

Examining the Significance of the Movements to Document Minority Histories and “Comfort Women” for the Japanese Military in Okinawa

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Abstract | In 1975 the first testimony from a “comfort woman” survivor came to light in Okinawa. This article focuses on the social context that enabled Pae Pong-gi, a surviving “comfort woman” and victim of the Japanese military in Okinawa, to provide this testimony. A fact-finding investigation regarding the forcible taking of Koreans to Okinawa commenced in 1972 following the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. Relatedly, the movement to document firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa had been underway since the late 1960s. Through this movement, Okinawa residents began to resist existing official accounts of the war, which adhered to the perspectives of the military and the state. These two concerns coalesced through the 1972 Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission to uncover the truth about the forcible recruitment of Koreans relative to the Battle of Okinawa. Building on the achievements of the movement to document experiences of the Battle of Okinawa, this organization successfully recovered and documented Okinawans’ forgotten memories of the Korean “military laborers” and “comfort women.” This effort by ordinary Okinawans to expose the horrors of the state’s wartime actions led to sympathy for the fact-finding activities regarding the forcible recruitment of Koreans. Furthermore, by coming to perceive Koreans as another victim of the Battle of Okinawa, Okinawans were able to relativize their own victimization and begin to document the history of their own responsibilities during the war. This qualitative transformation in the movement to record the experiences of the Battle of Okinawa provided the social context in which Pae Pong-gi revealed her testimony.

Keywords | Pae Pong-gi, Okinawa, “comfort women” for the Japanese military, fact-finding mission for the forcible recruitment of Koreans, movement to document firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa, mutual reference

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Introduction

The first testimony from a surviving “comfort woman” (*wianbu*) emerged in Okinawa in 1975, thirty years after the end of World War II, when Pae Pong-gi (1914–91) revealed herself to the public through the media. This was sixteen years before Kim Hak-sun became the first “comfort woman” survivor in Korea to provide testimony regarding her experience. How might the public testimony of a Korean “comfort woman” victim have been possible so much earlier in Japan, which was in this case the perpetrating nation with a history of aggressive wartime activity and colonial rule?

“There are ways to earn money there even without working. You won’t need to bring any clothes or a blanket. It’s hot, so people wear very little clothing. Fruit is also plentiful—pineapples, bananas. If you go to the mountain and lie beneath a banana tree with your mouth open wide, the bananas will fall in” (Kawata 1987, 39). Deceived by these seductive words of a female recruiter, Pae Pong-gi was recruited to a “comfort station” (*wianso*) on the Okinawan island of Tokashiki-jima. This was in March 1945, about five months before the outbreak of the Battle of Okinawa. With this “great gamble” (Kyokutō Kokusai Gunji Saiban Kenkyūkai 1947) for the defense of the mainland (*hondo*), the Japanese military attempted to break the enemy’s spirit and inflict maximum losses through as protracted and bloody a battle as possible. In the ensuing fierce ground war with American troops, one in four Okinawans lost their lives. On the island of Tokashiki-jima, more than three hundred of the roughly seven hundred residents remaining were forced to commit mass suicide. The Japanese soldiers confronting and resisting the US military also brutally slaughtered Korean military laborers (*gunpu* in Japanese, *gunbu* in Korean). Seven women at the “comfort station,” including Pae Pong-gi, were caught at the battle’s epicenter. Three were either killed or severely injured,¹ two escaped along with the deserting Japanese and Korean soldiers, and Pae Pong-gi and one other woman remained with the Japanese soldiers until the very end. After “suffering greatly for the sake of the military,” these women, who also witnessed the decapitation

1. According to the testimonies of Tokashiki-jima residents, three women were injured in an US air raid, one of whom, a Korean called “Haruko,” died instantly (Kawata 1987). According to the documentary *Grandmothers of Okinawa: Testimony, Military Comfort Women (Okinawa no harumoni: shōgen-jūgun ianfu*, 1979) directed by Yamatani Tetsuo (1979b), who was the first to record Pae Pong-gi’s testimony, Second Lieutenant Chinen Chōboku of the Japanese army buried the body. Later, when the White Jade Pagoda (*Shiratama no tō*) was built on the island in 1951 to commemorate the war dead, Haruko’s remains were moved for enshrinement along with the fallen Japanese soldiers. This was justified on the grounds that she was “like a soldier.” It is said a rumor has persisted on Tokashiki-jima of Haruko’s ghost appearing from time to time.

of a Korean military serviceman by a Japanese officer for “eating potatoes without permission,” surrendered in late August along with the Japanese soldiers. Eventually, they were sent to the Ishikawa prison camp specifically set aside for civilians (Han’guk Chōngsindae Yōnguso 2006, 48-49). Subsequently, with the establishment of US military government in Okinawa, the two became estranged from their compatriots who returned to Korea and separated from each other. Drifting around a devastated Okinawa, Pae Pong-gi worked odd jobs as a maid, waitress, and even prostitute, and her life improved little more compared to the times when she had been a “comfort woman” for the Japanese military (Han’guk Chōngsindae Yōnguso 2006, 48-49; Kim Mi-hye 2013, 66).

In the meantime, the United States Civil Administration for the Ryuku Islands (USCAR), the governing body for Okinawa which was now under US military occupation, passed the Immigration Control Act for the Ryuku Islands in January 1953, which required the registration of all foreigners residing in Okinawa. Having no association with Okinawa, Japan, North or South Korea, or any expatriate organization, let alone USCAR, Pae Pong-gi lived through the US occupation period as a stateless illegal immigrant susceptible to forced deportation. It appears that she “avoided the registration process because of a ‘past’ [she] did not wish to recall” (“30-nen buri ni jiyū no mi ni” 1975).

Excluded from the legal protection of the state, it was only three years after the US returned Okinawa to Japan that Pae Pong-gi was able to obtain “special resident status” after revealing her past as a Korean “comfort woman” for the Japanese military who had been brought to Okinawa during World War II. By registering as a foreign resident, she was able to escape the danger of deportation she had faced since before the war’s end, live safely in Okinawa, and undergo treatment for her ill health. This specifically happened only after acquaintances of Pae, who saw that she was no longer able to make a living due to worsening neuralgia, decided they had to intervene and requested state assistance (Kawata 1987, 177-78). Thus, Pae Pong-gi finally registered with the state after thirty years. Although accompaniment by an identity guarantor was required each year when she renewed her sojourn permit, she was able to live out the rest of her life in Okinawa as she wished. Her guarantor Shinshirō Kyūichi was the son-in-law of the owner of a restaurant where she had worked in the sixties. He explained that he became her guarantor after she asked him for help and he heard that she could register if he wrote a petition and followed the proper procedures (Yamatani 1979b). At the Naha Immigration Office, Pae Pong-gi expressed herself plainly: “I was deceived by the Allied [Japanese] military”; “I could not return to my country after the war because I was embarrassed about my ‘work’ on the battlefield” (“30-nen buri jiyū no mi” 1975).

When reporting this story, Japan's major newspapers introduced Pae Pong-gi's testimony as the "first of a Korean *forcibly recruited* [*kyōsei renkō, kangje yōnhaeng* in Korean] for the Battle of Okinawa," acknowledging that she was in fact a surviving victim of forcible recruitment ("30-nen buri ni jiyū no mi ni" 1975, emphasis added). The newspapers also emphasized that it was for this reason the government had accorded to Pae "special consideration" in granting her permission to reside in Japan. In addition to such newspaper commentary, director of the Naha Immigration Office, Ōtsu Yasuo, also readily accepted that Pae was a forcibly recruited Korean: "There are likely other remaining *survivors of forcible recruitment*. Okinawa's official family register was lost during the war and had to be remade through self-reporting. How many might have registered under a different last name or become Japanese through marriage with an Okinawan?" ("30-nen buri ni jiyū no mi ni" 1975, emphasis added). Pae Pong-gi thus gave her testimony on the basis of a social awareness that regarded it not as revealing a "shameful and unfortunate past" that must be concealed and silenced, but exemplary of the severe violation of human rights caused by forcible recruitment. Pae Pong-gi's guarantor Shinshirō also reflected this awareness in explaining his motivation for helping her: "Despite being a victim of the war, [she] suffered in all kinds of ways just because she was not a Japanese citizen" (Yamatani 1979b). How might this attitude have been possible at this time? In this regard, the newspapers referenced the following fact: "Concerning the forcible recruitment of Koreans to Okinawa, the 'fact-finding mission for Koreans forcibly recruited to Okinawa and massacred' was established in August of the forty-seventh year of the Shōwa era [1972]. An exact figure for the 'military laborers' and 'comfort women' is unclear, stipulated as somewhere between ten and even thirty thousand" ("30-nen buri ni jiyū no mi ni" 1975; "30-nen buri 'jiyū' no mi" 1975). In other words, a fact-finding mission was established in 1972, three years before Pae Pong-gi's testimony, to investigate the forcible recruitment of Koreans to Okinawa. This was three months after Okinawa was returned to Japan in May of that year.

In this article, I focus on the social context that enabled the discovery of the existence of the "comfort women" procured by the Japanese military in Okinawa. In addition to the particular circumstances of Okinawa at the time, I pay attention to the activities of the fact-finding mission initiated immediately after the return of the island to Japan to investigate the forcible recruitment of Koreans during wartime and the movement to document Okinawa residents' firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa.

In South Korea in 1991, a number of converging circumstances paved the way for Kim Hak-sun's public testimony. Her open testimony was made possible

due to the democratization movement that had opposed the long-standing military dictatorship, greater human rights awareness, and the women’s movement that had bloomed through this process. As part of this, a fact-finding investigation and movement to apportion blame and establish the truth surrounding the circumstance of the “comfort women” victims of the Japanese military began in earnest with the launch of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (*Han’guk Chöngsindae Munje Taech’aek Hyöbühoe*) in 1990. This context prepared Korean society to hear the direct testimonies of the victims (So Hyön-suk 2019). Of course, unlike Kim Hak-sun’s testimony, which was intended to express a victim’s resentment and demand an apology, the punishment of the perpetrators, and reparations from the Japanese government, Pae Pong-gi’s testimony was a “compulsory self-confession” driven by the speaker’s own quest for survival (Kim Mi-hye 2017). Be that as it may, considering that it was not until 1992 that a Korean “comfort woman” in mainland Japan, Song Sin-do (1922–2017), revealed her testimony, the social context in which Pae Pong-gi revealed her testimony at this much earlier moment demands explanation.² This context in Okinawa specifically was somewhat analogous to the Korean situation in 1991, as passionate political movements demanding the return of Okinawa to Japan, driven by local public concerns with demilitarization and human rights developed in opposition to the coercive rule and structural violence of US military rule on the island. Beginning in the late 1960s, Okinawa residents began to recall their memories of the actions of Japanese soldiers as Okinawa’s reversion to Japan drew near, and the deployment of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) there became a reality. Incited by these memories, residents began a project to recover the history of the Battle of Okinawa. This fact-finding mission for the forcible recruitment of Koreans during World War II, which emerged in close association with this series of political movements in Okinawa, can therefore be said to have prepared Okinawan society to hear the testimony of surviving “comfort woman”

2. It has been argued that, following the return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, the Japanese government offered to Koreans who lacked any official nationality and had lived in Okinawa since before August 15, 1945 a three-year grace period to register for “special sojourn status,” and thus Pae Pong-gi chose to give her testimony in 1975 because it was her last chance to avoid deportation (Kawata 2005, 13). It has not been confirmed, however, whether the Japanese government actually adopted such measures. Through the 1965 Japan-Korea Legal Status Agreement, Korean residents in Japan who had lived in Japan since before the end of the war were granted the right to register as legal residents over a five-year period until 1971. No exception was made for Koreans residing in Okinawa, which was later returned to Japan. Rather, the government appeared to adopt a legally non-binding approach to this issue, using terms such as “special consideration.” It would be accurate to conclude, then, that no “grace period” was ever implemented.

victim Pae Pong-gi. To further elucidate this point, I next investigate the background and content of this fact-finding mission, paying attention to the relevance of the “comfort women” issue.³

The Fact-Finding Mission for the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans during the War and “Comfort Women” for the Japanese Military in Okinawa

There was little fact-finding investigation into the forcible recruitment of Koreans for the Battle of Okinawa following the end of World War II.⁴ In Okinawa, just as carrying out a full-fledged investigation of the Battle of Okinawa was difficult during the US occupation period, concern for the forcible recruitment of Koreans to Okinawa was all the more lacking. In 1966, however, Kim Tong-sŏn, a Mindan⁵ affiliated Korean resident in Japan who was working for the US military in Okinawa, caused a sensation when he uncovered the story of a Korean family of seven that had been brutally murdered by Japanese soldiers on Kume-jima during the Battle of Okinawa. He recovered the remains of the family and enshrined them in a temple in Naha, and thereafter continued to participate together with other Okinawan residents in a memorial service held annually on August 20, the day they were massacred (“27-nyŏn man e pŏtkyŏjin” 1972). In April 1972, the year Okinawa reverted to Japanese control, the Japanese media even reported on this massacre (Oemubu 1973a, 114). Nonetheless, this was a limited one-man investigation.

Meanwhile, on mainland Japan, the government showed no interest whatsoever in the issue of the forcible recruitment of Koreans during the war. However, while the government adhered to an approach of concealment and neglect,

3. While this fact-finding investigation has also been explored in Sin Chu-baek (2007), Lim Kyoung-hwa (2015a), and O Se-jong (2019), there is little systematic research in this regard. Furthermore, only the current article analyzes the content and significance of the fact-finding investigation focusing on the “comfort women” issue to elucidate the relationship between the fact-finding investigation and the movement to document Okinawa residents’ firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa.

4. In general, the term “forcible mobilization” (*kangje tongwŏn*) is a more comprehensive term for explaining the structure of “total mobilization” that mobilized all colonial subjects under the total war system. This article uses the term “forcible recruitment” (*kangje yŏnhaeng*), which was used by minority historiographical movements—the movement to document the forced recruitment of Koreans and movement to document firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa—to emphasize the coerciveness and illegality of the Japanese military’s mobilization of “comfort women.”

5. The Korean Residents Union in Japan (Zai Nihon Daikanminkoku Kyoryū Mindan/Chae-Ilbon Taehanminguk Kōryū Mindan).

Chongryon⁶ affiliated Korean residents in Japan organized a massive fact-finding mission to uncover the truth. The initial fruit of this undertaking emerged with the publication of Pak Kyöng-sik’s (1965) *Record of the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans* (*Chösenjin kyösei renkö no kiroku*). Working at the time as a faculty member of the Chongryon-managed Korea University (Chosön Taehakkyo), Pak Kyöng-sik had gathered materials from construction sites and coal mines across the country and listened to the testimonies of survivors to investigate the truth of the forced conscription of Koreans. In his book, which established the phrase “forcible recruitment of Koreans” (*Chösenjin kyösei renkö*) among historians (Ch’oe Yöng-ho 1998, 310), he interpreted this coerced recruitment of Koreans after 1939 as an extension of the violence of colonial rule. At the same time as he was working on the book in the early 1960s, the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea was underway. Pak Kyöng-sik considered this as an attempt by Japanese monopoly capital to collude with American imperialism and surreptitiously re-invade the Korean Peninsula. This perspective was apparent in his explanation of the purpose of his study:

In order to avoid repeating a wretched past without a fatherland, we must accurately understand the nature of imperialism and learn for the ongoing struggle. At the same time, it is our hope that investigating Japanese imperialist crimes can strengthen a truly equal international solidarity between the Korean and Japanese peoples, expose the American imperialists’ prevailing policy of Asia invasion, and contribute to the ideological ground for cultivating the struggle to drive this invader out of Asia. (Pak Kyöng-sik 1965, 331)

In other words, the “investigation of Japanese imperialist crimes” would not only produce genuine international solidarity between the peoples of Japan and the Korean Peninsula but also the ideological ground for confronting the military expansion of American imperialism in Vietnam and Asia. Furthermore, Pak Kyöng-sik emphasized that this fact-finding investigation was not merely an “anti-Japanese” movement fixating on the past: Koreans who had settled in Japan (“the mainland”) after being forcibly brought there during the colonial period, establishing the social foundations for Korean residents in Japan, were still being exposed to the oppression that had succeeded the discriminatory policies of the colonial period (Pak Kyöng-sik 1965, 3-4). In other words, he viewed Koreans in Japan as members of the Korean nation still under colonial rule, a situation hindering true solidarity between Korea and Japan. For Pak

6. The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Zai Nihon Chösenjin Sö Rengökai [Chösen Sören]/Chae-Ilbon Chosönin Chöng Yönhaphoe [Chöngnyön]).

Kyŏng-sik, then, the fact-finding mission was also a movement to protect the rights of Zainichi Koreans, a minority in Japanese society.

At this time, however, with Koreans in Japan without South Korean passports prohibited from travelling to Okinawa, which was under US military rule, the scope of Pak Kyŏng-sik's investigation was restricted to mainland Japan. Since the US government regulated travel to and from Okinawa, one could only travel to Okinawa by obtaining official identification issued by the state (e.g., a passport) and an entry visa from the US government. This meant that Korean residents with *Chōsen-seki* status in Japan,⁷ effectively stateless for having refused to adopt a South Korean nationality, were unable to travel to Okinawa. When Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, however, residents with *Chōsen-seki* status gained the freedom to travel to the island.

The conditions thus arrived for a fact-finding investigation in Okinawa to begin. The investigation team consisted of four people, including Director of Social Affairs for the Chongryon Central Standing Committee Ha Ch'ang-ok and Deputy Director of Social Affairs Chŏn Ho-ŏn.⁸ Together with a Japanese private investigative organization consisting of four Japanese, including the attorney for the Human Rights Advocacy Committee of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations Ozaki Susumu and literary critic Fujishima Udai, they formed the "Fact-Finding Mission for the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans to Okinawa during World War II" (Chairman Ozaki Susumu, hereafter the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission). The team implemented a twenty-day systematic, large-scale fact-finding mission from August 15 to September 4, 1972. Subsequently, under the new title of "Fact-Finding Mission for the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans," this joint organization would also carry out field investigations in Hokkaido (1973), Kyushu (1974), Tohoku (1975), and Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1979) (Kim Chi-hyŏng 2003, 130; Yamada and Ryu Kwangsu 2012) and establish the basic contours of research relative to the forcible recruitment of Koreans, based on systematic investigation and research by Korean residents in Japan and Japanese citizens (Higuchi 2015, 5). The field investigation in Okinawa carried out immediately after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan was a monumental attempt to mark the inauguration of such activities.

The Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission published a sixty-page report on its investigation in Okinawa later that year, titled *Report of the Fact-Finding*

7. *Chosen-seki* is a category of nationality created in postwar Japan to classify Koreans who had "migrated" from colonial Korea to Japan and their descendants.

8. Information regarding four Chongryon-affiliated participants was unspecified in the report published as a result of the fact-finding mission (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972). Regarding their identities, see Oemubu (1973a, 114).

Mission on the Forcible Recruitment and Mass Slaughter of Koreans in Okinawa during World War II (*Dai Ni-ji Taisen Ji Okinawa Chōsenjin Kyōsei Renkō Gyakusatsu Shinsō Chōsadan hōkoku sho*, hereafter *Report*). In the *Report*, the purpose of forming the fact-finding mission was described as follows: “With the reversion of Okinawa to the fatherland, [the purpose of this report is to] counter the developing re-invasion attempt of Japanese militarism and champion the fundamental rights of Zainichi Koreans while promoting good relations between the peoples of Asia, including those of Japan and Korea, by investigating the facts and truth of the mistreatment of Koreans in the past through their forcible recruitment to Okinawa and massacre during the Battle of Okinawa” (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 1). Later in the *Report*, the following is also stated: “[This report] is not simply a revelation of the facts of the past. It is the ideological basis for denouncing the Japanese government’s participation in the American imperialists’ invasion of Vietnam, offering national territory, materials, and labor, and the new war crime of augmenting military strength premised on an invasion of South and North Korea” (57). In these statements, one can detect the *Report’s* intention to continue the work of Pak Kyōng-sik, who emphasized that a fact-finding investigation into the forcible recruitment of Koreans would not only provide the ideological basis for strengthening international solidarity between the peoples of Korea and Japan and opposing the American imperialist invasion of Asia but also a means to protect the rights of Zainichi Koreans.

Nonetheless, there was also a major difference between Pak Kyōng-sik’s earlier work and the *Report*. While the former mainly focused on forced labor, abuse, and massacres in mines and on public-works sites, the latter investigation focused on the brutalities committed by the Japanese imperial military against Koreans forcibly recruited to serve in the war zone. Unlike the case of the Japanese mainland in which the focus was on forcibly mobilized laborers, the *Report* paid attention to victims such as “military laborers” and “comfort women,” i.e., those forcibly mobilized by the Japanese military specifically for the war effort. Therein, the issue of the forcible recruitment of “comfort women” was particularly prominent.⁹

Compared to the subsequent activities of the Fact-Finding Mission for the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans, that which is particularly noteworthy was the warm welcome and active support offered in Okinawa by progressive forces and local governments. The Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission requested

9. However, Pak Kyōng-sik (1965, 169) does briefly refer to “comfort women” recruited to Okinawa, stating the following: “Korean women [dispatched as comfort women] were forcibly recruited en masse to the frontlines in China, the South, and Okinawa. It looks as if the figure was in the tens of thousands.”

support from progressive local politicians such as Okinawa Governor Yara Chōbyō and Naha Mayor Taira Ryōshō, who generously promised full cooperation. Furthermore, immediately after the fact-finding mission's arrival, human rights organizations, such as the Association for the Reversion of Okinawa Prefecture to the Fatherland—which was central to the movement to revert Okinawa to Japan—Okinawa Teacher's Union, Okinawa Prefecture Labor Union Council, and Okinawa Human Rights Association organized a forum to discuss material cooperation and a rally to share the results of the investigation upon its completion. The local media also attended these gatherings and displayed a high degree of interest (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 1-2). Meanwhile, maintaining a defensive posture with respect to these activities, the South Korean government described the purposes of the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission as follows: "While related to the activities of progressive forces in Okinawa opposed to the deployment of the SDF, its goals are to establish a Chongryon headquarters in Okinawa Prefecture and prepare for the Naha concert of the Central Performing Arts Group in Japan" (Oemubu 1973a, 115).¹⁰ Evidently the chief concern of the South Korean government with regard to the fact-finding activities was the cooperation and solidarity between Chongryon and progressive forces in Okinawa.

However, Okinawan progressives' hospitable treatment for and solidarity with Chongryon—and even North Korea—did not suddenly arise at this time. From the North Korean perspective, Okinawa was an "outpost of American imperialism for the invasion of Korea." Conversely, it was argued that the very possibility of North Korean provocations exacerbating military tensions in the Far East provided the pretext for the continued existence of US bases in Okinawa. Such differing views suggest the degree to which Okinawa and North Korea maintained a threatening and hostile relationship with each other. Nevertheless, under the US occupation, a portion of Okinawa residents engaged in exchanges with Chongryon and even directly with North Korea whilst voicing their opposition to American bases and campaigning for the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. The basis for this collaboration was their common advocacy of nationalism based on resistance to the US presence in the region: each viewed the tension in their respective "fatherlands" as caused by US-imposed division and each saw US withdrawal and unification/restoration of

10. According to O Se-jong (2019, 241-42), the *Ryūkyū News* (*Ryūkyū shinpō*) reported the following on the sixteenth page of the August 16, 1972 edition: "If this fact-finding investigation regarding the massacre of Koreans goes ahead, it appears a cruel reality hitherto unknown will be revealed. In this respect, associations for the reversion of Okinawa to Japan and human rights will actively and generously provide support from a position supporting peace and opposing war and the deployment of the SDF to Okinawa."

the “fatherland” as the way to alleviate such tension. North Korea thus continuously expressed support for and solidarity with Okinawa residents’ resistance movements (Lim Kyoung-hwa 2015b).

As things turned out, however, the reversion of Okinawa to Japan actually expedited the reorganization of the US-Japan military alliance and creation of the Japan-Korea-US triangular security system, which was premised on the stable management of US bases and deployment of the SDF in Okinawa. North Korea thus began to accuse the American imperialists of exploiting the delusion of Japanese militarists still captivated by the old dream of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to establish a front line of attack in their invasion of Asia (Kim Il-sŏng 1984). Meanwhile, for Okinawa residents, the deployment of the SDF ignited fears of the revival of Japanese militarism and aroused memories of the brutality of the Japanese military in the Battle of Okinawa (Arasaki 2005, 30). During this period, Okinawa residents had been exposed not only to an American attack so ferocious as to be called a “storm of steel” but also the abuses of their own military, enduring coerced mass suicide, massacre as “spies,” deprivation of food, expulsion from their homes, and so forth. It thus became an urgent task for Okinawa residents to delve into the truth of the Battle of Okinawa, especially for those groups and organizations that recalled the harmful history of the Japanese military as Japan began rearmament.

The Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission revealed not only the mobilization and exploitation of Korean “military laborers,” who were put to work delivering supplies, constructing fortifications, digging trenches, and so forth, but also the forcible recruitment of Korean women as “comfort women” for the Japanese military. The fact-finding mission began by procuring materials provided by research teams engaged in related historiographical projects (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 2). If not for such assistance, it would have been impossible to implement a fact-finding investigation across the entirety of the Ryukyu islands within a period of just twenty days. The first major source of assistance came from a team researching the Battle of Okinawa. Against the background of the movement to return Okinawa to Japan, the Ryukyu government had begun in 1965 to compile a twenty-four-volume series titled *The History of Okinawa Prefecture (Okinawa-ken shi)*. Three of these volumes were planned to cover the Battle of Okinawa, with two of these meant to document the testimonies of residents who had experienced the battle firsthand. The writing staff had thus been interviewing residents in each region since 1969. By the time the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission began, the first of the three volumes, *The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 9: Record of the Battle of Okinawa 1 (Okinawa-ken shi 9: Okinawa sen kiroku 1, Ryūkyū Seifu 1971)*, had already been publi-

shed, while publication of the second volume, *The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10: Record of the Battle of Okinawa 2* (*Okinawa-ken shi 10: Okinawa sen kiroku 2*, Okinawa-ken Kyōiku Inkaï 1974), was underway. The second major source of assistance was the Naha City Hall City History Editorial Office (Naha Shiyakusho Shi Shi Henshūshitsu), which had already published *Record of the Wartime Experiences of Citizens, vol. 1* (*Shimin no senji taiken ki 1*, Naha Shiyakusho 1971), another collection of citizens' testimonies regarding their wartime experiences. These publications marked the beginning of the wider effort to document testimonies pertaining to the massacre of civilians by the Japanese military in Okinawa. In addition, the Okinawa Prefecture Teachers' Union formed the Committee for the Pursuit of War Crimes and published *This Is the Japanese Military: Atrocities of the Battle of Okinawa* (*Kore ga Nihon gun da: Okinawa sen ni okeru zangyaku kōi*, Okinawa-ken Kyōshokuin Kumiai, 1972). This publication was filled with content detailing the Japanese military's massacre of civilians alleged to be "spies" and the forcing of civilians to commit mass suicide (Ishihara 1986, 243-45).

While undoubtedly benefiting from the achievements of these publications, the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission also pointed out their limitations insofar as they displayed "little concern for the Korean problem, which was only coincidentally and unintentionally referenced with respect to other facts" (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 14). On this basis, one can observe how the joint fact-finding mission endeavored to document history specifically from the perspective of Koreans, another subject of the Battle of Okinawa. Furthermore, the mission brought an entirely new subject to the forefront of the history of the Battle of Okinawa, namely, the forcible recruitment of Korean "comfort women," whom the movement to document firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa had all but ignored.

The Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission's investigation of Korean "comfort women" was based on historical materials and the testimonies of Okinawa residents. The results of this investigation, as displayed in table 2, show that it was not restricted to the main island of Okinawa but extended across many of the Ryukyu islands. In fact, the mission carried out field investigations on Ishigaki-jima, Iriomote-jima, Miyako-jima, Tokashiki-jima, Zamami-jima, Aka-jima, and Kume-jima. The Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission thus produced the only comprehensive report on "comfort women" in the Ryukyu islands until 1992, when the fifth Meeting of the National Women's History Research Exchange (*Zenkoku Josei Shi Kenkyū Kōryū no Tsudoi*) was held in Naha to commemorate twenty years since the return of Okinawa to Japan (Kyūshū Bengoshi Kai 1992). At this conference, the Symposium for Thinking

Table 1. Cases from the Okinawan mainland

Before the landing of the US military		After the landing of the US military	
Details	Source	Details	Source
Korean “comfort women” were living together with more than a thousand soldiers at a command post.	<i>The History of the Battle of Okinawa (Okinawa sen shi)</i>	Separated from other residents, under US military watch became “comfort women” for US soldiers at second-generation-managed bar	Ōshiro Masayasu
Seventeen women forcibly recruited for a special nursing unit. Fifty girls aged seventeen to eighteen years old became “comfort women.”	<i>I Accuse the Japanese Army (Nihon gun o kokuhatsu suru)</i>	Korean “comfort women” in a US military prison camp	Nakasone Seizen, Chihara Shigeko
Believing they were being recruited by a dressmaking school, they became “comfort women.” They appear to be children of a respectable family.	Ōshiro Masayasu	There were Korean “comfort women” in a US military hospital.	Tengan Kyōko, Ōshiro Hiroshi
There were Korean “comfort women.”	Yamada Yoshitoki Nakasone Seizen Zakimi Kazunori Uesato Kinsuke Ōshiro Masayasu Ōshiro Masahito	There were Korean “comfort women” in the US military northern district command headquarters.	
		There were Korean “comfort women.”	Iraha Tsuruko, Taira Tetsuo

About Okinawan Women’s History (*Okinawa no Josei Shi o Kangaeru Kai*) contained a groundbreaking and widely reported presentation revealing for the very first time the locations of 121 comfort stations pinpointed on a map and an estimated figure (at the time) of 554 women that had been Korean “comfort women” (“Hōkoku shū” Henshū Iinkai 1994, 25-31).¹¹

11. The subsequently produced “comfort station map” (<https://wam-peace.org/ianjo/map>) of the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (Onnatachi no Sensō to Heiwa Shiryōkan, WAM), which includes the comfort stations of all the territories occupied by the Japanese military during World War II, began with this first map.

Table 2. Cases from islands outside Okinawa

Island name	Details	Source
Zamami-jima	Seven Korean women, including Eiko, Konami, Mieko, Ikegami Toyoko, etc. were brought over in January 1945. Eiko was shot and killed.	Miyagi Hatsue
Aka-jima	Seven Korean women were brought over around September 1944. One was aged nineteen and the rest in their twenties. A club called Nanpūsō was established. In the morning they would work with the soldiers and from noon until midnight they would “service” the entire company (three hundred Japanese officers and soldiers). They would say things like “I want to go home” and “I miss my mom” and wearily sing Korean songs. Three died, one of whom was shot.	Kaneshima Kiku (“comfort station” cook)
Tokashiki-jima	At first, there were twenty Korean women aged between twenty-four and thirty. When the US army landed, four or five fled and two died in bombings. Seven remained.	Yoneda Tadayoshi
	Seven to eight Korean women were referred to as a nurse unit.	Komine Eijirō
	A date was set and several locations on the island were moved to. There were seven to eight people. Four to five of them died. Four deserted and were together with Sone, who had surrendered to the US military.	Ōshiro Ryōhei
	Three to four people were in Tokashiki before moved to Tokashiku. It is said they died from disease.	Shinjō Shinpei
	There were three to four people in Aharen but they disappeared.	Tamaki Shigeyasu
Miyako-jima	About fifty young women were brought here. The actions of the military were very extreme.	Yonaha Masayoshi
Iriomote-jima	There was a comfort station consisting of twenty Japanese women brought in and a comfort station with Korean women brought in from Taiwan. The former was frequented by officers and petty officers. The latter was frequented by soldiers. It is unclear as to their whereabouts from after the war’s intensification. Among the “comfort women” brought to Yonaguni-jima, there was one Korean woman.	

As table 2 shows, the fact-finding mission was able to procure testimony and materials regarding Korean “comfort women” for the Japanese military through the active support of Okinawa residents. In particular, testimony pertaining to Tokashiki-jima, the island to which Pae Pong-gi had been taken, was docu-

mented in such detail as to facilitate the revelation of her testimony three years later. Among those who gave evidence, Shinjō Shinpei, who was drafted to the local defense forces (*bōeitai*), also provided testimony in director Yamatani Tetsuo's documentary *Grandmothers of Okinawa* (*Okinawa no harumoni*, Yamatani 1979a, 145-46).

Another noteworthy feature of the *Report*, as displayed in table 1, was its temporal dimensions, extending beyond the Battle of Okinawa to cover Korean "comfort women," also the victims of violence perpetrated by the US military following the US occupation. Based on Pae Pong-gi's account, it does not appear that the US military conducted a fact-finding investigation or adopted a policy of immediate repatriation for the victims. In the *Report* it is instead stated that: "From the outset, the US military had no intention of returning Korean women to the fatherland. Rather than gathering the Korean women together in one place for their repatriation, it dispersed them to various bases on the main island in groups ranging from a few to twenty" (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 13). The *Report* also introduced a case of Korean women recruited as "comfort women" under the pretense of being sent to a dress-making school. They ended up working in bars catering to US soldiers, or as "nurses," while in effect existing in bonded servitude to sexually gratify US officers and soldiers. In *Grandmothers of Okinawa*, Naha taxi driver Mr. Tōma also describes how Korean women who "serviced" the Japanese military were referred to as "*Chōsen-pi*" (*Korean vulvas*), while those who "serviced" the US military after becoming their prisoners were referred to as "*panpan*" (street prostitutes) (Yamatani 1979b). According to Pae Pong-gi's early testimony, it appears that she also "serviced" US officers and soldiers ("*Ilche sigi Okkinawa*" 1977). Having become a military base and a battleground under the Japanese military, Okinawa became even more heavily armed in preparation for war under US occupation. The *Report* thus viewed the structure and role of forcing Korean victims to live as "comfort women" as transforming and passing from the Japanese to the US military. On this basis, with the mere handover of the occupation of Okinawa from Japanese to American imperialism, liberation had not come for Koreans in Okinawa. Indeed, they were still subjected to ethnic discrimination and persecution as much as or more than the people of Okinawa (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 10-11).

While the fact-finding mission attained active cooperation from Okinawa residents, it appears that local Korean residents were not so forthcoming. According to documents of the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the reason for this was that most of these Koreans were working for US agencies and did not want to involve themselves in local disputes (Oemubu 1973a, 117). Be that as it may, the fact-finding mission did not entirely rely on Okinawa

residents for the collection of testimonies and materials. Even if it was just a single case, the fact-finding mission managed to meet a Korean who was a “comfort woman” for the Japanese military and listen to her testimony.

A woman forcibly recruited as a “comfort woman” had concealed her past until now. When we first visited her, she viewed us with fear, vigilance, and suspicion. She did not even know that Korea had been liberated and was independent, not to mention the rapid development of the fatherland [North Korea] as a socialist industrial nation. Brought to South Pacific islands such as Saipan and Rabaul before she had matured, she could not even remember her original name or hometown. Tearfully relating her miserable past, she stated, “At first, I thought you were trying to trick me and take me somewhere again.”

Having been forced to live as a “comfort woman” a life so miserable it cannot be described in words, it has yet been impossible for the pain in her heart to heal over the last twenty-seven years since the liberation of the fatherland because Okinawa has been under US rule. (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 14)

The fact-finding mission thus met with a surviving victim and documented a “comfort woman’s” testimony three years before Pae Pong-gi provided her own. Regardless of this fact-finding mission’s political aspects, that is, its frank objective of propagandizing the superiority of the North Korean regime, it related the story of an anonymous woman who was brought at a young age to the battlefields of the South Pacific islands and forced to live as a “comfort woman” for the Japanese military, only to lead a miserable, neglected life in Okinawa following the war. Unlike Pae Pong-gi, however, this particular survivor, who had led a life in a foreign land without even knowing that “Korea had been liberated and was independent,” was unable to provide a public testimony at this time.

Mutually Referential Movements to Document Minority Histories

The fact-finding mission’s activities were reported in Japanese mainland newspapers such as *Ryukyu News* (*Ryūkyū shinpō*) and *Okinawa Times* (*Okinawa taimusu*). Moreover, on September 4, the last day of the fact-finding mission, NHK TV also reported on its activities, causing a massive sensation (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 3). On September 6, a concert held by the Central Performing Arts Group also aired on Ryukyu Broadcasting Corporation (*Ryūkyū Hōsō*). Describing this broadcast as “Chongryon’s surging advance,” the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported, “We shall pay attention to this investigation, which looks like it will continue into the future” (Oemubu 1973a, 115).

In terms of the “comfort women” issue, what is notable above all else about the fact-finding mission was its influence on Okinawa residents, something which was facilitated through its cooperation with the movement to document the firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa. The fact-finding investigation demanded self-reflection regarding the forgetting of Korean “military laborers” and “comfort women” who had existed right before the very eyes of Okinawa residents during the Battle of Okinawa. In a special article for the *Okinawa Times*, titled “The Reality of ‘Another Battle of Okinawa’” (*Mō hitotsu no Okinawa sen no jittai*), writer and chairman of the Okinawa Prefecture Archive of Historical Materials Ōshiro Tatsuhiko (1972) stated, “Although not entirely intentional, we Okinawans must again especially and unhesitatingly reflect on this ‘consciousness deficit’ regarding Koreans.” According to the *Report*, an assembly was held upon completion of the Korea-Japan Fact-Finding Mission’s activities, where Okinawan activists who attended affirmed the “resolution to carry out continuous investigation under the direction of Okinawa residents.” Although the subsequent activities of these attendees cannot be confirmed, the *Report* describes how liaisons were assigned for the establishment of a field investigation team (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 3). Researcher of Okinawan literature Shinjō Ikuo asserts that such self-reflection “compelled [Okinawans] to confront the ‘Other’ existing within a blank space in their historical awareness [of Korean ‘military laborers’ and ‘comfort women’], allowing for the breaking down of this barrier in their historical consciousness and the recovery of the accounts of forcibly recruited Koreans and comfort women.” He also refers to the many oral testimonies regarding “comfort women” and “forcibly recruited Koreans” that were featured in *The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10*, a fruit of this self-reflection published in 1974, three years after volume nine (Shinjō 2007, 135-37).

Table 3 draws on Teruya Daitetsu’s database (2016) of testimonies and memoirs pertaining to Korean “comfort women” and “military laborers” and “comfort stations” featured in the various histories of Okinawa Prefecture and its cities, towns, and villages. In 1971 publications—*The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 9* and *Record of Citizens’ Wartime Experiences, vol. 1* (Naha Shiyakusho 1971)—there are just three testimonies pertaining to comfort stations. However, in 1974 publications—*The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10* (Okinawa-ken Kyōiku Iinkai 1974) and *The History of Naha City: Materials, vol. 2* (Naha-shi Kikakubu Shi Shi Henshūshitsu 1974)—there are twelve testimonies related to “comfort women.” In particular, *The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10* features eight such testimonies. It was Ōshiro Masayasu and Yamada Yoshitoki, who provided the testimonies regarding the Korean “comfort

Table 3. Articles on Korean “Comfort Women” in histories of Okinawa Prefecture and Okinawa cities, towns, and villages

Publication year	Title	Testifying witness	Content
1971	<i>The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 9</i>	Asato Kanae	Makabe comfort station
		Aragaki Kame	Comfort station
	<i>Record of Citizens' War-time Experiences, vol. 1</i>	Hirata Hatsumi	Kyan comfort station
1974	<i>The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10</i>	Yáng Tiānfú	Iriomote-jima comfort station and comfort women
		Ikemura Tsunemasa	Miyako-jima comfort station and comfort women
		Sunagawa Masayoshi	Miyako-jima comfort station and comfort women
		Teruya Chūjirō	Motobu-chō comfort station
		Chinen Chōboku	Tokashiki-jima comfort station and comfort women
		Kim Tong-sŏn	Naha City comfort women
		Round-table discussion	Minamidaitō-jima comfort station and comfort women
		Aguni Yoshi	Shuri comfort women
	<i>The History of Naha City: Materials, vol. 2, part 2, section 6</i>	Jikuda Shūkaku	Kyan comfort station and comfort women
		Miyazato Chikateru	Itoman comfort women
		Tamai Kameyoshi	Naha City comfort station
Ikemiyagushiku Shūi		Comfort women	

women” victims listed in table 1, that oversaw the production of this volume.

With respect to Pae Pong-gi’s testimony, however, perhaps the most significant element of this fact-finding mission was its influence on the historical awareness of the movement to document firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa carried out by Okinawa residents. Ōshiro Masayasu, Ishihara Masaie, and Aniya Masaaki, who participated in this movement through their research on the Battle of Okinawa and involvement in the publication of *The History of*

Okinawa Prefecture, described it as a “bottom-up” historiographical movement seeking to uncover the truth of the battle from the perspective of Okinawa residents. The aim, in other words, was to critique existing accounts of the Battle of Okinawa composed by former members of the old Japanese military or government officials adhering to the rationale of the military, thus viewing Okinawa citizens purely in terms of their cooperation with the war effort and patriotism (Shima 1983; Ishihara 1986; Aniya 1974). As the pacifist movement to return Okinawa to Japan ended up with the continuing presence of US bases complemented by the deployment of the SDF, the effort to uncover and document wartime experiences based on such a bottom-up methodology—realizing the subjectivity of Okinawa residents—became all the more pressingly demanded at this moment of further militarization (Aniya 1974, 1114). Ultimately, this historiographical movement would transform the perception of the Battle of Okinawa from that based on a military standpoint to that based on the memories and perspectives of the Okinawa residents (Shima 1983, 127).

While also referencing this bottom-up methodology, the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission worked to expose the truth of the Battle of Okinawa in terms of the perspective and agency of Koreans, who had been omitted from the project to establish the subjectivity of Okinawa residents (Lim Kyoung-hwa 2015a, 566). With this in mind, the fact-finding mission levied the following criticism: “During the late-World War II Battle of Okinawa, the atrocities committed by the old Japanese military with respect to Okinawa residents, who were sacrificed in the name of defending the mainland, are gradually being exposed by Okinawans themselves. Yet there has been little attention to the fact of the great number of Koreans forcibly recruited by the old Japanese military during the Battle of Okinawa” (Dai Ni-ji Taisen 1972, 1). Such criticism derived from the fact that the perspective of a minority (Korean residents in Japan) could never be subsumed by the logic of a majority (Okinawa residents). It was not just that Koreans in Japan had been mobilized for an aggressive war from a territory under the long-term colonial rule and oppression of Japanese imperialism; they were still being exposed to the colonial discrimination and exclusion from Japanese society. Thus, the intent of the movement to document Okinawa residents’ firsthand experiences of the Battle of Okinawa served as an ideological impetus for the minoritarian concern of the fact-finding mission. Emphasizing the link between the historiographical movement of Korean residents in Japan as a minority and the bottom-up historiographical movement of Okinawa residents, the *Report* stated, “On the one hand, this investigation reveals the brutality of the Japanese military with respect to Koreans and Okinawa residents. On the other, it discloses the fact of the extensive sympathy

of the people of Okinawa for Koreans persecuted by the old Japanese military. Okinawa residents also enthusiastically cooperated with this investigation. This seed of the people's solidarity must be nurtured and grow strong into the future" (59). Even so, the fact-finding mission also paid attention to the interlayered structure of discrimination between Okinawa residents and Koreans, pointing out how the structure of discrimination between Japanese and Okinawans paralleled that between Okinawans and Koreans, alluding to the victimization of Koreans by Okinawan residents hitherto represented only as the utmost victims of the Battle of Okinawa. Regarding the existence of Korean "comfort women" forcibly recruited to Okinawa, the *Report* introduced various testimonies, such as the following: "In Okinawa, word spread after the war that Okinawan women went unharmed thanks to Korean women" (13). One could thus say the *Report* was an account of the Battle of Okinawa focusing on Koreans as victims, treated as "consumables" by the Japanese military and discriminated against by Okinawans.

One can concretely confirm the influence of the activities of the fact-finding mission on the historical awareness of the movement to document Okinawan residents' firsthand experience of the Battle of Okinawa in the general introduction to *The History of Okinawa Prefecture, vol. 10*. Describing how existing historical accounts based on the perspective of the military had completely excluded not only the lives of Okinawa residents but also Korean military laborers, Aniya Masaaki writes, "[This exclusion reflected] the mentality of the 'imperial soldiers' [i.e., wartime Japanese military], who considered the lives of Koreans to be as worthless as those of insects. Yet the problem is that such indifference and irresponsibility regarding the fate of Koreans continues to be faithfully represented in the Defense Agency's public history of the war" (Aniya 1974, 1096). Aniya certainly delves into the reality of Okinawa residents, who were discriminated against even as Japanese citizens, introducing, for example, the testimony of an Okinawan woman who reported hearing the following from a Japanese soldier: "Okinawan women sell their chastity for a bar of soap. Be grateful you're a comfort woman for the officers" (1101). Nevertheless, he also points out the problem of the "Okinawan-as-victim" approach:

[With respect to documenting Okinawan residents' firsthand experiences of the war,] one can count among the greatest problems those related to the forcibly recruited military laborers and comfort women from Korea and the great number of workers mobilized from Taiwan, mostly from Yaeyama. Okinawan residents have been described as nothing less than perpetrators in this regard, but only uncertain and fragmentary reports of their testimonies have been produced so far. (Aniya 1974, 1108)

Furthermore, Aniya called for reflection regarding the wrongdoings of Okinawa residents. Unable to prevent the harm done to themselves, he charged, they had gone on to stand together with the ruling class as perpetrators and pass this harm on to others. Aniya also argued that indicting the ruling class for its crimes against the Japanese and Asian peoples and disclosing the crime of voluntarily collaborating with the ruling class as perpetrators had to do with the question of accountability for the war (Aniya 1974, 1111). Viewing just the “comfort women” issue in this regard, refusing to conceal or ignore and taking responsibility for the existence of Korean “comfort women” was categorically related to the possibility of Okinawa’s liberation as a region oppressed through overlapping histories of victimization and victimhood. Okinawan residents’ “eventual recognition of the victimization of the peoples of Asia as well as aspects of their own perpetration” signified the development of this movement (Ishihara 1986, 250). When victims are discovered such as Pae Pong-gi, forgotten by the state and history in the space between World War II and the Cold War, the “logic of the civilian,” which shares in the perspective of the minority, can become one that embraces the existence of victims and leads them into history.

South Korea’s “Fact-Finding Investigation”

The activities of the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission were also introduced in the South Korean media. Eliding the connection with Chongryon, *Kyunghyang Daily News* (*Kyŏnghyang sinmun*) published two articles introducing the fact-finding mission as a Japanese organization composed of lawyers associated with the Human Rights Advocacy Committee of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. In particular, these articles featured information that was *not* in the *Report*, stating, “Residents testify that more than a thousand army comfort women were spread across the island, some of whom were young girls aged fourteen to fifteen” (“Il pyŏnhosa chosadan” 1972). This shows how, against the background of the increased South Korean interest in Okinawa following its return to Japan, it was judged that the fact-finding investigation was worth reporting on even if the connection with Chongryon and North Korea had to be omitted. In addition, while it is unclear whether he was influenced by the fact-finding mission, former member of the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II Chang Ki-yŏng also offered testimony in *Kyunghyang Daily News* in 1973. Dispatched to Okinawa as part of a vanguard unit following the US victory in the Battle of Okinawa, he had encountered surviving Korean “comfort women” as victims of the Japanese military.

Entering a teahouse in downtown Okinawa City, [I found] ten women under the age of twenty gathered there. Asking them in Japanese, “Where are you from?” they replied in Japanese, “We are from the peninsula.” “What country do you mean by ‘the peninsula?’” I asked. “We are Koreans,” they replied. “I am also Korean. How did you end up here?” I asked. The girls began to weep loudly. They had been *forcibly brought from Korea as comfort women for the Japanese military*. (“Nae ka kyōkkūn isip-segi” 1973, emphasis added)

One can observe how, between the conclusion of the fact-finding mission up until when Pae Pong-gi produced her testimony, the existence of Korean “comfort women” in Okinawa also garnered attention in South Korea and was perceived of in terms of “forcible recruitment” (see part in italics). Concerning the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, however, the South Korean government rather expressed greater concern over the reduction of US bases needed for defense against North Korea than the rearmament of Japan—that which had ignited demands for fact-finding investigations regarding the past in the first place—requesting that the Japanese government allow the establishment of a South Korean consulate in Naha (“Ilchi chumok hal podo” 1972). The Naha consulate which opened in March of the following year took on a special role. Along with the normal duties of the protection of overseas Koreans and other consular services, it specifically engaged in “rapid reporting on the local situation regarding security issues” and the “strengthening of Mindan activities and prevention of Chongryon infiltration operations” (Oemubu 1973a, 118). In particular, the friendly relations between Chongryon and Okinawan progressives who opposed the imposition of US bases was a cause for concern among the South Korean government and Mindan. For example, when a screening of the North Korean film *The Flower Girl* (*Kkot p’anūn ch’ōnyō*) was hosted in Naha by the Chongryon Okinawa Prefecture Headquarters in February 1973, attracting an audience of about a thousand, the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed the Consulate General in Fukuoka to “deal with the false propaganda of Chongryon,” “screen a promotional film introducing the development of the fatherland,” and “establish long-term public relations plans” in order to ensure that overseas Koreans would not be taken in by the Chongryon propaganda (Oemubu 1973b, 111-14).

The South Korean government also rather abruptly dispatched a councilor to Okinawa in March 1974 to investigate the “fact of the massacre or mass slaughter of Koreans in Okinawa who were conscripted as laborers or soldiers during World War II” (Oemubu 1975, 4).¹² However, according to Ministry of

12. I would like to thank Hanshin University Professor Kim Min-hwan for providing information

Foreign Affairs documents, the true purpose of this “investigation” was to counter the “North Korean puppets” (*Pukkoe*), who were “collecting these facts in hopes of constructing a memorial.” This councilor’s investigation was little more than a formality. Outside of the construction in 1971 of the Green Hill Memorial (*Chǒnggu chi tǎp*) for Korean victims and a visit to Kume-jima, where a Korean family had been massacred, the following information was collected through a visit to the Okinawa Prefecture History Archive:

It was said that the total number of Koreans forcibly dispatched to Okinawa during World War II as conscripted laborers or soldiers or comfort women was estimated to have been between ten and twenty thousand. And that when considering the fact that only a little over ten thousand of the one hundred thousand of the Japanese military forces survived, one could infer the number of victims who were Korean laborers, a proportion greater than that of the combatants.

In terms of comprehensive materials on Korean victims in Okinawa during World War II, [there is the] fact-finding investigation report regarding the forcible recruitment and massacre of Koreans in Okinawa during World War II [this was the only comprehensive report on this issue]. Also, the personnel of the Okinawa Prefecture History Archive reported *that it was true the report contained some exaggerations and had factored in political propaganda but that it was otherwise highly credible.* (Oemubu 1975, 11, emphasis added)

The South Korean government’s “investigation” thus largely consisted of quoting experts associated with the prefectural history compilation committee. According to these experts, even taking into account the political intentions and exaggerated Chongryon rhetoric, which reflected the intention to expand to Okinawa following its return to Japan while cultivating links with Okinawan progressive forces criticizing the Korea-US-Japan triangular security regime and demanding the immediate return of land occupied by US bases, the *Report* was basically a reflection of the facts. Thereafter, the South Korean “investigation” focused solely on the construction of a memorial, the purpose of which was to “gain an advantage over the North Korean puppets by removing the basis and pretext for their infiltration of Okinawa by constructing a memorial in this area to console the spirits of the dead” (Oemubu 1975, 15). These facts were reported to the president almost word for word. The memorial construction nominally proceeded under the guise of Mindan and Mindan-affiliated supervision, while actually being carried out by the South Korean government with the president’s approval. In August 1975, the Memorial for Koreans was constructed at the entrance to Peace Commemoration Park in Itoman-shi. On September 3, about

and commentary regarding this document.

three hundred South Korean and Japanese representatives attended the unveiling ceremony for the memorial, including the South Korean minister of health and social affairs, South Korean ambassador to Japan, Mindan president, and so forth (“Ok’inawa Han’gugin wiryōng t’ap” 1975).

In general, fact-finding investigations and commemorative enterprises to restore the dignity of victims can be regarded as core elements for the resolution of past crimes committed by the Japanese state. Even so, the South Korean government’s lack of concern with the fact-finding investigation and preoccupation with the construction of a memorial at this time, rather than helping the victims, cannot but be regarded as an attempt to propagate the legitimacy and assert the predominant position of South Korea vis-à-vis North Korea in a newly restored Okinawa. This is also evident in the memorial’s epitaph, which reads: “With the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, Korean youth were dispatched to the frontlines on the continent and in the South Pacific through Japan’s system of forced conscription. At that time and in this place, more than ten thousand conscripts, after undergoing countless hardships, were but sacrificed, dying in battle or massacres.” Thus, the existence of Korean “comfort women” victims of the Japanese military, whom the Korea-Japan Joint Fact-Finding Mission restored to the pages of history, was omitted. It cannot be denied that this memorial, however, which was completed and widely discussed a little more than a month before Pae Pong-gi gave her public testimony, played a part in again highlighting for the locals the existence of Korean victims at the Battle of Okinawa. Furthermore, it formed part of the social context enabling Pae Pong-gi to reveal her past.

Conclusion

In the immediate aftermath of the return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, Korean residents in Japan joined with progressive activists in Japan to form a fact-finding mission to expose the truth of the forcible recruitment of Koreans during the Battle of Okinawa. These activities built on and augmented the efforts of Okinawans to document firsthand experience of the Battle of Okinawa. This endeavor itself had been ongoing since the late 1960s and constituted a movement that had been galvanized by the impending return of Okinawa to Japan. Resisting the established account of the war monopolized by the state and the military, this movement historically documented Okinawan residents’ experiences and memories of the war, whereby they also began to recall their experiences with Korean military laborers and Korean “comfort women.”

Meanwhile, the fact-finding mission to investigate the forcible recruitment of Koreans to Okinawa, mainly carried out by Chongryon-affiliated Korean residents in Japan, joined through its activities with the movement to document Okinawans’ firsthand experience of the Battle of Okinawa, specifically and successfully recovered and recorded the experiences and memories of Okinawan residents with respect to Korean “military laborers” and “comfort women.” These two minority historiographical movements—the movement to document the forcible recruitment of Koreans and movement to document Okinawans’ firsthand experience of the Battle of Okinawa—took place around the same time in postwar Japanese society. As such, they were aware of each other and referred to each other, and not only did they each uncover new historical facts, but they also expanded the horizon of historical consciousness.

This finding serves to reveal the baselessness of historical revisionist arguments recently advanced in South Korea. For instance, in the 2019 volume *Anti-Japanese Tribalism (Pan-Il chongjokchuïi)*, Yi Yöng-hun states, “The common perception today that [laborers who went over to Japan during the late stages of the Pacific War] were forcible taken or exploited is nothing more than the consequence of the widespread dissemination of the nonsensical theories of Chongryon-affiliated scholars in Japan since 1965” (Yi Yöng-hun et al. 2019, 19-20). The authors also add the following: “In 1965, Chongryon-affiliated Korea University (Chosön Taehakkyo) faculty member Pak Kyöng-sik first introduced the argument regarding forcible recruitment. His advancement of the propaganda that the ‘Japanese empire cruelly exploited Koreans’ was an extension of the objective of preventing the normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan underway at the time. This was because North Korea would become encircled if the two countries normalized relations” (67-68).

The authors thus directly referenced Pak Kyöng-sik’s *Record of the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans* published in 1965. Despite these claims, the case of Okinawa made clear that Japan’s rearmament amid the formation of the Korea-US-Japan triangular security system was also a problem demanding a fact-finding investigation and questioning of Japan’s history of colonial rule and martial aggression. Furthermore, as the quotations above reveal, Yi Yöng-hun’s account omits the fact that the fact-finding mission had in mind not only the goal of strengthening bottom-up solidarity between the Korean Peninsula and Japan but also solidarity with the movement to protect the rights of Zainichi Koreans, a minority in Japanese society. The fact-finding mission by Zainichi Koreans in Japan and Okinawa residents explored in this article successfully served as a nexus linking the views of Zainichi Koreans and Okinawan residents. Despite their mobilization for the Japanese imperialist war and tremendous

forced sacrifice, and in addition to their continuous exposure to discrimination and exclusion under colonialism, both of these minorities in Japan continued to live as they had under imperial Japan even after the war had concluded. There is thus little need to fixate on the pro-North Korea character of this movement and its supposed objective of preventing the isolation of North Korea.

Okinawa residents were better able to relate to Korean victims of forcible recruitment than the mainland Japanese due to the accumulated results of their efforts to present the horrors of the aggressive war perpetrated by the state from a bottom-up perspective. This point of view established a foothold for the discovery of Koreans as another category of victim within the Battle of Okinawa. One can say that such a qualitative shift in the movement to document Okinawans' firsthand experience of the Battle of Okinawa prepared the way for Pae Pong-gi to testify as a surviving Korean "comfort woman" and victim of the Japanese military.

• *Translated by Keiran MACRAE*

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