese society can also be seen as resulting from the resonance between Park’s perspectives and the trend towards historical revisionism within Japanese society.

In the second section of *Comfort Women of the Empire*, entitled “Struggle of Memory,” Park focuses on the Korean Council as the chief culprit in the erroneous “production of public memory” regarding comfort women in Korean society. Settling on the term “sexual slavery,” the Korean Council portrays the Japanese military as the primary culprit, disseminating this view in Korean society through such media as its website’s homepage, the War and Women’s Human Rights Museum, the e-Museum of the Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, novels, graphic novels, and films. According to Park, “The narrative of comfort women that we [Koreans] have internalized as a ‘pure culture’” overlooks the historical truth of pro-Japanese collaboration and preserves a “victim structure,” and is the product of the “engagement and arguments of people who

7. Regarding Japan’s “historical agent controversy” surrounding the liberal view of history, see Takahashi (2000). Regarding the related “politics and literature controversy,” see Yi Kyōng-hūi (2017, 95-114).

have never had any concern for human rights or peace in Asia” (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 111, 116-17, 121). Asserting that Korean society venerates only anti-Japanese, nationalist memories as public memory and excludes other memories, Park views the Korean Council as a Korean version of neo-nationalism.

If eighty percent of the 200,000 comfort women were Korean, why did not the rest of the comfort women also raise their voices [in 1991 when the first testimony emerged]?... It was the Sharing House (*Nanum ūi chip*), which was not a space preserving memories of love, that made this elderly lady uneasy. In other words, this was a space that required the memories of “complete victims.” This is also the reason why Japanese comfort women who received compensation have not raised their voices. In a place that requires only victims’ memories, conciliatory memories are excluded. The stories of those who received compensation or loved Japanese soldiers cannot be the “stories of comfort women.” (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 122)

It is precisely this line of argument that has evoked appreciation for *Comfort Women of the Empire*. Those who support the book share in common support for the argument reviving the diversity of memories surrounding colonial rule and the critical view of patriarchal Korean nationalism that simplifies the image of comfort women as “innocent girls of the nation” (Chang Chōng-il 2015; Kim Kyu-hang 2015, 2016, as quoted in Kim Yo-sōp 2016, 41-45). Actually, prior to the revelation of Kim Hak-sun’s testimony in 1991, not only Japan but also the Korean government and people were reluctant to raise the issue of comfort women as a public concern. As is well known, public surveys on the issue were nonexistent. Yang Hyōn-a points to a male-centric nationalist discourse and sensibility as the cause of this “lengthy and deep social silence regarding the comfort women issue.” In a social atmosphere in which the comfort women issue was represented as an issue of “chastity” and “pride” among male national actors, comfort women could not speak of their victimization to their husbands or children, and were coerced into shame and silence and marginalized (Yang Hyōn-a 2001, 157-76).

The tendency in Korean society for nationalist discourse to exercise exclusive dominance over the comfort women issue has persisted since it was publicized in the 1990s. However, Park’s accusation that Korean Council activists have selected comfort women survivors’ memories while ignoring those they do not want to hear does not accord with the facts. Indeed, Park wrote *Comfort Women of the Empire* based on the collection of testimonies that the Korean Council and the Comfort Women Research Institute (Chōngsindae Yōnguso) spent much time compiling. And Park is the one who interprets comfort women’s “good memories” by arbitrarily separating and extracting them from their

context. As Yang Ching-cha (2016, 270-76) points out, an integrated examination of comfort women's testimonies compels one to interpret their psychological dependence on Japanese soldiers as reflecting not "comradely relations" but "traumatic links with an aggressor," that is, the pathology of a victim confined for extended periods. Furthermore, as Yi Na-yŏng points out, the comfort women movement initially began in Korean society as a "challenge to the hostile coexistence of nationalism, colonialism, and patriarchy." Since the 1980s, these activists had already "paid attention to the experience of victims concealed by national shame" and "candidly exposed the way in which the 'comfort women' issue was coopted for the (re)constitution of national identity" (Yi Na-Yŏng 2016, 388-90).

Despite many critical problems, Park's *Comfort Women of the Empire* shifted the discussion around Japanese military comfort women from ideology and nationalism to "experience." As discussed above, in terms of theory, this shift was related to the emergence of postmodern historiography; and in practical terms, it was related to the democratization of Korean society. "Memory wars" have continued in Korean society since democratization, involving a variety of issues such as colonial rule and pro-Japanese collaboration, evaluating military dictatorship and industrialization, and the struggle for and reality of democratization. Individual memories are formulated and ceaselessly reconstituted within a social frame. Thus memory is in some sense always collective and a product of the present, not the past. Furthermore, considering that diverse, distinct, and multiple memories can exist with respect to a single past, memory is inevitably selective, and some memories persist while others are suppressed or discarded. Memory that attains a structural quality as a collective identity is accordingly always partisan (An Pyŏng-chik 2007, 277-82).

With the development of postmodern historiography, roughly divisible into adherents of the linguistic turn and narrative theory, memory is gradually superseding history as the criterion by which to understand the past. In other words, one may define history as social memory, and it is through memory that postmodern historiography criticizes closed, unitary historiography. However, as An Pyŏng-chik argues, the relativism of postmodernism and narrative theory is not simply intellectual nihilism. Historians adhering to a postmodern epistemology must also apply the same standards of criticism and skepticism to their own perspectives and analyses. Furthermore, they must focus on the intent and purpose of memory rather than its content per se. It is their duty to liberate humanity from the "burden of history" by highlighting memory useful for the present and future through the "dialectic of memory and creative forgetting" (An Pyŏng-chik 2007, 290-303).

In this respect, breaking the structure of silence surrounding colonial rule and comfort women and reviving various memories requires not the “usurping of testimony” evident in works such as *Comfort Women of the Empire*, but the social concern and support for testimony as a cathartic process acknowledging the agency and not just the victimhood of comfort women survivors (Yi Na-yŏng 2016, 394-97). Comfort women’s experiences and testimonies do not serve simply as supplements to documentary evidence; there is a need to approach historical reality through these sources in and of themselves. Especially now as the generations who experienced the Asia-Pacific War and colonialism are rapidly disappearing, scholars must reflect honestly on the methods and perspectives of postcolonial historiography of the colonial period, which include oral history.⁸

Kim Mi-yŏng analyzes three modes of representation of comfort women, comparing official reports, testimonial records (oral history), and novels. She defines oral history as the “revival of omitted history through a verbalization process known as ‘representation of memory’” and the primary form of historiography that resists the tyranny of official history. Furthermore, sharing in the pain of the other produces reflective memory, and when such memory is elevated to the status of social collective memory, the edifying power to prevent the repetition of unfortunate events emerges. However, the task of recording oral testimony is meticulous and difficult, requiring one to understand and read contradictions, errors, omissions, frequent silences and sighs, and even spaces between words. For example, a woman impregnated through rape that underwent forced abortion at the hands of an army surgeon speaks of how she met her first love, a Japanese soldier, at a comfort station (Kim Mi-yŏng 2009, 227-32). These seemingly contradictory stories each belong to a single comfort woman. Nevertheless, treating her testimony as a whole, there appears to be extremely little room to interpret her love for the soldier in terms of patriotism, imperial citizenship, or voluntary participation in wartime sexual violence.

According to Cho Chŏng-min, postwar Japanese literature’s consideration of comfort women has been extremely restricted, and the few works that feature comfort women typify them as “romantic objects sharing a human rapport with a Japanese soldier or goading Japanese soldiers’ feelings of hatred toward women” (Cho Chŏng-min 2016, 268). By comparison, female Okinawan writer Sakiyama Tami’s novel *It’s not the Moon* (*Tsuki ya aran*) deals with the “representational politics of ‘identity’ operational in literary narratives” and “contention, suppression, and struggle over memory related to the representation of comfort

8. In this regard, see Yi Sŏn-hyŏng (2002).

women” in quite a sophisticated and literary manner (270).⁹ The book features the following characters: a comfort woman victim who is the first to come forward about her experiences yet unable to organize and express them properly; a young man who uses her testimony and adds his own narrative to fabricate a testimonial record; a young woman editor who desperately tries to read the massive, unintelligible manuscript that the comfort woman victim leaves behind; and the protagonist who attempts to complete the “autobiography” of the comfort woman victim while listening to a recorded tape left behind by the editor.

Clearly some historical truths can be revealed reflectively only through literature. This comfort woman, who as poor woman from a colony is disadvantaged in three ways, was taken as a sexual slave, underwent repeated gang rape, and witnessed the deaths of other comfort women. It is not easy for her to convey this experience using the existing language system, and even when she does, words do little to adequately communicate her pain. As Kim Mi-Yŏng emphasizes: “In terms of how it conveys the infinite gap between what is spoken and the pain that goes unexpressed,” the language of literature “is different from historical description, which it may complement.” Furthermore, she states that, unlike in historical writing, in literature, “The juxtaposition of an other with the speaker opens a path to an inner world” (Kim Mi-yŏng 2009, 234-39). In *Comfort Women of the Empire*, Park reconstructs Korean comfort women’s memories suppressed by patriarchal nationalism by using Japanese novels that marginalize comfort women as sources of historical knowledge. The majority of the speakers and protagonists in these books are Japanese men who participated as soldiers in the Asia-Pacific War, and the voices of Korean comfort women are lacking.

Clearly parts of history are missing from the nationalistically unitary representation of comfort women as “girls of the colonies.” In that case, to what degree is historical truth represented in Park’s narrative of comfort women as “prostitutes of the empire”? It looks as though her intent is to intervene in the process by which the comfort women issue is transforming from individual trauma into reflective memory, while demanding the development of post-nationalist memory in Korean society, but encouraging the reactionary forgetting that inhibits the formation of reflective memory in Japanese society.

3. An International Politics Approach to the Possibility of Reconciliation

Throughout *Comfort Women of the Empire*, Park establishes resolution as the

9. See also Yi Yu-hyŏk (2012) and So Myŏng-sŏn (2014, 2016).

most pressing priority of the comfort women issue. In this respect, she pays attention to the statue of a young girl erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in December 2011 and the monument to comfort women erected in the US in 2013, arguing that they exacerbate tensions between Korea and Japan. Furthermore, regarding progressives in both Korea and Japan, on the one hand, she blames them for linking the comfort women movement with current domestic political problems; and on the other, she blames them for amplifying the issue into “questioning Japanese historical perceptions in general’ while campaigning for global ‘pressure’ on Japan.” She thus thinks progressives have made it more difficult to resolve the comfort women issue. Regarding Japanese and Korean comfort women activists’ rejection of the 1995 Asian Woman’s Fund, which denied Japan’s legal responsibility, Park asserts that the “comfort women issue has devolved into a means of changing the actual politics of Japan.” Furthermore, emphasizing legal substance over form, she argues that a critical Korean Council statement nullified Japanese prime ministers’ apologies, additional compensation, and the 2012 plan for a resolution of the comfort women issue composed through a visit of the Japanese ambassador with Korean comfort women (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 168, 172-73, 197, 211-12).

What is important is not the “movement’s advancement” itself. What is necessary is the resolution of the “comfort women issue” and “comfort women’s” resulting “liberation from the movement.” The reason why Korea has been unable to resolve issues resolved in other countries is that the progressive forces that resisted empire have reemerged with the end of the Cold War to resist empire once again. (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 257)

Park’s plan for resolution of the comfort women issue in *Comfort Women of the Empire* is a politically engineered consensus situated on the positive objective of normalizing Korea-Japan relations and the Japanese state by “overcoming” the past. However, might this manner of “resolving the comfort women issue by liberating comfort women from the movement” actually resolve the comfort women issue? Jeffrey Olick describes three attitudes regarding German history that prevailed in Germany from 1945 until the 1990s. First, there is Theodore Adorno’s “working through the past” (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*), which he presented in a 1959 lecture. Adorno criticized the fascist trend of the democratic era in West Germany ignoring the burdensome Nazi legacy. Rather than reappraisal in a true sense, that is, facing the past with the lucid, enlightened spirit advocated by Kant in order to overcome its spell, West Germany was interested only in self-protection or preservation. As something demanding constant self-criticism, then, Adorno viewed working

through the past as superior to a second attitude toward the past, which was “mastering the past” (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). According to Adorno, mastering the past permitted silence about the past. Finally, neoconservatives in the late 1970s and 1980s dismissed both working through the past and mastering the past as political slogans without differentiating between them, advocating instead for normalization of the past.

The West German project to normalize the past expressed itself through two strategies: “relativization” and “ritualization.” First, relativization acknowledged the violence of the German past but argued that it was no different from that of other nations. Second, ritualization pertained to the manner in which major national commemorative days normalized or regularized ways of thinking about Nazi Germany. West Germany’s attempt to normalize the past in the 1980s was partly successful. In particular, the relativization strategy was positively appraised domestically but caused sensitive problems internationally. With the unification of Germany in 1989, overcoming the communist past emerged as a new task and the problem of overcoming the Nazi past quickly subsided, which served as a means of further normalizing the past. Meanwhile, neoconservative rhetoric and relativization continued to intensify throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Olick 2006, 293-326).

In a speech in spring 2007, Japanese prime minister Abe Shinzō declared that comfort women had not been forcibly mobilized. He also stated, “Human rights were violated all over the world throughout the twentieth century, and Japan was no exception in this regard” (*Sankei shinbun*, April 27, 2007). These remarks can be interpreted as a part of a relativization strategy to normalize the past. As criticism mounted, Abe went to the US to apologize, but a number of Japanese Diet representatives took out an advertisement in the *Washington Post* in June 2007 denying Abe’s apology. Meanwhile, later that year, North American and European representatives urged Japan to apologize over the comfort women issue. This was the fruit of the Korean Council and other comfort women activists’ efforts to draw Amnesty International’s attention and the influential power of the emerging testimonies of Korean, Dutch, and Filipino comfort women. The European Parliament’s decision to accept Amnesty International’s recommendation to view the comfort women issue as one of human trafficking was singularly significant.

Just like the German neoconservatives of the 1980s and 1990s, *Comfort Women of the Empire* dismisses working through the past and mastering the past as political movements of the progressive left, rather excessively focusing on normalization of the past. Particularly through a strategy of relativization, Park advances rhetoric claiming that if one criticizes Japan’s imperialist wars and

colonial acquisitions, then one must also criticize American imperialism and that of other Western great powers; likewise, Japan's comfort women system was problematic, but so were the American military base camp in Tongduchŏn and the rape of Japanese women in Okinawa following Japan's wartime defeat. The problem is that this kind of relativization strategy extends to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Park claims that a historical "retrial" is possible and that "the reason to do so is that retrials produce new values" (Park Yu-ha 2015a, 163). What kind of values might she be referring to?

Comparing the postwar apology problems of Germany and Japan, Jennifer Lind offers the following observations. First, the denial of past crimes or unapologetic remembrance hinders reconciliation by heightening the threat perceptions of neighboring nations. Representative of this are repeated thoughtless statements by high-level Japanese politicians and the 2005 textbook amendment largely removing any discussion of the Japanese invasion of Asia. By comparing UK-Germany relations and China-Australia-Japan relations, Lind reveals how this dynamic is not limited to Korea-Japan relations. Second, this does not mean that thorough historical settlements and apologies are necessary for reconciliation with neighboring countries. Looking at the example of France and Germany, a basic apology led to the rapid restoration of relations. And in the UK-US-Germany and US-Japan cases, alliances were formed for strategic reasons without apologies. Third, the media, NGOs, and scholars are increasingly demanding apologies for past human rights violations, but apologies can threaten reconciliation by fomenting domestic opposition (Lind 2010, 179-82).

Although Lind's first conclusion accords with intuitive expectations, her second conclusion suggests the counterintuitive possibility of reconciliation without apology in international politics. Lind's third conclusion is relevant for Park's criticism of the Korean Council and the statue of a young girl in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Lind asserts that just the right number of apologies—neither too few nor too many—facilitates international reconciliation. In other words, policymakers must carefully strike a balance between justice and reconciliation while considering the responses of both domestic and international audiences. There is also a need for activists to consider any domestic backlash that may arise due to pressure to apologize from international society. According to Lind, however, the deterioration of Korea-Japan relations owing to Japan's denial of the past and historical distortions is not itself a consequence of the cultural particularity of Korea, i.e. excessive nationalism. One can rather explain it as an example of a universal phenomenon, in which certain Japanese attitudes heighten distrust and threat perception. Furthermore, while it is true that an aggressor state's apology can make reconciliation more difficult by

provoking a domestic backlash, this is a constraint that must be considered realistically in respect of realizing reconciliation. Just as with Park, designating and criticizing civil society activist organizations as barriers to reconciliation betrays a preposterous conception of just what reconciliation is for.

One can more clearly grasp the problem with Park's plan for reconciliation with reference to the work of Thomas Berger. Comparing the official historical narratives of Germany, Austria, and Japan regarding WWII war crimes, Berger describes Germany as the "model penitent," Austria as the "prodigal penitent," and Japan as the "model impenitent." He adopts the method of historical realism to consider the combined influences of social memory, the calculated interests of political elites, and the cultural discourse determining these different official historical narratives. According to Lind's categorization, the historical reconciliation between Korea and Japan in 1965 amid the Cold War was a kind of reconciliation without apology. In terms of Berger's three elements, this was a product of the calculated economic and strategic interests of elites. However, the alignment between the two countries was limited, and together with the anti-regime movement criticizing the pro-Japanese origins of then-President Park Chung Hee and other elites, anti-Japanese sentiment continued to function as political culture in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, conditions improved for Korea-Japan reconciliation, but between 2001 and 2007 Korea, China, and Japan became mired in historical disputes owing to domestic political conditions and a rightwing backlash in Japan. Due to a lack of neighboring countries urging something like the cooperative political framework of the EU or incentives for cooperation, progress made in relations in historical disputes in East Asia has been weak (Berger 2012, 201-202).

According to Berger, a successful reconciliation strategy must fulfill at least five conditions. First, there must exist benefits sufficient to offset the costs of reconciliation for political leaders. Second, there must be consistent reciprocity. Third, there must be consistency with respect to official narratives across various fields. If historical textbooks or politicians' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine are excluded from the diplomatic rhetoric of the apology, as in Japan's case, its sincerity falls into doubt. Fourth, in a democratic society, there must be consistency between the behavior of the government and private citizens. In other words, reconciliatory efforts must proceed not only from the top down but also the bottom up. Fifth, a successful reconciliation strategy requires time (Berger 2012, 230-49).

The year 2015 marked seventy years since the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Through amendments to the pacifist provisions of its constitution and a normalization of its past, Japan is displaying strongly intentions to become a

“normal” state. The Announcement by Foreign Ministers of Japan and the Republic of Korea at the Joint Press Occasion could also be seen as an expression of this normalization. However, the sincere reappraisal of the past called for by Adorno demands a constant renewal of reflective historical consciousness and reform of current politics and society. Furthermore, as Lind points out, apologies are not necessarily required for reconciliation, but historical narratives rejecting apology for past events escalate threat perceptions in neighboring states and impede relations in the long term. Finally, rash agreements failing to consider conditions for reconciliation, such as Berger describes, do not resolve the issues and only deepen disunity. The task of international politics analysis surrounding historical perceptions and the past reminds one of the need to consider the domestic politics of memory with respect to the international politics of apology. This is because, despite the important roles of leadership for deft and cohesive decision-making, and of official narratives for inter-state reconciliation, pragmatic agreement at the governmental level prioritizing strategic interests cannot rectify individual pain and suffering or social memory.

Conclusion

In this article, I have investigated the controversy surrounding Park Yu-ha's *Comfort Women of the Empire* in terms of the politics of memory. Considering how Park denies the Japanese state's legal responsibility for the comfort women system, emphasizes the collaborative (i.e. colonial) particularity of Korean comfort women, and understands wartime sexual slavery as prostitution and sex work, she demonstrates quite problematic perceptions in *Comfort Women of the Empire*. In this regard, a number of Korean and Japanese scholars have criticized this book from the perspectives of international law, history, and feminism. Meanwhile, the work has been extremely well regarded within Japanese society but prosecuted for defamation within Korean society, suddenly revealing the various existential and epistemological conflicts in which it is entangled.

Since the 1990s, with the advent of the post-Cold War era and a growing tide of democratization, historians all over the world have pursued an alternative, resistant, bottom-up historiography. In Korea, this pursuit emerged alongside the revelation of Korean comfort women's testimonies and the inauguration of President Kim Yŏng-sam's civilian government. Divisions between Korea and Japan, and within each society, over the comfort women issue has become an

issue pertaining to colonial rule, war crimes, and the patriarchal violence and mobilization of women suppressed and forgotten under authoritarian governments. In the meantime, alongside an epistemological transformation resisting traditional discrimination against oral history, testimonial evidence, and memory—as opposed to official historical narratives recorded in written documents—theoretical consideration of memory has developed in the disciplines of history and sociology. By comparison, the fields of political science and international politics have not treated the problem of memory in a manner commensurate with its importance. In this article, I have focused on discussing the case of *Comfort Women of the Empire*, thus leaving more earnest discussion of the politics of memory to future research.

History is constantly reconstructed and projected onto the future through present-day choices. In designating history a site of struggle over the representation and discourse of memory, one may recognize the great pain and suffering of history's victims. When dealing with a topic such as the comfort women issue, in which the pain and suffering is still ongoing, a researcher's methodological ethics become all the more important. On the one hand, through oral history, there should be more effort to restore the experiences and voices of minorities forgotten by social memory and erased by official historiography. On the other, researchers must conduct their research with the strictest caution and self-awareness regarding the violence and politics of representation. Finally, foreign policy must be planned and implemented with careful consideration of the interactions between domestic and international politics. This is something to consider with respect to both the progressive project of democratizing domestic political society and the conservative project of ensuring the nation's survival.

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