of American army bases in South Korea, particularly Ŭijŏngbu and Kunsan, and to some extent for those in Seoul's red light districts. Yet the issue was, for almost 50 years, brushed under the carpet. Until recently, the South Korean government argued that no documentary evidence survived the defeat of Japan, hence the issue should not detract from the need to normalize Korean-Japanese relations. Those who studied the issue knew very little, and until the early 1990s many considered that coercive recruitment largely followed the setting up of a Women's Voluntary Labour Corps in 1944. The Corps was established ostensibly to provide labour for Japanese factories; according to Yun Chŏngok, writing in a Council publication, the recruits were 'forced to comfort the divine imperial troops at the battlefront while subsisting on day labour by laundering the soldiers' uniforms and cleaning the military mess'.[2] In January 1992, the Korean newspapers *Tonga ilbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo* reported the confession of a Japanese school teacher, Ikeda Masae, who recruited six pre-teen girls in 1944 in obedience to an imperial edict. The apparent discrepancies caused by supposing such a late date largely went unnoticed, even with suspicions roused by the knowledge that many Korean women were displaced to Japan in the 1920s and 1930s as labourers.[3] Further, female labourers, as with comfort women and the Corps, mostly had received little or no education.[4]

Public debate in Korea was further stymied by the lack of testimonies. By the end of 1991, only three Korean women had admitted their past as comfort women. The tragedy, then, was exacerbated by silence. The shame of a woman was the shame of her whole family. The poverty of colonial Korea meant that offers of work had held considerable attraction to both families and individual women, yet such paid labour countered the traditional view that a woman's place was within the home. The Confucian propriety of Korea stretched beyond economic power, since men held all legal and social mechanisms to represent their women. The resulting control and possession have proved powerful tools. Again, Korean society ascribed to a notion of defilement which expected and required chastity. Whatever the reason, sexual defilement tended to be associated with promiscuity.

The debate on comfort women has emerged in South Korea at a time of domestic realignment. The women's movement has gained considerable momentum just as economic development has led many to begin to take a stand against the might of Japan. In North Korea, the state has yet to normalize relations with Japan, and the issue of forced prostitution is seen as a potential and useful lever; media coverage, some of which has broadcast documentaries produced in Europe, has increased public awareness. On a broader canvas, memories of empire mean that the

CHAPTER 1

A Korean Tragedy

Keith Howard

The story of the comfort women reflects an unhappy century of Korean development. Five hundred years into the Chosŏn dynasty, the late nineteenth century was a time of turmoil. Confucianism stifled intellectual debate and the land-owning *yangban* aristocracy had entrenched economic stagnation. The *yangban* controlled access to education and, because of a state examination system based on classical Chinese texts, held a monopoly of power. Commoners were throttled: by 1906 almost 70 per cent of government revenue came in the form of a land tax, when 75 per cent of farmers were tenants or part-tenants who worked smallholdings averaging out at less than 2.5 acres. From the eighteenth century, a law punishable by death prohibited Koreans from talking about their country with foreigners. But the 'Hermit Kingdom' found itself threatened by international realignments. The Chinese empire was in decline, and 600 years as a suzerain state left little scope for Korea to forge new political alliances. The 1860s Meiji restoration left Japan, towards which Korea held a long-standing enmity following several invasions, increasingly powerful. And new ideas in scholarship and learning, moulded from the Christian concepts of justice and the rights of man, had begun to filter into the Korean peninsula.

The Korean reaction was retrenchment. When Kojong (r. 1864–1907) ascended to the throne at the age of twelve, his father Yi Haŭng took effective power as the *Taewŏn'gun* [Prince of the Great Court]. Confucian propriety was reimposed. Much of the lineage power that ensured *yangban* control and had institutionalized corruption was curbed. The *Taewon'gun*, though, quickly lost local support, particularly when he imposed new taxes and viciously checked dissent from anyone such as Christians who stood for change. His myopic view of foreign relations could not be sustained as foreign powers began to jostle Korea to sign unequal treaties. New factions emerged. A mutiny in 1882 led to an attack on the Japanese legation in Seoul, which provided the excuse for Japanese troops to be sent in as guards. Then, in the 1884 *Kapshin*

chongbyon attempted coup, the expected Japanese support failed to materialize, allowing the court to vacillate back towards Chinese protection. Later, the *Tonghak* peasant rebellion in 1894 threatened state control, and the king asked for Chinese assistance. This led directly to the Sino-Japanese war, as a result of which China was forced to rescind any claims on the peninsula. Japan manoeuvred into position as Korea's modernizing protector. For two years the *Kabo* reforms, financed partly with a Japanese loan, shifted social and political grouping away from the ascribed aristocracy/peasant duality. They initiated Western-style schools, monetary and judiciary systems, and a cabinet-centred constitutional monarchy. In 1896, an elitist Independence Club (the *Tongnip hyŏphoe)* began to argue for independence, but Korea was ill-equipped and unprepared to modernize at a pace dictated by foreign powers. The result was Japanese occupation, inevitable after Korea became a protectorate at the end of 1904, and official from 1910.

The Japanese approach to colonizing Korea was the summation of four modalities. First, Japan allowed few concessions to Koreans, the result of experience in Taiwan where they had had trouble controlling 'unsophisticated' tribes after their invasion of 1895. Second, Britain, other European states and America seemed relatively unconcerned, so Japan felt that in Korea they could emulate colonization practices employed elsewhere. Third, confidence was high, since Japan had triumphed in conflicts with China and Russia. Fourth, legend provided a divine mission, in which Korea could be exploited for Japanese good. Policy institutionalized discrimination: Koreans were to be made useful for the empire. The appropriation of resources moved beyond labour, industry and agriculture to encompass language and culture. Hence, in the 1930s, Koreans were eventually forced to adopt Japanese names and the Japanese language, and to discard shamanism in favour of Shinto. Koreans had no prior experience of democracy, and were used to living in a Confucian autocracy where hierarchical structures ensured that power must be obeyed, not questioned. Thus, and despite the nationwide demonstrations and widespread arrests that followed the 1919 Declaration of Independence, appeals for sovereignty came from competing groups of the educated or disenfranchised. There were two basic factions. Those on the right followed Yi Kwangsu's 1921 *Minjok kaejoron* [Treatise on National Reconstruction] and proposed that education and building wealth should be a higher priority than raising national consciousness. Those on the left soon splintered into Korean, Manchurian and Siberian camps.

To the Japanese, the appropriation of women was a further aspect of exploitation; they attacked at the point of least resistance as they took the young and uneducated. To the Koreans, the issue was never so clear-cut

as it might seem from our contemporary viewpoint. There was little widespread understanding of human rights. Serving authority, even if disliked, was not widely questioned. And women had little value in the strictly patrilineal society, where the cost of bringing up a daughter and paying for her marriage put a heavy millstone around the necks of fathers who struggled to provide sufficient food for their families.

Emerging after liberation, the peninsula found itself divided for no reason except convenience. Two young Washington officers – one was Dean Rusk – had been instructed to find a way to divide responsibility for taking the Japanese surrender between the Soviets and the Americans. They suggested the 38th parallel, a line which corresponded to no single geographical feature or administrative boundary. The two halves of the peninsula were soon radically opposed. In the North it was inexpedient to be a former landlord, a collaborator with the Japanese or a Christian; in the South it was better not to be left of centre. The descent into a fratricidal war heaped physical destruction on the colonial inheritance of poverty. Until the late 1970s, rebuilding consumed the energies of both states and both Korean populaces. The Northern regime created a monochromatic socialist power pyramid that survived the death of its founder and single leader, Kim Il Sung, in 1994. After a military coup in 1961, the Southern government under Park Chung Hee accepted massive financial support from America and in 1965, in exchange for a normalization treaty, from Japan. Neither government was particularly concerned with human rights, hence war reparations of a more personal nature had to wait. Change is still to come in the North. In the South, increased individual wealth and greater access to higher education made change inevitable, even though it was held back by a second military coup that brought Chŏn Tuhwan to power in 1980. Chŏn's successor, Roh Tae Woo, initiated much of the needed democratization process while he served as president.

During Roh's administration (1988–94), four factors collided to push for the redress of wrongs committed against comfort women. First, the development of the fledging women's movement, particularly among female scholars, began to encourage primary research on former comfort women. Second, the Korean Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, founded by Tai-Young Lee, the first woman lawyer in Korea, succeeded in 1989 in persuading the government to revise the family law. Third, the 1980s had witnessed an outpouring of nationalism, directed primarily at what was perceived to be foreign cultural imperialism. Koreans had become secure in their economic development, and could now question the continuing influence of Japan, the neighbour on whom they still relied for a large proportion of technology transfers to their domestic

industry. A fourth ingredient further focused attention: surviving sex slaves were prepared, at last, to tell their stories. The reason why they had kept silent for so long had much to do with the position of women in Korean society, and it is to this that I now turn.

Many would contend that a Korean woman's lot is not a happy one. The titles of three books in English on Korean women include, respectively, the phrases 'Shamans, housewives and other restless spirits', 'Virtues in conflict', 'View from the inner room'.[1] Women have lived with inequality.[2] During the Chosŏn dynasty, and still reflected in thought patterns today, women have been forced to live under the constraints imposed by Confucianism. Confucianism is a well-reasoned schema for ordering and shaping society, in which the *illyun* moral imperatives separate the functions of husband and wife. In practice, in Korea it enshrined patrilinealism, with male *yang* (~~Kor: um~~) always above female *yin*. Marriage became a kin transaction to acquire a woman's domestic and procreative services. Male offspring ensured lineage survival, so girls were weak, and married women achieved status only as mothers. Still today, women's given names are often avoided; a girl, as the 'sister of x' (her brother), becomes a wife and the 'mother of y' (her son). Polygamy was until recently legally acceptable if a wife failed to produce a son; among the old, concubines and second wives can still be found, despite legal strictures in place since a 1921 revision of the Civil Code.

Girls were expected to be faithful and chaste (the terms *sujŏl* and *chŏngbu* applied) exemplary women (*yŏllyo*). Women were expected to be able to entertain guests and undertake household chores, roles which required little formal education. From the age of seven, strict segregation confined (and hid) women in the *an pang*, the inner rooms. Women, through exogamous marriage, became part of a husband's family. There, they enjoyed no rights to inherit. And virtue meant that even if a husband died his wife remained duty-bound to his family. The remarriage of widows was thus scorned. Further, women were not allowed to divorce until the 1890s *Kabo* reforms; then, divorce was allowed if the husband agreed, but a wife could still not set up her own home. A divorced woman became a *kich'ŏ,* an 'abandoned wife', not dissimilar to the *hwanghyang nyŏ* [returning woman], a category reserved since the seventeenth century for women who made an unwelcome return to their natal home. *Hwanghyang nyŏ* initially marked women sent away as tributes to China and Manchuria, and as in divorce, disdain came from the perception that in a marriage a woman should break all ties to her natal home.

The colonial administration inherited this social environment. The comfort women system could, nonetheless, only work because of Japanese importations. The Japanese licensed prostitution system was adopted – a

system dating back to the Minamoto Yoritomo administration's 1193 guidelines and, more specifically, to Tokugawa regulations imposed ostensibly to avert potential Samurai revolts. Indeed, some Korean feminist writers downplay or deny the existence of prostitution in Korea prior to the twentieth century.[3] In Japan, the Meiji restoration had added new legislation in 1872, introducing the registration of brothel prostitutes, nullifying stultifying open-ended contracts and stipulating mandatory weekly check-ups. Money and the complicity related to its acquisition meant that prostitutes, even if no longer virtual prisoners, still tended to come from the countryside. Parents received money from brothel-keepers or middlemen and lost their daughters, in effect, as collateral for the loan. The patterns of recruitment continued as industrialization took hold, with contractors paying for a girl's labour over a fixed period. The image of Britain's dark satanic mills would not be out of place; girls shared squalid barrack huts and worked long hours for little food.

In Korea, given rural poverty, the same forces could be applied. At one end of the spectrum, the colonial administration upgraded *kwonbon* training schools for entertainment girls (*kisaeng*), and allowed the publication of catalogues of the most beautiful 'flowers', detailing artistic accomplishments as well as personal statistics.[4] Although the courtesan tradition once had little to do with prostitution – witness the *kisaeng* and poet Hwang Chini (?–1544) – it is clear that women who sang and danced in public fell foul of the Confucian view of appropriate virtuous behaviour. Partly because of this, many *kisaeng* were recruited from the low echelons of rural society, particularly from the *ch'onmin*, a socially outcast group of artisans, traders and entertainers who, until the 1890s, were ranked below farmers in the official hierarchy. The testimonies included here make several references to *kisaeng* and *kwonbon*, and clearly demonstrate that women from the lower social orders were targeted by the military. Women were also actively recruited to work in factories, much along the lines already tried in Japan, as Kang Tŏkkyŏng (Chapter 20) relates. The testimonies make it clear that parents and elders remained reluctant to let daughters undertake paid work outside the home; this conflicted with the old sense of propriety. However, the crisis of poverty and the low value placed on daughters conspired to attract the young. Thus, a theme runs through this text: many of the former comfort women say they felt burdened to earn money for their families. This does not in any way diminish the Japanese crime; rather it demonstrates how the colonial authorities manipulated the desperation of Koreans.

After liberation in 1945, change slowly began to occur. Article 10 in the 1948 South Korean constitution guaranteed equality, but the state proved reluctant to allow this in respect of sexual equality. The reason probably lay

in a perception that this might engender conflict between law and social custom. Certainly, the Civil Code, promulgated in 1958 to take effect from January 1960, remained discriminatory: women now had the right to inherit, but only half a son's entitlement; a mother/wife came third after sons and daughters; a woman had only limited parental rights, whereas a man could claim illegitimate children as his own; a woman could become household head only if there was no male heir.[5] From the 1960s onwards, women's organizations began to petition for revisions, particularly after members of 61 women's organizations inaugurated the *Pŏmnyŏsŏng kajokpŏp kaejŏng ch'okchinhoe* [Pan-Women's Committee for the Expedition of the Revision of the Family Law] in June 1973.[6] A revision of the family law was approved in December 1977. Now, in the absence of a will, sons and daughters could receive equal inheritance, except that the eldest son – whom tradition obliges to prepare and carry out appropriate ancestral observances – was to receive half as much again as his siblings. Married daughters received one quarter of their siblings' shares, and wives were now entitled to the same amount as the eldest son. Women also gained more parental rights, though the final arbiter remained the husband. And if a woman returned to her natal home after divorce or bereavement, she lost her rights as a parent, a regulation which in effect meant that the husband's family kept the children of a broken union.

The most recent revision, in December 1989, addresses issues of inequality, but continues to favour sons over daughters as family heads. There remain faint echoes of imbalance,[7] but it appears that the law has moved ahead of what remains a conservative society. Inequality is still widespread in everyday life. For example, one legacy of the Japanese colonial period in which the old and the new collide is working girls, *yŏgong*. Old Korea considered paid work unsuitable for women, but in new Korea girls labour to supplement family incomes until – and prior to 1987 this was specified in officially sanctioned contracts – they either marry or get pregnant. *Yŏgong* have provided much of the labour for Korea's economic development, but as cheap labour they institutionalized a lack of training programmes and enjoyed few promotion opportunities. Thus, while women comprised over 40 per cent of the South Korean workforce in 1991, they earned 52.7 per cent of the average male wage.[8] In 1991, the 50 top Korean conglomerates recruited 1200 women but 19,000 men to white-collar and management-level jobs. And, at the same time, domestic work was accorded little monetary value, hence the average claim following the accidental death of a housewife was 276,250 wŏn (about £230).[9] Again, women remained peripheral in the National Assembly prior to 1993; no elected woman was able to take decisions or develop her own policies.[10]

Why, then, did comfort women not break their silence until recently? Apart from the four factors which collided during Roh Tae Woo's presidency, the reason lies primarily in social conservatism. Each revision of the family law has given women more power and control over their own lives, but social convention has taken some time to catch up. In 1945 and 1946, when the comfort women returned to Korea, they came back as *hwanghyang nyo*. To the Koreans around them, they were neither faithful nor chaste. They were not exemplary women. The families of comfort women feared the ostracism they would suffer if the shameful past was discovered; the women became an extra burden, and there was little chance to marry them off.

By the beginning of the 1990s social conventions had begun to change. But now, one further factor came into play: age. The former comfort women were now old. They had outlived their parents, and their families – where these existed –had grown up and married. The women had nothing left to lose. Their life stories complete a jigsaw begun in 1962 when Senda Kako, a journalist researching the war for the *Mainichi Shimbun*, uncovered a previously censored wartime photograph. It showed two women wading in the Yellow River. He was told they were 'P' women – Japanese slang that probably descends from a vulgar Chinese word *piya*, 'vagina house' – comfort women. Eleven years later his first book appeared.[11] Senda's efforts were verified and supported by Kim Ilmyŏn's 1976 account.[12] Kim mixed documentary evidence with testimony, notably referring to a 1965 account given under the pseudonym 'Kim Chŏnja', and Ito Keiichi's 1969 publication of Shanghai comfort station regulations promulgated in the late 1930s.

In 1982, Yun Chŏngmo's fictionalized account, *My Mother Was a Military Comfort Woman*, told of a comfort woman who had been sent to the Philippines. Yun was much more direct than the earlier allusions to a heroine's similar past in Hahn Musuk's (1918–94) 1948 novel, *Yŏksanŭn hŭrŭnda* [History Flows].[13] However, strict censorship under Chŏn Tuhwan's regime limited progress in Korea, and most of the debate took place in Japan.[14] A few military memoirs began to appear. Yoshida Seji's 1983 volume is perhaps best known. It describes how each Japanese regiment in Shanghai used one or more dedicated comfort station staffed mainly by Korean women, and recalled expeditions to Korea to recruit labourers in which some 1000 comfort women were taken.[15] By then, at least two documentary films existed. In *Karayuki-san* [Foreign-bound Women] in the late 1970s, the director Imamura Shohei travelled to Malaysia, and then accompanied a former comfort woman back to Japan.[16] In 1979, the director Yamatani Tetsuo in *Okinawa no harumoni* showed the life of a surviving Korean woman living in Okinawa, Pae

Ponggi (1915–91).[17] Pae is normally considered the first Korean comfort woman to have broken silence, and before her death she also appeared in a Korean documentary, Pak Sunam's 1991 *Chongshindae Arirang*.[18] Pieces of the jigsaw fell into place as former comfort women came forward – a memoir under the pseudonym Yi Namnim appeared in 1982; Yuyuta, a Korean living in Thailand, was interviewed by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper and brought to Seoul in 1985; Shirota Suzuko broadcast her story on Japanese radio in 1986.

International awareness grew. A Taiwanese novel by T'ang Te Kang based on comfort women testimonies appeared. Hung Kuei-chi edited a volume on Japanese atrocities in Taiwan which included information on forced prostitution.[19] Later, in December 1992, a Dutch woman, Jan Ruff, told a public meeting in Tokyo about her experiences;[20] a Javanese comfort woman described, in the May 1993 edition of the Indonesian magazine *Kartini*, how she and her sister were taken. But this is jumping ahead. A new Korean government under Roh Tae Woo was installed in 1988. At home, the climate was changing. On 7 January, more than 200 members of Korean women's groups drafted a protest letter against news that the government would send a representative to attend Emperor Hirohito's funeral. They staged a protest at the former Pagoda Park in Seoul, the site where in 1919 a declaration of independence was announced against Japanese rule. Yun Chung-ok and two members of the Korean Church Women United visited sites in Japan where comfort women had been stationed in February; in April, the church group sponsored a conference on women and tourism. The issue was increasing in importance, and then it exploded into public consciousness when Kim Haksun came forward to tell her story at the church group's offices on 14 August 1990. She was by then 67 years old. A year later, in December 1991, Kim and two other plaintiffs filed a lawsuit at the Tokyo District Court.[21] The full story could begin to be told.[22]

Notes

1 Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life*. Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1985; Sandra Matielli (ed.), *Virtues in Conflict: Tradition and the Korean Woman Today*. Seoul: Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1977; Laurel Kendall and Mark Peterson (eds), *Korean Women: View From the Inner Room*. New Haven: East Rock Press, 1983.

2 The picture which emerges seems remarkably consistent. In addition to the books cited above see, in Korean, *Han'guk yŏsŏng undong yaksa*. Seoul: Han'guk puinhoe ch'ŏngbonbu [Korean Women's Association], 1986; and *Yŏsŏng paeksŏ*. Seoul: Han'guk yŏsŏng kaebalwŏn [Korean Women's Development Institute], 1991.

3 For example, Chin Sung Chung, 'Wartime state violence against women of weak nations: military sexual slavery enforced by Japan during World War II', *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* 5.2/3 (Fall/Winter 1994), 21. To my knowledge, there is no adequate study of prostitution in Korea, and certainly no summary comparable to that in Nicholas Bornoff, *Pink Samurai: Law and Marriage in Contemporary Japan*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

4 An example is, in the Korean pronunciation and reproduced in a mimeographed copy, *Chosŏn miin pogam* [Handbook of Korean Beautiful Women]. Seoul: Minsogwŏn, 1984.

5 A number of discussions of the 1960 Civil Code have been published, among them Ko Chŏngmyŏng, *Han'guk kajokpŏp* [Korean Family Law], 32–7. Seoul: Komunsa, 1980; Yi Taehong, *'Han'guk yŏsŏng ui pŏpchŏk chiwi'* in *Han'guk yŏsŏngsa* [History of Korean Women] 2, 162–7. Seoul: Ehwa yŏja taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1972; and articles by Pak Pyŏngho and Kim Chusu in Pak Pyŏngho et al., *Modernization and Its Impact on Korean Law*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

6 One magazine, *Yŏsŏng* [Woman], has studiously followed the campaign. Judith Cherry has published an outline in English: 'Korean women's legal status: tradition and change' in Daniel Bouchez, Robert C. Provine and Roderick Whitfield (eds), *Twenty Papers on Korean Studies Offered to Professor W. E. Skillend. Cahiers d'etudes Coreennes* 5, 45–51. Paris: College de France, 1989.

7 '...Legal experts argue that [the 1989 revision] ameliorates only a certain de jure imbalance in practical matters and they expect that de facto discrimination against women may continue for some time': Chungmoo Choi, 'Korean women in a culture of inequality' in Donald Clark (ed.), *Korea Briefing 1992*, 106. Boulder: Westview, 1992.

8 *Chosŏn ilbo*, 15 August 1991.

9 *Choson ilbo*, ibid.

10 Chunghee Sarah Suh, *Women in Korean Politics*. Boulder: Westview, 1993.

11 *Jūgunianfu, 'komaki onna': Hachimanjin no kouhatsu* [Military Comfort Women, 'Voiceless Women': The Indictment of 80,000 People], 1973. I have used a Korean translation by Yi Songhŭi, *Chonggun wianbu*. Seoul: Paeksŏbang, 1991. Senda has reflected further on his research in *Jūgunianfu to Tennō* [Military Comfort Women and the Emperor]. Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 1992.

12 *Tennō no Guntai Chōsenjin ianfu* [The Emperor's Forces and Korean Comfort Women]. Tokyo: Sanchi Shobo, 1976.

13 Kashima Setsuko translated Yun's book into Japanese as *Haha Jūgunianfu*. Kobe: Gakusei Seinen Senta, 1992. I am grateful to Hyun-ki Kim Hogarth, the author's daughter, for alerting me to Hahn's novel.

14 This does not preclude the considerable discussions between Japanese and Korean scholars. Yun Chung-ok [Yun Chŏngok], a professor at Ehwa Woman's University in Seoul who in the closing days of World War II had narrowly escaped being drafted to the Women's Voluntary Labour Corps, has been particularly active. Her reports dot the available literature in Korean, particularly publications from the Korean Council and its constituent bodies such as the series *Chŏngshindae charyajip* [Materials on the Comfort Women]. A good example of her work is an analysis of 39 former comfort women, *'Chonggun wianbu, 39 myŏn-e taehan shilt'ae chosa pogowa chŏngŭiwa in'gwŏn-e taehan hoso* [Military comfort women, documentation on 39 people, definitions, and appeals about human rights]' in *Kukche in'gwŏn hyŏpyakkwa kanje chonggun wianbu munje* [International Human Rights Agreements and Questions on the Coerced Military Comfort Women], 2–12. Seoul: The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, 1993. Yun is also the primary author of a collection of articles issued in Japanese in 1992, *Chōsenjin josei ga mita ianfu mondai* [The Comfort Women Issue As Seen by Korean Women]. Tokyo: Sanchi Shobo.

15 *Watakushi no sensō hanzai: Chōsenjin kyōsei renkō* [My War Crimes: Forced Drafting of Koreans]. Tokyo: Sanchi Shobo, 1983. Translated into Korean by the Hyŏndaesa yŏn'gushil and issued as *Nanun Chosŏn saramŭl irŏkke chabagatta* [This Is How I Abducted Koreans]. Seoul: Ch'ŏngge yŏn'guso, 1989. See also the 1977 volume, *Chōsenjin ianfu to Nihonjin: Gen Shimonoseki rōdō hōkoku dōin buchō no shiku* [Korean Comfort Women and the Japanese: Memoir of a Former Shimonoseki National Service Corps' Recruiting Chief].

16 Later, in 1986, Imamura produced a feature film, *Zegen*, about a comfort station.

17 A brief version of Pae's life story was published posthumously together with documents from North Korea in the English language booklet *Fact-Finding Work and Compensation of 'Comfort Girls' and Forced Labourers*. Tokyo: The Fact-Finding Team on the Truth About Forced Korean Labourers, 1992.

18 This film was reviewed by Kim Kyŏngyong in '*Chŏngshindae arirang: muryo ch'ulhyŏn* [Comfort Women's *Arirang*: benefit performance]', *Tonga ilbo*, 15 October 1992. Several other films exist. The Korean Broadcasting System issued a documentary *Ch'immuk ŭi han* [Suffering of Silence] in August 1990. A film by Sekiguchi Noriko and titled *Senso Daughters* is noted by Alice Yun Chai in her article 'Asia–Pacific feminist coalition politics: the *chongshindae/jŋgunianfu* ('comfort woman') issue', *Korean Studies* 17 (1993), 67–91. This was distributed by First Run/ICARUS Films. More recently, *Najŭn moksori* [The Murmuring: A History of Korean Women], produced by Byun Young-Joo [Pyŏn Yŏngju] and issued by the Docu-Factory VISTA, was being shown in Seoul cinemas in spring 1995. I am grateful to Brother Anthony for this last information.

19 *Jihpen Tsai-Hua Paosing lu 1928–45* [Japanese Atrocities in China, 1928–45]. Taipei: Kuoshih Kuan, 1985.

20 Evidence given to the war crimes tribunal held by the Dutch in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1948 was meant to be sealed until 2025, but some documents kept in The Hague were made public shortly before Ruff came forward.

21 This is the starting-off point for Seong-Phil Hong, 'A quest for accountability: redressing the wrongs of the comfort women', *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* 5.2/3 (Fall/Winter 1994), 28–37. The background, and early stages in the court proceedings, are detailed in George Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 148–52, 158–68, 179ff. St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1995.

22 English language materials still remain sparse. Apart from sources already mentioned, I have been introduced to the following by Helen Oh: Jin Sook Lee,'The case of Korean comfort women: women forced into sexual service for Japanese soldiers during World War II seek justice', *Korea Report* (Spring 1992), 18–20; 'Questions of responsibility', *Japan Times*, 5–7 August 1992; Lisa Go, '*Jugunianfu, Karayuki, Japayuki*: a continuity in commodification', *Japanese Militarism Monitor* 53 (January/February 1992), 9–16; Kano Mikiyo,'The problem with the comfort woman problem', *Japan-American Quarterly Review* 24/2 (1993), 40–3; short articles in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 February 1993, by George Hicks ('Ghosts gathering: comfort women issue haunts Tokyo as pressure mounts') and Louise do Rosario ('A quest for truth: sex slavery issue affects ties with Asian nations'); Watanabe Kazuko, 'Militarism, colonialism, and the trafficking of women', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 26.4 (October–December 1994), 3–17.

CHAPTER 2

Korean Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan

Chin Sung Chung

The extent of the damage which the Japanese inflicted on Korea during their occupation, especially during the Asia–Pacific war, need not be repeated here. Still there are numerous unsolved problems such as the Korean expatriates who remain in Sakhalin, Korean victims of atom bombs, Korean forced labourers, soldiers and civilian employees, and war crimes committed against Korea which fall into the recognized classes B and C. The most tragic issue, however, is the case of comfort women. Only recently have facts begun to emerge about women forcibly drafted between 1930 and 1945 for military prostitution from Japanese colonies and occupied territories, including Korea.

The monstrosity remained buried on the dump of history primarily because the Japanese government and military authorities kept all relevant documents hidden. Documents recently uncovered reveal that the Japanese military not only secretly operated the comfort woman system,[1] but also instructed soldiers who were in charge to destroy records at the end of the war.[2] Japan, unlike Germany, has never tried to resolve post-war issues. It has not concerned itself with fact-finding, restitution and punishment. I consider this to reflect Japan's contempt for other *Asian* nations and the American desire to see their capitalism spread in Asia. In respect of the former, those responsible for drafting Dutch women to serve as comfort women in Indonesia were punished, but the same crime against Asian women has not been dealt with punitively in any way. In respect of the latter, America's priority was to keep Japan on their side in the Cold War. America was lax in its condemnation of Japan's ferocity, and thereby helped Japan dominate Asia once more.[3] Another factor is a culture based on Confucianism which discriminates against women and fosters the shame and silence of sex victims. Therefore, although Japan perpetrated the crimes, responsibility for failing to deal with the issue properly, for concealing it and for not publicizing it as a historical lesson,

host explained everything about our circumstances, and we were allowed to get on the last ship to be found in the port.

It was 1946, the year after our country had been liberated. I disembarked at Pusan and went home to Yŏngam. My father, remember, had died of grief at my letter. My 14-year-old sister welcomed me. As my mother was too poor to keep me, I quickly left home again and went back to Kwangju to find work as a domestic help. I moved around many different places trying to eke out something of a living. Between moving from one household to another, I briefly lived with a man. But I soon left him because he was a heavy drinker and a gambler. At present I live with my sister, surviving on government aid. All the beatings I received in Shanghai have so affected my health that on wet days my body aches all over and I am unable to move about. Even now, I can't bear to watch violent scenes on television.

CHAPTER 7

I Thought I Was Going to a Textile Factory

Oh Omok

Oh Omok was born in 1921, in Chŏngŭp, North Cholla province, the first child in a poor family of five children, two boys and three girls. In 1937, at 16 years of age, she was promised work in a textile factory in Japan by a Mr Kim from her home town. She left home with a friend. When they arrived in Manchuria, where Mr Kim handed them over to a Japanese man, they were taken to a Japanese unit and forced to become comfort women.

I was born into a poor family on 15 January 1921, in Chŏngŭp, North Chŏlla province. I was the eldest child, and I soon gained two brothers and two sisters. My father had been in poor health since I was very little and was now no longer able to work. My mother ran a small shop next to the police station where she sold vegetables. I couldn't go to school, because we were too poor to pay the fees.

It was 1937, and I was 16. My parents had begun to try to find me a husband. One day a Mr Kim, from Chŏngŭp, visited us and said that he could get me a job in a textile factory in Japan. He also offered to find work for a friend of mine. He said that our job would be as weavers and added that we would be paid such and such a month. I forget the actual amount. After the visit he didn't come back. We had almost forgotten about him when he suddenly reappeared and urged me to take the job which was on offer. I needed to earn money, so I went along with him, taking an old friend of mine called Okhŭi. She was two years younger than me. She used to visit me often and I had shown her how to embroider.

When I left home for the factory, my mother was expecting another child. It must have been winter, since I remember wearing padded clothes. Okhŭi and I arrived at Chŏngŭp station with Mr Kim, where there were three other girls waiting. We all got on board a train and travelled to Taejŏn, where Mr Kim bought us lunch. Then we boarded the train again and travelled for three or four days, all the way to Manchuria.

Somewhere around Fengcheng we asked Mr Kim why he had brought us to China instead of Japan. He had, after all, promised to take us to Japan. He bluntly told us we must follow him. He handed us over to a Japanese man and promptly disappeared. From then on, with this new man, we continued our journey further north until we finally arrived right at the top-most tip of Manchuria, although I still don't know what the place was called. It was very cold, and it was crowded with soldiers. There were mountains and rivers, and there were thousands of Chinese and Koreans milling around.

The five of us from Chŏngŭp were led to a village of tents on the outskirts of the place where the Japanese military units were based. There was a sea of tents surrounding the troops. Whenever new soldiers arrived, they would set up even more tents, because there was not enough room for them in the barracks that had already been built. There were already some 30 Korean women. We entered one tent. A soldier there cut my hair short and gave me a Japanese name, Masako.

There were women in every tent. They washed the soldiers' clothes and they cooked for them in the kitchens. There was no fresh water supply in the whole village. The soldiers delivered meals to us. We had cooked rice mixed with barley, spinach or pickled radish, soup and occasional fish balls. We could often hear guns firing in the distance, and whenever there were air raids we were not allowed to light anything.

At first I delivered food for the soldiers and had to serve the rank and file, to have sex with them. There were Japanese as well as Koreans among the managers who instructed us where to go each day. On receiving orders we were called to the appropriate unit and served five or six men a day. At times we would serve up to ten. We served the soldiers in very small rooms with floors covered with Japanese-style mats, *tatami*. There were many rooms. We lived in the tents and were summoned to the barracks whenever required. We were given blankets by the army, and when it was very cold we used hot water tins. The only toilets were outside the tents, as were the bathrooms, and such facilities were separated for men and women. When the soldiers were away on an expedition it was nice and quiet, but once they returned we had to serve many of them. Then they would come to our rooms in a continuous stream. I wept a lot in the early days. Some soldiers tried to comfort me saying '*kawaisōni*' or '*naitara ikanyo*' which meant something like 'you poor thing' and 'don't cry'. Some of the soldiers would hit me because I didn't understand their language. If we displeased them in the slightest way they shouted at us and beat us: '*bakayarō*' or '*kisamayaro*', 'you idiot' and 'you bastard'. I realized that I must do whatever they wanted of me if I wished to survive. There was no payment given to any of us for

cooking or washing clothes, but we were paid whenever we slept with soldiers. The bills they handed over were blue and red. There were some women who set up home with soldiers in tents, and a few of them even had children.

The soldiers used condoms. We had to have a medical examination for venereal infections once a week. Those infected took medicine and were injected with 'No. 606'. Sometime later, I became quite close to a Lieutenant Morimoto, who arranged for Okhŭi and me to receive only high-ranking officers. Once we began to exclusively serve lieutenants and second lieutenants, our lives became much easier. When I was 21, in 1941, I had to have my appendix out, but the operation didn't go well and I was readmitted to hospital for a second, follow-up operation. I remember Morimoto coming to see me. The hospital chief was Japanese, and the patients were mostly soldiers and Chinese women. The fee for the operations must have been paid by the army. Afterwards I was able to take a break from serving soldiers. During my convalescence I did various chores: I cooked, filled bathtubs, heated the bath water and so forth.

We moved along with the army. I cannot remember what it was called. We moved south in China. When we were stationed in Nanjing we were sometimes able to see films with the soldiers. We mainly watched war films. The comfort station there was housed in a Chinese building. It was not so cold there. We wore Western style dresses and occasionally were able to buy Chinese clothes. Fukiko, Masako and Fumiko were among the five of us who went there together, but all the others died except Fukiko. One of them died of serious syphilis. There was a sign in front of the house, but I don't remember what it said. In Nanjing we had to serve many soldiers, just as usual. Whenever they came into the building, we had to say '*irassyai*'. This meant 'welcome'. There was a bed and a mirror in each room.

I cannot remember where it was, but we had to do training under the supervision of the soldiers. Each of us wore a sash on our shoulder with *Women's National Defence Society* written on it. We wore caps and baggy black trousers. There were Japanese women and civilians who trained with us, and after each training session we returned to our station.

It was while we were there that we were liberated. There was a Korean man from Kwangju who lived in Nanjing with his wife and family, trying to run a business. I used to call him my big brother, and we got on very well. After Korea was liberated Okhŭi and I returned with this man and his family. On our way back, many people with us died in a train accident, but we were delivered safely. I wept and wept as we travelled back to our homeland, and 'big brother' tried to console me. He, with his wife and family, went their own way half-way through the

journey, and Okhŭi and I were left alone. We noticed lots and lots of Russian troops on the way, and there was a rumour going around that they would take away young women, just as the Japanese had done before them. So we smudged our faces with soot, and continued our journey looking like tramps. In Shinŭiji we stayed overnight in a Korean guest-house. Russian soldiers rushed in during the night, apparently looking for young women, so we hid in a wardrobe. They must have gone, but we stayed confined in there all night.

We got on a ship from Shinŭiju to Inch'ŏn, and then took a train to Chŏngŭp. I was wearing flat yellow shoes I had bought in China, and a short-sleeved blouse. We bid goodbye to each other at the station, and I took a rickshaw home. My brother, Kŭmsu, who was in primary school at the time, still remembers me arriving on the rickshaw! My other brother was cutting firewood, and when he heard I was home he dropped everything and ran back to the house. My parents said that they had given me up for dead. My mother was so shocked to see me after such a long time that she fainted. After nine years in China, I found it hard at first to understand my own language. I had a small bamboo bag from Japan with me in which I carried some photographs and Chinese shoes. But in order to forget that part of my life, I burnt these souvenirs later on.

For a few years I stayed with my parents. I lied to them about my life in China, saying I had worked as a domestic help. I was still young, and felt that I could do anything with my life. My parents tried to find me a husband, but I said I wanted to live alone. They finally found me a room, and my mother bought me a pair of beautiful shoes, even though she was still very poor. She also got me many herbal cordials to build up my strength. After 1945, my parents were running a small restaurant in a boarding house for policemen. My father died of illness in 1951, and at the age of 33 I married a farmer whose wife had also died. I had been told that he had two children from his first wife, but after the marriage I found out that he had five! Marrying him meant I had to move to Seoul, and I lived with him for a number of years, looking after those five children. I found it hard to bring up someone else's kids, and I soon discovered that I wasn't able to have any of my own. When I was 48 I left him, taking with me the baby of my housemaid. I adopted that baby girl and lived back in Chŏngŭp for three years, without letting anyone know my exact whereabouts, not even my own brothers. It was hard to bring up a child on my own. I lived on cooked barley, working at silkworm farms on a daily wage of 2500 wŏn. I could not afford to send my adopted daughter to school until she was nine but, seeing me struggling to survive, she left school during her sixth grade and began to work in a

factory that made bamboo umbrellas. I didn't tell her that she had been adopted, just that her father had died. She is 21 now, married to a stonemason. They live in Asan county, South Ch'ungch'ŏng province. They have a three-year-old son and are expecting a second child soon. So that they were able to register the birth of their child, I had to register the birth of my adopted daughter as my own daughter. I had been scared to do this earlier.

Okhŭi used to say that, since we couldn't have children or be married, we should live on our own. She used to visit me often and we would cry together, talking about our miserable past. She, too, lived on government aid until she died of cancer last year. I have been on the list to receive state benefit for the past three years. In the autumn I work, picking red peppers from their stalks. If I work from dawn until dusk, I get paid something between 3000 and 5000 wŏn ($4 to $6) a day. I have very little income, so I don't pay any tax, but I have to pay 300,000 won ($375) every ten months for my room. Last year I wasn't able to pay it. My only wish is to be able to live without worrying about rent. And I still feel resentful that I haven't been able to have children because of what happened almost 50 years ago.