

Comfort Women Activism

Critical Voices from the Perpetrator State

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Activists in the Perpetrator State

The Comfort Women Movement

During the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945), the Japanese military inflicted sexual violence on tens of thousands of young women and girls of the Japanese empire and its occupied territories, forcing many of them into sexual slavery at comfort stations. The first comfort stations were constructed by the navy during the Shanghai Incident around 1932. Soon after, the army followed suit. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 prompted the Japanese military to establish comfort stations formally, making an amendment to the *Yasen shuho kitei* (Military regulation on the commissary in field battles).¹ Yoshimi Yoshiaki (2000), a leading historian on the comfort women issue, notes that the term *shuho*, which usually meant a military commissary, was now used to refer to a comfort station where “there was only one thing for sale,” that is, comfort women (53). Comfort stations proliferated in China in the late 1930s and expanded into Southeast Asia and the Pacific after the 1941 start of Japan’s war against the United States (43–57, 76–82).

According to military records, the purposes of the creation of comfort stations were to prevent soldiers from committing rape in occupied areas and contracting sexually transmitted diseases. However, Yoshimi (2000) found that soldiers never stopped raping local women (66). At comfort stations, military doctors regularly conducted examinations of comfort women, but were unable to contain the spread of the diseases because soldiers did not adhere to the doctors’ elaborate guidelines for preventive measures (71). Yoshimi noted that the Japanese military still found it necessary to operate comfort stations because it offered almost nothing else to “comfort” soldiers, who were “subject to the strict supervision and arbitrary discipline of their commanding officers on a daily basis” (73). The military also tried to prevent spying at private brothels by operating comfort stations. It preferred comfort women from the Japanese empire, including its colonies, in order to protect military secrets. Yet, when it could not provide such women, it allowed soldiers to round up local women (75). At least thirteen countries had women victimized by the comfort women system and the sexual violence condoned under this system.

In postwar Japan, the existence of comfort women had been known not only to former soldiers but also to other citizens through war memoirs, novels, and films, but it was not perceived as a social issue to resolve. The ordeals of comfort women and other victims of the Japanese

1. Nagai (2007, 429–35) discovered the amendment and other relevant documents, which together proved the Japanese state’s direct involvement in the operation of comfort stations.

military's sexual violence caught national and international attention in the early 1990s, when some survivors came forward and testified about their painful past. They sued the Japanese state for the wrongdoing, demanding an apology and compensation. Their personal experience was finally constituted as a social and political issue, that is, *ianfu mondai* (comfort women issue). Many citizens of Japan immediately took action in response, forming groups to support the women's legal fight for justice, to study the comfort women issue, and to hold testimony rallies to listen to survivors' stories. Those activists included not only experienced activists and progressive lawyers and researchers but also theretofore uninvolved ordinary women. The movement to resolve the comfort women issue, or simply the comfort women movement, thus started, involving diverse kinds of people in numerous cities across Japan, including Tokyo, Osaka, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Sapporo.

The comfort women movement in Japan developed as part of the transnational advocacy network created for the resolution of the issue, the major goal of which was to make the Japanese government take legal responsibility. Citizen activists in Japan play a crucial role in negotiating with Japanese politicians and generating public opinion conducive to such a resolution. They did not give in when the Japanese government offered compromised resolutions to the issue in 1995 and 2015. The movement has persisted to this day, changing strategies according to the shifting sociopolitical climates in Japan, Asia, and the world. Many activists have been dealing with the issue for more than a quarter-century while many others have joined the movement at different stages. The vast majority of the activists are women.

In this book, I look into the comfort women movement as it has evolved in Japan. I tackle the question of how women activists, Japanese and resident Koreans (Koreans living in Japan), understand the issue by presenting their narratives based on the interviews I conducted during my ethnographic fieldwork between 2014 and 2018. Various kinds of people in Japan have discussed the issue. Politicians have dealt with it from the perspective of the state's responsibility. Social commentators have made their own, often ideologically charged, arguments and tried to influence the Japanese public on the issue through newspapers, magazines, and online venues. Scholars have analyzed the issue from the perspectives of feminism, nationalism, responsibility for war and colonial control, and human rights, among others. I discuss the different ways in which those professionals have talked about the issue so as to situate the activist narratives in a larger social context. The activists occupy a unique position in terms of grasping the issue precisely because they have had face-to-face communication with survivors. I seek to shed light on their nuanced understandings of the issue, as expressed in their narratives.

I examine the activist narratives in relation to relevant scholarly arguments. The activists developed various lines of thought at the site of the movement. Encountering survivors as citizens of the perpetrator state, they thought through the issue of Japan's responsibility for war and colonial control. Working with activists of the countries Japan had invaded and colonized, they had to contemplate the position of Japan in the political culture of East Asia not only in the era of the Japanese empire but also in the postwar period. Listening to the survivors who experienced inhuman sexual violence, they came to grasp the meaning of women's human rights. Many of the activists' thoughts are relevant to scholarly debates on the comfort women issue, exemplifying, substantiating, and commenting on what researchers have said. I want to demonstrate how the activist narratives contribute to the advancement of scholarship on the issue.

Based on the analysis of the activist narratives, I explore the possibility of interpreting the movement as a new form of feminism. In this exploration, I rely on the theorization of Ōgoshi Aiko, a leading feminist scholar in Japan who has been writing prolifically on the comfort women issue. Witnessing the spread of the movement in the mid-1990s, she noted

that the feminist movement in Japan, which had mostly taken place from a narrow national perspective, might be able to contribute to feminism in the world by problematizing war, state, and sexual violence (Ōgoshi and T. Takahashi 1997, 135). As she raised the question of the “postwar” (*sengo*) from a gendered perspective on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, she argued that the comfort women issue exposed the structure of the balance of power in postwar East Asia and compelled Japanese citizens to confront war responsibility, which had been defused by the presence of the United States in the region. She also pointed out that the comfort women system was a product of the aggregate of multiple problems of modern war and could not be reduced to any singular problem (Ōgoshi 2005a, 18). By measuring the activist narratives against scholarly arguments and following Ōgoshi’s theorization, I seek to demonstrate that the comfort women movement in Japan could be called a new form of feminism characterized by postcolonial historical consciousness, transnational solidarity, intersectionality, feminist ethics, and mutual transformation.

In the English-language literature, many works have been produced on comfort women activism as a transnational advocacy network (Kern and Nam 2009; Ku 2015; McCarthy 2018; Piper 2001; C. Shin 2011) and as a feminist or redress movement in South Korea (H. Kim 2009; Min 2003; Y.-m. Park 2010; Soh 1996; Son 2018). There are also publications on comfort women activism as it has taken place in other countries (McGregor 2016; K. Mendoza 2003; Qiu 2014, 160–70; A. Song 2013; S. Suzuki 2011; Thoma 2001). The movement in Japan is often mentioned in these writings, but studies focused on the Japanese context have been limited to examinations of particular aspects of the movement (Askin 2001; Mitsui 2007; Sakamoto 2001; Tai 2016) or of earlier periods of the movement (Hayashi 2001; Yamazaki 1996). This book provides an account of the thirty-year history of the movement. By highlighting the narratives of activists who have made this history possible, it sheds light on the movement from within. It is the first attempt in either English or Japanese to show what activists in Japan are thinking and feeling at the site of the movement.

Terminological Considerations

The question of which term to use in referring to women sexually victimized by the Japanese military is important for activists in expressing their thoughts about the women. Here, I discuss the terms most frequently used at the site of the movement: *comfort woman*, *sexual slave*, *victim*, and *survivor*. I also comment on the term *supporter* in reference to activists. I begin by noting that in face-to-face communication with the women, activists use the word *grandma* or *elderly woman* to express respect and affection. They first used the Japanese word *obaasan* or its intimate version *obaachan*, but they soon switched to using equivalents in the women’s respective languages transliterated into Japanese. For example, they call Korean women *harumoni* (*halmoni*) and Chinese women from Shanxi Province *daanyan* (*daniang*).

There has been much debate about the use of *ianfu* (comfort women) among activists and researchers. The term is a euphemism for victims of Japan’s military sexual slavery. When the comfort women issue began to draw social attention, *jūgun-ianfu* was most frequently used by activists, researchers, the media, and the government. Yoshimi used the expression in his 1992 book and explained the meaning as “comfort women who belonged to the military” (1992, 24). Whereas *ianfu* was actually used by the Japanese military, *jūgun-ianfu* was coined in the early 1970s and spread through Senda Kakō’s 1973 book *Jūgun-ianfu*. At the Asian Solidarity Conference for the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (hereafter Asian Solidarity

Conference) of 1993, participants from several countries agreed to use *Nihongun* “ianfu” (Japanese military “comfort women”), eliminating *jūgun* and using quotation marks for *ianfu* to indicate that it was a euphemism. When *jūgun-ianfu* appeared in history textbooks in 1997, the use of *jūgun* spurred a debate. Progressives criticized the term because it literally meant “to follow the troops” and contradicted the reality. Historical revisionists, who regarded comfort women as paid prostitutes, opposed the use of *jūgun*, arguing that it wrongly specified the status of comfort women as belonging to the military.² The use of *jūgun-ianfu* persisted in the media and other sectors long after activists and activist researchers switched to *Nihongun* “ianfu.”³

The use of *ianfu* has been criticized even within quotation marks. Ōgoshi points out that the term was deployed as a sophisticated tactic to create a façade of consensual sex out of the reality of rape. In this metamorphosis, she argues, an incident of rape is turned into a story in which a vulnerable man seeks *ian* (comfort) from a woman and is saved when embraced by the woman’s body. She notes that the *ian* discourse is central to the culture of sex in Japan (Ōgoshi and T. Takahashi 1997, 137).

Activists were keenly aware that survivors did not want to be called *ianfu* or *moto-ianfu* (former comfort women), let alone *jūgun-ianfu*. The survivors often asserted in testimony rallies that they never intended to “comfort” soldiers. The strongest objection came from the Chinese survivor Wan Aihua and the support group for the Shanxi Province lawsuit. Wan was gang-raped in caves, not at a comfort station, and was also tortured because of her engagement in anti-Japanese activities. She was first called a comfort woman when she gave testimony at the 1992 International Public Hearing in Tokyo. Until she died in 2013, she insisted that she was not a comfort woman.⁴ Ishida Yoneko (2013), a historian who has led the support group, has opposed the use of *ianfu* in support of Wan’s assertion. Ishida sees the term as a serious insult to all victim women. She is afraid that the use of it allows conservatives to make erroneous arguments. She also thinks that struggles of some victims would be left unnoticed when different types of victims were subsumed under one label *ianfu* (22–23).

Ishida’s concern opens up the question of forms of victimization. There have been discussions on the types of “comfort stations” (*ianjo*). Yoshimi (2000, 89) finds three types in historical documents: those directly managed by the military; those managed by civilian operators but supervised and regulated by the military; and local facilities, such as restaurants and hotels, designated as comfort stations but open to the general public. Tanaka Yuki (2002, 18–19) recognizes a different set of types: permanent stations in major cities; semipermanent stations attached to large army units; and facilities temporarily set up by small units near the front line.⁵

Having heard diverse stories of victimization, activists hold an inclusive view of categorization, which is presented as a chart in a museum catalogue of the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM), a key organization in the movement. The chart was originally developed by Ishida’s group based on its investigation in Shanxi Province, which is discussed in her narrative (Chapter Four). In the center of the chart is a circle divided into four sections for four forms of sexual violence: “mass rape,” exemplified by the 1937 rape of Nanjing; comfort stations; *gōkanjo* (rape centers), makeshift facilities with women abducted locally; and *senjō-gōkan* (rape on the battlefield), happening anywhere on the front line such as roadsides and houses and taking particularly ferocious forms with victims seen as the “enemy’s women” (WAM 2015, 10).

2. See the website of VAWW-NET Japan, <https://archive.fo/4OIDA>. Accessed May 31, 2018.

3. The lawsuits filed before the conference had *jūgun-ianfu* in their names.

4. See Qiu (2014, 124–25) for more discussion. As Ishida (2013, 23) notes, this claim could be interpreted as discrimination against those victimized at comfort stations.

5. Soh (2008, 117–37) categorizes comfort facilities based on motive. Qiu (2014, 54–57) finds four types of facilities in China.

The women Ishida's group worked with were victimized in *gōkanjo* and *senjō-gōkan*. The circle in the center indicates that the four forms were interdependent: the rise of mass rape prompted the creation of comfort stations; soldiers familiar with comfort stations built makeshift rape centers when finding none nearby and raped the enemy's women on the battlefield; and the normalcy of sexual violence in the war zone produced mass rape. While recognizing a fundamental commonality among the four, Ishida argues that it is important to pay attention to their differences in order to understand individual victims' injuries and pain.⁶ She avoids using *ianfu*. Seeking to stress the commonality, Ōmori Noriko, a lawyer who worked with other victims of *gōkanjo* and *senjō-gōkan* in Shanxi Province, chooses to use the term in addressing their lawsuits.

The question arises about whether victims of *gōkanjo* and *senjō-gōkan* should be included in the number of "comfort women." In his seminal 1995 book, Yoshimi estimated the total number to range between 50,000 and 200,000, but added that the number could be higher if those abducted and confined for a short time in occupied territories in China and the Philippines were counted (1995, 79–80; 2000, 93). Su Zhiliang, a Chinese researcher, has estimated the total number at 400,000 and the number of Chinese victims at 200,000.⁷ The cases of Japanese comfort women further complicate the question of the number because there is no consensus about which Japanese women can count as victims of military sexual slavery (Fujime 2015, 63). WAM on its website discusses the number based on Yoshimi's argument, but concludes that it is difficult to make a reasonable estimate.⁸ This is probably the stance taken by most activists.

In place of or in addition to *ianfu*, the term *seidorei* (sexual slave, sex slave) has been used since the mid-1990s. At the United Nations, the use of "sexual slavery" started as soon as the comfort women issue was raised in 1992. It spread in the international community after the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 included it in discussing women's human rights. In Japan, *seidorei* appeared in the left-leaning nationwide newspaper *The Asahi Shimbun* (hereafter *Asahi*) as early as 1992 in a report on a victim ("Moto-jūgun-ianfu no shōgen," *Asahi*, May 15, 1992). The term *seidorei* was widely adopted by activists and progressives in Japan after its use was recommended in the 1996 UN report written by Radhika Coomaraswamy. Given the Japanese government's denial that the comfort women system was by its nature a form of slavery, the use of *seidorei* is important. The question has remained about the applicability of *seidorei* to cases where victims were not enslaved for a long time, such as those raped in *gōkanjo* and *senjō-gōkan*.⁹ Ishida and the support group have used the broad term *senji seibōryoku higai-sha* (victims of wartime sexual violence).

The term *ianfu* has been kept alive in the movement. Historically used, it expresses the particularity of Japanese military sexual slavery. In discussing her book, *Girls Labeled as Comfort Women on the Battlefields*, Kawata Fumiko (2005, 266), an activist writer, said that she decided to use it in order not to erase the cruel fact that while forcing girls and women into sexual slavery, the Japanese military labeled them as "comfort women." At the 2012 Asian Solidarity Conference, participants decided to continue to use *Nihongun "ianfu"* in the name of the international memorial day, August 14, which they established for celebrating the courage of Kim Hak-sun, the first survivor to come out, and for commemorating victims of Japanese military sexual violence.¹⁰ "*Ianfu*" with quotation marks is more commonly used in the names of groups

6. Ishida's lecture in Osaka on June 12, 2016.

7. For more discussion on the number, see Qiu (2014, 37–39, 205).

8. The WAM website, <https://wam-peace.org/ifaq/ifaq-05>. Accessed November 1, 2018.

9. Uesugi (1997, 194) notes that during her investigation, Coomaraswamy did not go to the Philippines, where she could have met victims who were raped sporadically. She interviewed Korean victims.

10. Kim Hak-sun came forward on August 14, 1991.

than *seidorei*, which often appears in the contents of group newsletters and publications. A notable exception to this general trend is a Tokyo-based network that has *senji seibōryoku* (wartime sexual violence) in its name.¹¹ For activists, the comfort women issue involves not only sexual slavery at comfort stations but also sexual violence at *gōkanjo* and *senjō-gōkan*. The name of this network expresses this inclusiveness. The expression *ianfu mondai* (comfort women issue) is an established expression in Japan. It is used with quotation marks for “*ianfu*” by activists and progressives and without such marks by the media and conservatives. Activists call the movement “*ianfu mondai kaiketsu undō* (movement to resolve the “comfort women” issue).

In the English-language literature on Japanese military sexual slavery, the term *comfort women* has been used widely with the understanding that it actually means “sex slaves.”¹² In my discussion, I use *comfort women* in this sense, following activists and progressive researchers in Japan. Given the situation in Japan, where *ianfu* is often interpreted as “paid prostitute,” they never drop quotation marks. Writing in English, I omit the quotation marks in the interest of readability.

There is also a question of whether to designate women who came forward as victims or survivors. In writings or in public talks, activists use three expressions to refer to the women: *higaisha* (victim), *higai josei* (victim woman), and the loanword *sabaibaa* (survivor). The first two terms are used much more commonly than the third. The use of *higaisha* was important for the women in early days because most of them thought of themselves as having a “shameful existence” and needed to identify themselves as victims in order to start a recovery process (Nishino 2006a, 247). It has remained important because conservatives and rightwing nationalists in Japan have refused to acknowledge the victimization of women by the Japanese military. Their refusal means their rejection of the notion that Japan is the perpetrator state. Discussing the 2015 Japan–South Korea agreement, Nakano Toshio (2017), a leading scholar on Japan’s military sexual slavery, argued that its major problem was the erasure of both *higaisha* and *kagaisha* (perpetrator). He explained that it excluded victims from the negotiation table and did not specify the Japanese state as responsible for the operation of the comfort women system (3). The use of *higaisha* is an effective reminder that Japan is *kagaisha* in the society where the agreement has led most people to believe that the issue has been settled.

Activists use the loanword *sabaibaa* when they want to stress that victimized women have agency (*shutai*). Yang Ching-ja (2017b), a leading activist who usually uses *higaisha* and *higai josei*, has used *sabaibaa* to discuss the “survivors’ fight.” In this discussion, she seeks to shed light on what the women have done proactively to resolve the issue and criticizes two prevailing views that revolve around *higaisha*. One is that the women are in need of *kyūsai* (help) and the other is that activists exploit *higaisha* for their own political ends (258). In the first view, *higaisha* has connotations of helpless and pitiable and, in the second, of passive and easy to manipulate. In their use of *higaisha* and *higai josei*, activists and progressive researchers nevertheless understand the women who came forward as proactive and courageous. They are aware that the women do not want *kyūsai* (*Chukouqi*, June 30, 2007). Moreover, they have witnessed many survivors becoming activists (Shim 2017). In this book, I generally use *survivors* because this term is used commonly in English-speaking countries in referring to victimized people in the process of recovery.¹³ When discussing activists and authors, I follow their use of terms.

11. The group is the Network against Wartime Sexual Violence.

12. For discussion on the two terms, see A. Song (2013, 384), Knop and Riles (2017, 855), and Meyer (2001, 1061). Many books have *comfort women* in their titles.

13. See the website of RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), the largest anti-sexual violence organization in the

Finally, I should comment on *shiensha* (supporter), the most commonly used word in newspapers and scholarly publications to refer to those acting on behalf of survivors. Activists are careful in using the term. When observing a group of Japanese presenting themselves as *shiensha* at the Wednesday protest in Seoul, Yamaguchi Akiko, a committed activist, whispered to me, “It is odd that citizens of the perpetrator state call themselves *shiensha*.”¹⁴ She thought that the group was condescending, given the vertical relationship of giver and receiver suggested in the word *shien* (support). The word appears in such expressions as *shien dantai* (support group) and *shien katsudō* (support activities) with the target of *shien* specified as a lawsuit and victims’ medical needs, among others. The activists often use *yorisou* (to be with) in talking about their relationship with victims. In this book, I use *activists* to refer to people who have been taking political action to resolve the comfort women issue. I use *supporters* when discussing activists engaged in particular supportive activities.

Research, Activists, Narratives

I conceived the idea of doing research on the comfort women movement with a focus on activist narratives after speaking with four activists in Tokyo in 2014. In May, I participated in a meeting of the group that supported the lawsuit filed by Taiwanese survivors. I had known of the member Shiba Yōko since the early 1990s and had been following the movement through the group newsletter she had been sending me. I was curious to know why she had been tackling the comfort women issue for so long and so seriously. I had been drawn to the photos of Taiwanese survivors that appeared in the newsletter. The women not only looked content and confident but also conveyed affection for the photographer, Shiba. At the meeting, I observed several activists enthusiastically discussing strategies to educate the public on the issue. In December the same year, I had lunch with Shiba and two other members, Nakamura Fujie and the aforementioned Yamaguchi Akiko. As Yamaguchi, a devout Christian, recollected how she became involved in social activism after finding out about Japan’s atrocities against Christians in colonial Korea, Nakamura, whose narrative appears in Chapter Three, talked about Vietnamese resistance against Western imperialist power. Shiba told me that the three of them had been visiting Taiwan every three months to see survivors. The lawsuit had long been over. A week earlier, I had a conversation with Yamashita Fumiko, an activist working at WAM.¹⁵ She told me she had been visiting Hainan, China, annually to see survivors and pay respect at the graves of those survivors who had died. She said, “At first, I did not know how to communicate with elderly survivors, but I soon noticed that they smiled a nice smile just like my grandmas and felt closer to them.” I was drawn to the four stories, each in a different way. The abstract image I had held about the movement was transformed into a web of face-to-face interpersonal relationships rich in affection. I was intrigued by the geopolitical scope of their thoughts and the depth of their dedication to the movement. I wanted to meet more activists and listen to their stories. In this way, I developed a research project about the comfort women movement with a focus on activists.

Shiba offered me an opportunity to meet more activists. In May 2015, I spent several days with her and six other activists, visiting historical sites in Cheju and Seoul, and attended two activist meetings in Seoul: the Asian Solidarity Conference and a meeting for the joint

United States, <https://www.rainn.org/articles/key-terms-and-phrases>. Accessed June 1, 2018.

14. Yamaguchi and I participated in this protest on May 27, 2015.

15. For discussion about Yamashita, see Nakayama (2013).

nomination of comfort women documents to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. On this trip, I met a few dozen activists from Japan and set up interviews with some of them. In the interviews, I asked, “Why have you been involved in the comfort women movement?” Their responses were diverse, with some focusing on postwar citizen activism, some talking about their childhood under the Japanese empire, and still others delving into gender discrimination. As I continued to meet activists in the following years, I found more diversity. I thought that it would be impossible to make a generalization on activists’ thoughts. In doing so, I would lose details, any of which could be an important part of the significance of the movement. Moreover, the activists’ stories were full of transformative moments and laden with personal feelings. They resisted simple characterization. I decided to present what activists told me as individual narratives.

I understand “narratives” as “crucial mechanisms in helping people make sense of and communicate about complex and contested issues” (Boswell 2013, 620). In research on social movements, narratives are analyzed for a variety of purposes: to look into alternative knowledge production (Dulfano 2017); to challenge the portrayal of an essentialized minority image and foreground multiple voices (Pande and Nadkarni 2016); to complicate the dominant understanding of an issue (Majic 2015); to analyze a form of activism scarcely studied (Hakan 2009); and to understand a process of change in a movement (Owens 2008). These purposes are all relevant to the activist narratives I introduce here. Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have engaged with women’s narratives to reveal previously marginalized voices in academic studies and in the public discourse (Kimura 2016, 141–42). I see the voices of activists in the comfort women movement as marginalized. Their voices have hardly been studied by feminist researchers in Japan. Ōgoshi Aiko is an exception, but her work focuses on one activist, Matsui Yayori, and one particular event organized under Matsui’s leadership, the 2000 Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery. I want to show other voices that I think are just as powerful and important as Matsui’s, and discuss other aspects of the movement. I think that activist narratives bring to light the intricate nature of the comfort women movement.

The narratives of eleven women activists are presented in this book. In my fieldwork, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-nine activists and talked to several dozen other activists. I selected the activists with whom I was able to meet more than once and in different contexts. I included activists from different age groups and different cities, and from major and small groups. The diversity among the eleven activists, however, does not reflect all the multiplicity I witnessed in the fieldwork. The eleven stories revolve around Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Malaysian survivors. I talked to those who worked with survivors from other countries, including the Philippines, but given the limit in space, I did not include their stories. I also interviewed some men activists, but I selected only women activists because of the overall dominance of women in the movement. I should note that the activists I met and interviewed were against the 2015 Japan–South Korea agreement and had remained active in the movement through the fall of 2018, when I completed my fieldwork.

As Maki Kimura (2008, 12) notes, “narrative texts are the collaborative products of narrators and listeners.”¹⁶ I introduced myself to activists as a researcher interested in the comfort women movement and a Japanese national of a Taiwanese father and a Japanese mother. Except for a few, the activists did not pay much attention to my background. They told me their stories in their own way and with their own choice of subtopics in response to my question, “Why have you been involved in the movement?” I often added, “What does the comfort women issue

16. Kimura makes this comment in discussing narratives of comfort women survivors.

mean to you?" I asked these broad questions because I did not want to place any boundaries on what they would say and I did not know in which direction the issue had taken each activist. Once the activists started talking, they dominated the conversation and continued to talk enthusiastically. The contents of the narratives presented here are largely from the interviews and conversations I had with the activists, but I also quote from their public lectures and their writings published in newsletters, books, and magazines. I keep direct quotes as much as possible, but I paraphrase some portions of interview data and written materials.

The question is how to organize individual narratives in a way useful for building scholarship. Here, I resort to Cheryl Rodriguez's (1998) analysis of black women's narratives. She resolves the question by focusing on similar elements and recurring themes embedded in different narratives. Though the eleven stories I present here are diverse in content, I find certain themes appearing frequently. Given that each narrative has multiple themes and similar themes recur in multiple narratives, I group the narratives into four groups according to their main themes: historical consciousness, listening to survivors, discrimination against women, and transnational feminism. These themes are interwoven and intersected, reflecting the complexity of the comfort women issue itself and its effect on the activists' thoughts. For each group, I present theoretical arguments relevant to its major theme. I analyze how the narratives exemplify, substantiate, and advance those arguments.

I entered the site of the movement a year before the 2015 Japan–South Korea agreement and witnessed activists eagerly anticipating a result of the bilateral negotiation that had preceded the agreement, being disappointed by it, and recovering and reinvigorating their activism. Between 2014 and 2018, I took a total of eight trips to Japan, staying about a month each time, interviewing activists and going to workshops and lectures organized by activist groups. I participated in the Asian Solidarity Conference in Seoul in 2015, 2016, and 2018, listening to speeches, sharing rooms with Japanese activists, and chatting with them over lunch and dinner. I took group tours with conference participants, visiting comfort women museums and memorials in Seoul and Daegu, and the House of Sharing in Gwangju. I attended the opening ceremony of the Ama Museum in Taipei in 2016 and took a study tour with Japanese participants. I joined the Wednesday protest in Seoul several times and participated in Wednesday protests in Fukuyama, Hiroshima, Osaka, Takarazuka, and Tokyo. I attended the unveiling ceremony of the comfort women memorial in San Francisco in September 2017, where I met resident Korean activists from Japan now living in the United States, and the first anniversary celebration of the memorial in September 2018, where I spent three days with activists who had traveled from Osaka. I also participated in some comfort women events in the 2000s during my fieldwork to study multiculturalism in Japan.

In the next chapter, I sketch a history of the comfort women movement as it has evolved in Japan. I show what activists have done collectively, modifying strategies according to changing situations in Japan, Asia, and the world. In doing so, I provide sociopolitical contexts for understanding the activist narratives, which are about what they have done individually and what they have thought and felt about the issue personally. Part Two is divided into four chapters, where I present activist narratives and discuss their theoretical implications. In Part Three, I synthesize the arguments in those four chapters.

For Japanese, Korean and Chinese personal names, I follow East Asian practice, giving family name first and then given name, except for authors who write in English. I use the modified Hepburn system of romanization for the transliteration of names and terms in Japanese and the pinyin system for that of names and terms in Chinese and Taiwanese. For the transliteration of Korean names, I follow the practice of the existing publications in English where their names

appear. In the main text, I refer to activist groups in English, using English names provided by groups or translating Japanese names into English myself. I have a list of activist groups and newsletters in Japanese and English in the appendix. I translated into English the Japanese texts used in this book.

Listening to Survivors

Mutual Transformation

Subject Responsible for History

In the redress movement, which became active in the 1980s and was invigorated in the 1990s, testimony was employed as the most popular and probably the most effective strategy for getting public support. Citizen groups carried out *shōgen shūkai* (testimony meetings, testimony rallies) where people gathered to listen to victims of the war testify. The decade of the 1990s was called *shōgen no jidai* (era of testimony),¹ for numerous testimony rallies were held across Japan. Such being the case, how to respond to testimony arose as an important question for scholars interested in the comfort women issue. They debated whether or not testimony could count as historical evidence. They also theorized the act of listening to survivors as a form of taking responsibility.

This theorization was preceded by the “debate on the historical subject” (*rekishi shutai ronsō*), which began with the work of literary critic Katō Norihiro. In his controversial 1995 essay, “Since Defeat,” he expressed willingness to admit Japan’s aggressive past and take responsibility. However, he argued that before apologizing to the twenty million victims of the war in other Asian countries, it was necessary to form a unified Japanese national subject through the process of mourning the three million Japanese war dead (N. Katō 1995). While appreciated by many, his essay was harshly criticized by progressive intellectuals, most notably by Takahashi Tetsuya, a scholar in philosophy. Takahashi (1999, 194–95) challenged Katō’s thesis by asking how he could prioritize mourning the death of aggressors over that of Asian others, for which Japanese people were responsible as perpetrators. Lee Hyo-duk (1998, 112–13), a resident Korean scholar, argued that Katō’s essay was addressed to Japanese audiences and that it advocated taking responsibility solely for the purpose of recovering Japanese pride. Lee thus called the essay a “masturbatory monologue.”²

“Since Defeat” promoted discussion on the question of taking responsibility as Japanese. Nishino Rumiko (1998, 238), a writer-activist, noted that many Japanese born in the postwar period had an allergic resistance to social and political pressures to identify as Japanese. Those Japanese were not willing to take responsibility as Japanese, not because they denied Japan’s past as historical revisionists did, but because they did not want to identify as Japanese. Moreover,

1. Suh Kyung-sik used this expression, referring to Elie Wiesel and noting that it signified a worldwide phenomenon (Suh and T. Takahashi 2000, 3).

2. For more discussion, see Koschmann (2006) and T. Takahashi (2005).

scholars who were influenced by postmodern theories tended to embrace blindly the idea of transcending nationalism (Nakamasa 2002, 216).³ This tendency amounted to an ironic use of the notion of nationalism, insofar as its refusal of national identity resulted in the evasion of national responsibility.

The position of transcending nationalism was adopted by critics of Katō's essay in their effort to stay away from any hint of nationalism. Suh Kyung-sik (2002), an influential resident Korean intellectual, criticized them for evading Japanese responsibility. He referred to Hannah Arendt for his argument. Arendt (2003, 147–51) distinguishes political responsibility, which is collective in nature, from moral and/or legal guilt, which belongs to the agency of wrongdoing and is hence personal. She argues that by virtue of one's membership in a community, one has collective responsibility for what has been done in the name of the community. Suh (2002, 70–71) claimed that people born in postwar Japan were not guilty, but that they must take collective responsibility as Japanese for war and colonial domination.

Possibility for Responding

Witnessing the popularity of Katō's inward-looking view, progressive intellectuals felt an urgent need to respond to Asian others. They were also aware that they had to deal with the stance of refusing to take responsibility as Japanese. The idea of *ōtō sekinin* (responsibility to respond, possibility for responding) was a breakthrough for them. Takahashi Tetsuya conceptualized it as he attempted to theorize war responsibility for those born in postwar Japan, including himself. In his well-received 1999 book *Postwar Responsibility*, he looks into the concept of *responsibility* as the English equivalent to the Japanese word *sekinin*. He first points out that *responsibility* originally means “possibility for responding” (*ōtō kanōsei*). He then argues that the act of calling out to others and the act of responding to such a call make up the basis of human relationships and that human beings are able and expected to respond when spoken to by others (23–26). In his view, people born in postwar Japan are not guilty of the war crimes committed by the Japanese empire, but they are expected to respond to Asian others and pursue *ōtō sekinin* (38–39). He stresses that *ōtō sekinin* operates as a rule, not as an obligation, but he says that pursuing *ōtō sekinin* is a way to develop a relationship of mutual trust (29).

Referring to Suh, Takahashi also talks about the importance of assuming political responsibility. He argues that Japanese citizens are responsible for making the Japanese government accept legal responsibility for Japan's past. In this way, Takahashi calls for people in Japan to take universal responsibility in the form of *ōtō sekinin* and particular Japanese national responsibility. He notes that in the process of fulfilling responsibility, Japanese people can break down the existing concept of “Japaneseness” and transform Japanese society into a more democratic one (46–51).

Nakano Toshio, a scholar in intellectual history, has theorized how *ōtō sekinin* takes place at the level of interethnic interaction, expanding on the idea of the transformation of Japanese identity and society in Takahashi's thesis. Nakano (2008) says that in pursuing *ōtō sekinin* in an encounter with Asian others, one would have to give up the comfortable majority identity position “Japanese.” However, as the popularity of “Since Defeat” has shown, there is a problem in this scenario because of the resistance to giving up one's desire to remain a Japanese subject (91). Contrary to Katō's assertion that it is necessary to establish a unitary national subject

3. Nishikawa Nagao's 1992 *How to Transcend National Borders* was influential in spreading the idea. Benedict Anderson's 1983 *Imagined Communities* also had an impact.

before taking responsibility, Nakano says, the unified subject, or rather the imagination of it, should fall apart at the moment it takes responsibility (97). For when responsibility is understood as a response to the Other (*tasha*),⁴ the act of taking responsibility as Japanese inevitably involves listening to the Other's voice and accepting the conflicts, tensions, and uneasiness that the Other's voice causes inside the "I." These conflicts and tensions lead to a critical examination of "I" as Japanese. When responding to the Other, the imagined unity of the subject is inevitably fragmented under the Other's gaze. This fragmentation may in turn generate political action to fulfill responsibility, Nakano argues (2001a, 296–99; 2008, 97). He sees a similar psychology among those who do not want to take responsibility as Japanese. Whatever the "I" means to them, it is a majority position when facing Asian others (2001a, 330–31).

The problem that gets in the way of pursuing *ōtō sekinin* is the desire to protect one's right to define oneself. In line with Nakano, Oka Mari (1998, 217) points out that such a right is unevenly distributed among people. It is a taken-for-granted privilege for Japanese people and something of which many Asian others are deprived. There is an asymmetrical colonial relationship in the context in which Asian victims demand response (*ōtō*) from Japanese people, Oka says.

Agency and Diversity

The conceptualization of *ōtō sekinin* has brought about not only the theorization of the subject position on the part of Japanese citizens but also the theorization of agency on the part of survivors. Igeta Midori (2010), a feminist literary critic and VAWW RAC member, argues that Japanese citizens have an ethical obligation to "respond" (*ōtō-suru*) to survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery (69). In reading their testimonial narratives, Igeta pays attention to the content of the narratives as well as to the process by which testimony is created and recreated through interaction. In such a process, the survivors act as *shutai* (subjects, agents), she says. Having lost a sense of trust in people, the survivors had not spoken about their past. Yet, they began to talk when asked to. At first, they were uncertain whether they could trust their listeners. They were fearful that their stories would be misunderstood or taken lightly. Still, they decided to take a risk and talk in the hope of building trust with people. The listeners strived to comprehend them through their utterances, sighs, and nonverbal cues (73). Igeta stresses that the survivors were constantly interrogating the listeners, "Are you committed to 'responding' (*ōtō*) to us?" (82). Igeta thus understands the survivors as actively demanding *ōtō* from people.

From attending testimony rallies, Igeta (2010) has learned that the act of testifying about sexual torture entails an extraordinary amount of pain (78). Yet, survivors chose to talk about it and demand that they be recognized as human beings (89). Igeta argues that what the survivors effectively did in deciding to give testimony was to become the agents of their experience of sexual violence and to restructure its meaning for themselves. She says that through the act of coming out, they, as the agents of sexuality, challenged the social norms of sexuality that had kept them silent (89–92).

Similarly, Maki Kimura (2008) focuses on survivors' agency in discussing their testimonial narratives. She argues that "their narratives are where agency concurrently emerges, and 'Comfort Women' are thus not powerless victims but are active participants in their creation of their own narratives and their own selves" (5). Kimura (2016) notes that they "did not initially have a language to speak about their experience of victimization" and that they could not easily wipe out their self-blame (196). However, through "the very act of testifying to their

4. By *tasha*, Nakano seems to mean "that which is different from or opposite to oneself."

experiences” as well as the process of having their utterances heard, they recovered their dignity and became “subjects,” she says (197).

By theorizing the survivors’ agency, Kimura (2008, 16, 19) effectively critiques the discourse of the innocent model victim.⁵ Kimura shows the diverse voices of survivors by examining their testimonies (105–24). Similarly, in her discussion on Korean survivors, Sarah Soh (2008) criticizes the paradigmatic discourse that homogenizes the women’s testimonial narratives and sheds light on the diversity in the lived experiences of the women. She says that the narratives “reveal not only the unbelievably wretched life conditions of the poor in colonial Korea, but also remarkable levels of agency, aspirations for autonomy, life-affirming perseverance, and resilience” (xvi). The testimonial narratives of survivors have been published in Japanese; the two volumes of *Testimony, Memory for the Future* have probably been the most complete sets of Asian survivors’ testimonies (WAM 2006; 2010a). The testimonies amply demonstrate “diversity” and the “agency” of each survivor, even though these terms are not used.

Ueno Chizuko (2004), a leading feminist scholar in Japan, has been a harsh critic of the discourse of model victims. She ascribes the creation of this discourse to the tendency in the “military sexual slavery paradigm” to deny that prostitutes may be victims. In this paradigm, a model victim is imagined, for example, as a “young woman who was a virgin at the time she was taken away” and who was “either completely duped or captured by force.” Ueno argues that “the agency of the victims has to be assiduously denied” in the paradigm. Instead of demonstrating diversity among survivors as Kimura and Soh do, Ueno turns the criticism against the testimonies’ listeners. Regarding the model victim as a “manipulative category,” she states that “the problem lies not with the narrator but the listener who only hears what he or she wants to hear” (89).

When Park Yu-ha, a South Korean author, published *Comfort Women of the Empire* in Japanese in 2014, many Japanese intellectuals, including Ueno, praised the book for demonstrating diversity (*tayōsei*) among Korean comfort women.⁶ Park (2014) said that Korean comfort women were members of the Japanese empire and had “comradely” (*dōshiteki*) relationships with Japanese soldiers (80–84). The survivors at the House of Sharing in South Korea sued Park for defamation in June 2014. When the Eastern Prosecution Office in Seoul indicted Park in November 2015, the Japanese media reported it as a suppression of freedom of speech. Soon after, fifty-four intellectuals from Japan and the United States issued the “Statement against the Indictment of Professor Park Yu-ha.” Ueno was one of them. While calling for academic freedom and denying that the book had harmed the honor of survivors, the statement said that, by demonstrating *tayōsei*, the book attempted to grasp the complicated nature of the comfort women issue and seek a genuine solution (“Teikoku no ianfu,” *Asahi*, November 27, 2015).⁷ In December 2015, 380 scholars and activists from Japan and South Korea publicly presented their position on the book and the indictment, criticizing the book’s depiction of comradely relationships, calling attention to the survivors’ pain and human rights, and problematizing the Japanese intellectuals’ admiration for the book’s depiction of *tayōsei*.⁸

5. For more discussion on model victims, see Choi (1997) and Roces (2009).

6. The book won literary prizes in Japan.

7. The word *tayōsei* is used to apply to the complexities of the issue. However, the emphatic use of it in the statement has contributed to the spread of appreciation for the book’s depiction of the Korean comfort women as diverse. For the statement in English, see Park’s website, <http://www.ptkks.net/en/>. Accessed November 1, 2018.

8. Nationwide Action, email message to author, December 2, 2015. One may argue that, when emphasizing *tayōsei* among the Korean comfort women, the Japanese intellectuals appreciate the book’s depiction of them in a way that can be taken as lessening to some extent Japan’s responsibility to them. In particular, they use the word *tayōsei* to highlight “comradely relationships,” as though the idea of such relationships should be seen as a mitigating factor in assessing the responsibility of the

Testimony and History

When survivors began to give testimony, a debate was generated on whether or not testimony could count as historical evidence. At first, Ueno Chizuko criticized historians such as Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Suzuki Yūko for their approach to the comfort women issue in her 1997 article, which drew attention from scholars. Yoshimi countered her criticism. What is now known among scholars as the Ueno-Yoshimi debate started when the JWRC held in 1997 the symposium entitled “Nationalism and the ‘Comfort Women’ Issue,” where the two debated in person.⁹

There are two interrelated points in Ueno’s (2001) criticism against the discipline of history.¹⁰ First, she makes “a conscious effort to politicize existing historiography’s naive and misguided positivism—an unquestioning faith in material evidence considered neutral and objective” (303). She notes that the dispute between historical revisionists and left-leaning historians “has continued to focus on matters of historical evidence.” She goes on to argue that these two groups of people “may be said to share the old-fashioned methodology of historical positivism.” The second point revolves around testimony. In “serious’ scholarly historiography,” Ueno finds “the denial or the dismissive evaluation of the oral testimonies of the survivors” and the “hierarchy of historical evidence.” She claims that “the anachronistic invocation of historical positivism, or of the putative neutrality and objectivity of history as an academic discipline clearly undermines the achievements of women’s history in the last couple of decades” (319). Following the linguistic turn in history and understanding history as an ongoing project of reinventing the past, she argues that “history can be narrated in a variety of ways from a variety of different perspectives.” She criticizes conservative historians for using inconsistencies in survivors’ testimonies to prove “the unreliability of oral history” (320).

At the 1997 symposium, Yoshimi (1997, 183) denied that he had an unquestioning faith in material evidence, pointing out that historians, including conservative ones, have valued testimony for thirty years. In his 1998 article, after pointing out several basic misunderstandings in Ueno’s 1997 article, he harshly criticized her argument. To begin with, he says that it sounds like a confession of her faith in testimony. He goes on to state that it is a commonplace in the discipline of history that there are multiple perspectives on the same matter. Then, he argues that it amounts to a matter of taste if one claims, as Ueno does, that there are multiple realities depending on the perspective (124–41). The debate between the two ended when Ueno (1999, 24) admitted that she had only a shallow knowledge about the discipline of history and apologized to Yoshimi. However, the debate has continued to have repercussions and the relationship between oral testimonies and historical documents has yet to be analyzed.¹¹

Activists

The activists I met are all committed to taking collective responsibility as Japanese citizens. They had started pursuing what Takahashi called *ōtō sekinin* long before he theorized it. In fact, most of them do not know this scholarly term. The expression they often use in its place is “listening

perpetrator state for its operation of the comfort women system. For discussion, see Shūkai jikkō iinkai (2016).

9. See T. Ueno (2005) for the details of the Ueno-Yoshimi debate. Suzuki Yūko criticized Ueno, saying that it was obvious to historians that testimony was primary historical material and that revisionists never conducted documentary investigation (Fujime, Suzuki, and Kanō 1998, 122).

10. I quote from Ueno’s 2001 article written in English, which covers the content of her 1997 article.

11. Others have criticized both revisionists and historians for relying heavily on official records. See Ahn (2008, 38). Kimura (2016, 133) argues that even though Yoshimi stresses the importance of oral testimony, his approach “only gives a secondary role to testimonies in understanding history.” Ueno Chizuko (2017, 245) has continued to criticize historical positivism.

Feminism against Japan's Military Sexual Violence

Critical Transnational Feminism

Ōgoshi Aiko's Theory of Feminism

In the narratives presented and discussed in the previous chapters, I find a particular form of feminism characterized by critical historical consciousness; the intersectionality of gender, class, and ethnicity; transnational solidarity; mutual transformation; and the centrality of survivors.¹ In this final chapter, I seek to analyze the nature of this feminism by following Ōgoshi Aiko's theory of feminism and recapturing the theoretical discussions added to the narratives. Among the scholars studying Japan's military sexual violence in the context of Japan, Ōgoshi, a Japanese feminist scholar in philosophy, seems to have offered the most thoughtful arguments. She has theorized the issue while watching the movement closely and maintaining personal contacts with those directly involved in activism, including the late Matsui Yayori and Nakahara Michiko. I have introduced some of Ōgoshi's arguments above. In what follows, I trace the development of her theorization so as to shed light on her theory in a comprehensive framework.

When the comfort women issue emerged as a social issue in the early 1990s, Ōgoshi (1994) grasped it as an issue of sex. She problematized the culture of *sei* (sexuality, sex), deeply embedded in Japanese society, finding the origin of this culture in the Buddhist idea of salvation and elucidating the troublesome cultural meaning of the term *ian* (comfort). She stated that the patriarchy that revolved around the exhibition of male power through phallic worship was foreign to Japanese society, where those relegated to a subordinate position (women) were expected to embrace and support those in power (men), who were seen as the vulnerable seeking Bodhisattva's salvation or *ian* (121–24).² Ōgoshi (1996) argued that the discourse of sex as *ian* was developed in the premodern era as the Buddhist idea of abstinence from sex was abandoned in favor of men's sexual indulgence. She noted that the term *ianfu* (comfort women) straightforwardly expressed the Japanese paradigm of rape, in which rape was interpreted not as the exercise of male power but as proof of the weakness of men who needed to seek *ian* from women. In this paradigm, men would be saved when embraced by the female body. The

1. I discuss the thought and action of women activists, including two resident Koreans, in the context of Japan. I plan a research project on comfort women activism carried out by resident Korean women, analyzing it from a diasporic feminist perspective. A. Seo (2018) discusses early actions taken by resident Korean women from such a perspective.

2. Ōgoshi (1994, 109) notes that women who offered men sexual salvation were regarded as manifestations of Kannon bodhisattva. Moreover, the women were imagined as willing to save men out of their sense of *ianteki bōsei* (motherhood for comfort). Ōgoshi points out that contempt for women developed in the medieval practice of Buddhism metamorphosed into this notion of motherhood (123–24). The relationship of mothers and prostitutes is complicated in her theory.

discourse of sex as *ian* operated to produce an image of consensual sex out of the reality of rape, leaving the rapist devoid of a guilty conscience (194–200). Ōgoshi (1997) pointed out that when refusing to be called *ianfu* and designating the act of rape as rape, survivors exposed the falsehood of the discourse of sex as *ian* (12).

Ōgoshi (1996) argued that, in modern Japan, political leaders adeptly used this cultural discourse to justify the creation of the licensed prostitution system and the comfort women system (200). They applied to the control of Japan's colonies the policy of ruling people through the culture of *sei* (207). During the war, they deployed this culture to promote the idea of “sexual service for the sake of the country” and to obfuscate the reality of rape in the minds of soldiers at comfort stations, allowing them to exploit comfort women without any ethical consideration (200–205).³ Ōgoshi (1996) ascribed to the culture of *sei* the dissemination of the view of comfort stations as a necessary evil (201). She called for feminists in Japan to investigate this culture as the major cause of Japan's military sexual violence (210).

In her 1997 conversation with Takahashi Tetsuya, a scholar in philosophy, Ōgoshi stressed that the comfort women issue was first and foremost about the horrendous sexual violence inflicted on women's bodies (Ōgoshi and Takahashi 1997, 134). At the same time, she situated the issue in the geopolitics of postwar East Asia, claiming that it had called into question all aspects of Japanese culture and society, including democracy, the emperor system, and feminism (144–50). In a series of books entitled *Postwar, Violence, Gender*, Ōgoshi (2005a, 2005b, 2010a, 2010c) problematized the notion of “postwar,” joining Nakano Toshio and other scholars in the interrogation of issues left unresolved in “postwar” Asia (see Chapter Three). Ōgoshi (2005b) pointed out that scholars in male-dominated academia had debated “postwar thought” (*sengo shisō*) without paying attention to gender issues and legacies of Japan's colonialism, such as the presence of Koreans in Japan and the relegation of Okinawa to the status of an internal colony (26).⁴ Ōgoshi found the postwar emperor system particularly problematic. It defined the emperor as the symbol of the Japanese state and nation, implying the exclusion of minority ethnic groups from the state. It had also contributed to the creation of patriarchal democracy, which was antagonistic to true democratization (36–44). Ōgoshi argued that, for people in the rest of Asia who had had to cope with the legacies of Japan's wartime aggression, the emperor system symbolized the fallacy of the thesis that war and colonization were over (47).

Ōgoshi (2005b) praised the 1970s *ribu* activism not only for asserting the liberation of sex but also for making a critique against the discourse of the “postwar.” She appreciated that *ribu* activists problematized the victimization of comfort women in connection to postwar men's sex tours to Asian countries and Japan's economic imperialism in postwar Asia (53–55). Ōgoshi (2010c) noted that *ribu* activists developed a perpetrator's sense of responsibility for other Asians based on their close attention to women's bodies and sexualities (40). However, they could not fully form a perpetrator's consciousness because they confronted their own victimization by Japanese men. The duality of being victims of gender discrimination within Japan as well as accomplices to Japan's imperialism rendered their sense of ethics (*rinri*) ambivalent and turned it into an ethic of self-denial. As a result, they did not take any political action on behalf of victims in other Asian countries, Ōgoshi said (40–41).

As discussed in Chapter Six, Ōgoshi (2003, 52) has called the Women's Tribunal “transnational feminism in practice.” She has given the primary credit for the achievement of this

3. Former soldiers remembered how the presence of comfort women made their life in the war zone *nagoyaka* (harmonious) and appreciated the power of women (*Silence*, November 25, 2000).

4. About seventy percent of U.S. bases in Japan are located in Okinawa.

event to Matsui, understanding her as diverging from *ribu* activists. Ōgoshi's theory of comfort women activism as transnational feminism thus revolves around the tribunal and Matsui.

In her discussion of the tribunal, Ōgoshi (2000) criticizes those scholars who support post-modernism and social constructionism for dismissing the importance of ethics and seeking value-neutral research on the one hand and for trivializing the notion of *shutai* (subjectivity) and the category of women on the other (154–55). She argues that the dismissal of ethics would allow historical revisionists to assert the legitimacy of their historiography (see Chapter Three). Referring to Judith Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble*, Ōgoshi claims that, unlike Butler, post-modern feminists in Japan, including Ueno Chizuko, failed to examine the political forces that had constructed the essentialist category of women, when they negated that category. Ōgoshi goes on to say that in deconstructing the category, those scholars suggested the impossibility of women's solidarity and thereby discouraged women's movements (157). She points out that in the practice of the Women's Tribunal, activists of diverse backgrounds achieved solidarity. She finds a performative demonstration of the political category of women based on the acknowledgment of diversity in the category. Ōgoshi notes that this performativity was enabled by survivors' testimonies. She also claims that Japanese activists came to realize in the process of making the tribunal that their subjectivity had been politically constructed in Japanese society as victims of the war, not as citizens of the perpetrator state (158–59). Ōgoshi argues that, at the time of the tribunal, feminist scholars had not caught up with feminist activists. She calls this situation "feminist trouble" in Japan (155).

In her analysis of Matsui's activism, Ōgoshi (2010c) finds her different from *ribu* activists in two ways. First, Matsui cultivated a transnational perspective (27). She continued to pursue in the 1980s what *ribu* activists had started but had left incomplete, that is, a critical inquiry into Japan's oppressions in the rest of Asia. She traveled in Asia as a journalist and exposed structural discrimination against women in the region under Japanese economic domination. She launched the Asian Women's Association in 1977 to take action on behalf of subaltern women and published the best-selling *Women's Asia* in 1987 (42–44). Ōgoshi finds it particularly significant that Matsui worked with other Japanese women to hold Emperor Hirohito responsible for Japan's military sexual violence. Japanese feminism as led by Matsui was not confined to the national framework; rather, it had broken down the national border and had become transnational, Ōgoshi says (57).

Second, Ōgoshi (2010c) finds Matsui different from *ribu* activists in that she prioritized ethics (*rinri*) over the liberation of women.⁵ When encountering survivors of Japan's military sexual violence, Matsui sought to fulfill her "responsibility to respond to them" (*ōtō sekinin*) and decided to hold a people's tribunal. Ōgoshi praises her for this decision. In choosing this option, Matsui made crystal clear her commitment to responding to the survivors, who had demanded the punishment of the responsible. Ōgoshi calls this commitment Matsui's "feminist ethics." For Japanese citizens, the act of prosecuting the responsible would entail self-examination and self-criticism, whereas the act of engaging in redress litigation would not necessarily call for such inquiries into the self. Matsui also wanted to send a message of condemnation to those liberals who had endorsed the AWF and reduced the comfort women issue to a matter of money. Matsui tried to actualize her feminist ethics by seeking "gender justice" at the site of the tribunal (50–53). She had witnessed this notion emerging in international feminist efforts to integrate crimes against women into the international criminal law (54–57).⁶ Ōgoshi points out

5. This may be related to Matsui's Christian background. See Chapter Five.

6. The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice led the efforts and achieved the goal. Matsui invited Rhonda Copelon, who conceived

from victimized countries can constitute a self-serving act. I observed Japanese women activists harshly criticizing the group of Japanese men who visited survivors and apologized to them as representatives of Japan.¹⁸ The women activists regarded such a gesture as hypocritical, paternalistic, self-serving, and nationalistic.¹⁹ The activists I know want to express their commitment to taking responsibility through action, not through abstract language.

The Japanese activists' effort has been acknowledged by activists in other countries. Yun Mi-hyang, the leader of the movement in South Korea since the early 2000s, noted in her conversation with Yang Ching-ja that, if not for Japanese women and citizen groups, comfort women activism would not have become as international and persisting as it has actually become. Yang, a Korean in Japan, responded that Japanese activists took being citizens of the perpetrator state very seriously (Yun, Yang, and Okano 2016, 35).²⁰ The activists have also been committed to pursuing *ōtō sekinin*, which arises based on humanity, not on national citizenship. Nakahara Michiko makes it clear that she is committed to taking responsibility as a Japanese national, but she rejects seeing the comfort women issue confined to a national framework, as simply an issue of national responsibility. In her Miyakojima episode, when she called for women in relevant countries to remember victims' pain and create a society without war, she was taking a transnational stance in the act of pursuing *ōtō sekinin*. I argue that the JMSV activists have succeeded in developing transnational solidarity with activists in other countries because they have tried to take both forms of responsibility ethically.

Emerging in the Practice of Activism

Ōgoshi (2010a, 13) describes feminist ethics as something that emerges in the process of activism and takes form consequentially.²¹ Mutual transformation has emerged between survivors and JMSV activists as a consequence of their interaction. Likewise, transnational solidarity among activists has emerged in the process of activism. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2010) offers an insight on this point. In his discussion on intercultural collaboration in the making of Native American museums, he argues that collaboration is “a problem to be solved—rather than a solution to a problem” (50). He says that “we ought to see collaboration as an ideal that we should, we must, strive for, even if our attempts are at times clumsy, unsure, and imperfect” (59). The JMSV activists did not presume that they could collaborate with other Asian women just because they were also women. They strived for transnational collaboration. They remained self-critical of the nature of collaboration in the process of activism while often facing moments of uncertainty and clumsiness. Their moral humility consequentially enabled transnational collaboration and solidarity. Kim Pu-ja (2011, 151) notes that transnational feminism was achieved at the site of the Women's Tribunal as a consequence of the Japanese activists' efforts. For them, transnational collaboration or transnational feminism was a problem to be solved.

The JMSV activists have dealt with the ethical questions of apology and reconciliation at the site of the movement. Many people in Japan, especially conservatives, insist that Japan has

18. The activists were discussing a movie scene. I saw a group of Japanese men apologizing to survivors at the Wednesday protest in Seoul on May 27, 2015. A Japanese female activist criticized the group.

19. Kikuchi (2003, 182) criticizes historian Kurahashi Masanao for expressing a strong sense of shame as Japanese about the comfort women issue. She regards his “shameful Japanese” identification as nationalistic. Referring to Ukai's (1995) discussion on shame, Nakano (2008, 91–97) argues that a shameful person can avoid developing a nationalistic pride by exposing him-/herself under the eyes of survivors in the act of listening. JMSV activists have done this.

20. Qiu (2014, 172, 192) also appreciates Japanese activists' efforts.

21. This understanding also differentiates Ōgoshi from advocates of global feminism who have an abstract understanding of feminist ethics and gender justice. Her theorization stays at the level of performance.

apologized enough to victims of the comfort women system. The Japanese government provided funds for survivors in 1995 and 2015. However, the JMSV activists have refused to acknowledge those apologies and funds as sincere. Their sense of morality is diametrically opposed to that of the government, which defined the 1995 AWF as an expression of taking “moral” responsibility. Observing Japanese officials’ apologies in the 1990s, You-me Park (2000) notes that, in the act of apology, the perpetrator often “assumes the position of the powerful, and ‘reminds’ everyone involved of the hierarchal differences between the perpetrator and the victim.” Such a reminder may work “only to add moral superiority: he is not only powerful but conscientious and ‘manly’ enough to own up!” (203). Due to Japan’s economic and political superiority in Asia, Japan’s apology to victims in the rest of Asia is even more problematic, Park says (203). Similarly, Lisa Yoneyama (2016, 125) points out that the AWF “offered unilateral apologies and presumed that its terms of apology would be automatically accepted.”²² The JMSV activists denounced the 2015 Japan–South Korea agreement because they interpreted it as basically the same as the AWF, that is, as Japan’s imposition of unilateral apologies on South Korea.

JMSV activists have been rejecting the discourse of reconciliation (*wakai*) promoted by Park Yu-ha, a Korean author, and her supporters in Japan. Park’s 2006 *For Reconciliation* was praised by liberal scholars and the left-leaning newspaper *Asahi*. In it, Park calls for Koreans to appreciate what conscientious Japanese have accomplished and the apologies Japan has offered. She argues that, in order to achieve reconciliation, the Koreans should offer forgiveness before the Japanese give a formal apology. Progressive scholars in Japan have critiqued Park’s argument. Kim Pu-ja (2011), the most vocal among them, claims that Park’s view lacks a critical perspective on colonialism and is akin to the revisionist view (179–83). Kim finds it most disturbing that “conscientious” Japanese scholars, including feminists such as Ueno Chizuko, have endorsed Park’s view (185–87). As discussed in Chapter Four, many Japanese have appreciated Park Yu-ha’s 2014 *Comfort Women of the Empire* for demonstrating diversity among Korean comfort women. They have also praised the discourse of reconciliation in it. Park (2014, 253) argues that there have been apologies from Japanese prime ministers and the emperor for Japan’s colonial control of Korea, and that there has been compensation for the comfort women issue. Kim Pu-ja (2017a, 149) critiques Park for holding private brokers primarily responsible for the recruitment of comfort women and downplaying the responsibility of the Japanese military and government.²³ Chong Young-hwan (2016, 123), a resident Korean scholar, calls the reconciliation discourse presented by Park in her 2014 book and endorsed by Japanese liberals “reconciliation for oblivion.” The book gives a false impression that Japan apologized for its colonial rule, he says.²⁴ With Kim and Chong, the JMSV activists regard Park’s reconciliation thesis as inadequate.

Just like mutual transformation and transnational solidarity, reconciliation (*wakai*) may be achieved consequentially through activism. In her critique of Park’s 2006 book, Nishino Rumiko (2010, 139–40) rejects the idea of “seeking *wakai*” or that of “trying to resolve the issue for the sake of *wakai*.” She says that the term *wakai* belongs to survivors and not to any others, including non-victim Koreans such as Park. Nishino argues that citizens of the perpetrator state should seek to bring justice to the survivors. They might hear the word *wakai* from the survivors

22. For insightful discussion on apology in relation to the comfort women issue, see Field (1997). See Dudden (2005) for a political analysis of apology.

23. Finding in Park’s book a great deal of influence from Ueno Chizuko’s *Nationalism and Gender*, P. Kim (2017b, 104–6) argues that Ueno’s historical view, which accepts multiple historical realities, paved the way for Park’s revisionist thesis.

24. On March 28, 2016, defenders and critics of Park’s 2014 book held a scholarly debate at the University of Tokyo. See Shūkai jikkō iinkai (2016). Each camp of scholars published an anthology to express its views (Asano, Ogura, and Nishi 2017; Nakano et al. 2017).

only when they have succeeded in doing so, she says. Watanabe Mina, who became the WAM director in 2018, recently told her fellow activists that *wakai* did not have to be the goal of activism. Having just visited the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, she shared this association's message: "We don't forget, forgive, or reconcile."²⁵ It was an inspiring and liberating message, she said, given the dominance of the *wakai* discourse in Japan. She asked for persistence in fighting for justice and the truth.²⁶

JMSV Feminism in Japan and Beyond

As I write this conclusion, what Ōgoshi Aiko has called feminist trouble still looms large. However, young activist-scholars, such as Atsuta Keiko, Nagayama (Yang) Satoko, and Ha Kyung Hee, have started to analyze the comfort women issue from a perspective of critical transnational feminism. Moreover, scholars have begun to rethink "Japanese feminisms," exploring the possibility of "different feminisms for different ends" (Kano 2018, 278). JMSV feminism can be regarded as one of various feminisms that have been developed with Japan as a primary location of inquiry. It may occupy a special position among them. For as Setsu Shigematsu (2018, 219) notes, "during the 1990s, the debates surrounding the 'comfort women' marked a turning point in Japanese feminism." She also says that "the rise of *ūman ribu* marked a watershed in the history of postwar feminism in Japan" (206). The relationship between the *ribu* movement and the comfort women movement should be studied systematically. Much research is also needed to situate JMSV feminism in relation to other feminisms, including feminism for minority women in Japan. Shigematsu notes that critical transnational feminism "encourages dialogue between diverse feminisms and feminists in Japan" (208). In such a dialogue, feminist trouble may be deciphered and an understanding of the culture of *sei* (sexuality, sex) may be deepened. In fact, scholars in Japan have started to examine intersecting feminisms with a focus on sexual violence, as evidenced in *Feminism as a Bridge: History, Sex, Violence* (Muta 2018a).

As stated in Chapter One, Ōgoshi predicted in the late 1990s that the comfort women movement in Japan might be able to contribute to feminism in the world. I argue that JMSV activists have made such a contribution in two ways. First, they have demonstrated how feminists of a former colonial empire may avoid falling into imperialist feminism. They have shown how feminists in privileged positions may develop an ethical relationship with underprivileged women by listening to their voices with moral humility. As discussed above, scholars have theorized the ethics of listening in an asymmetrical relationship. The JMSV activists have acted out their theory in practice, demonstrating how it works in concrete ways. They have suggested that overcoming imperialist feminism is possible only through the act of listening and only at the site of activism. Second, the JMSV activists offer feminists throughout the world the tactics of intersectionality in activism. By collaborating with activists involved in a variety of issues, they have learned different political perspectives and different strategies for their own movement. They suggest that feminism is effective when it intersects with other kinds of activism.

JMSV feminism has become a complex, multifaceted activism since it started at the beginning of the 1990s. It is complicated because the comfort women issue is. While expanding the scope of their activism, the JMSV activists remain conscious of the fact that it was initiated by survivors who had decided to come out and tell their stories. For the activists, JMSV feminism is simply a response to the voices of the survivors, no more and no less.

25. Many children disappeared during the military dictatorship in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Their mothers created the association to tackle this problem.

26. WAM's email message to its members, September 19, 2018.

Appendix: Activist Groups and Newsletters

Action Group for Resolving the Issue of Japanese Military “Comfort Women,” Kitakyūshū (Kitakyūshū Group)

日本軍「慰安婦」問題解決のために行動する会・北九州

Action Network for the Issue of Japanese Military “Comfort Women”

日本軍「慰安婦」問題行動ネットワーク

Action Network for the Military Comfort Women Issue

従軍慰安婦問題行動ネットワーク

All Solidarity Network for the Resolution of the “Comfort Women” Issue (All Solidarity)

「慰安婦」問題解決オール連帯ネットワーク

Asia-Japan Women’s Resource Center (AJWRC)

アジア女性資料センター

Onnatachi no 21-seiki 『女たちの21世紀』

Women’s Asia 21: Voices from Japan

Asian Women’s Association (AWA)

アジアの女たちの会

Association for Clarifying Japan’s Postwar Responsibility (Hakkiri-kai)

日本の戦後責任をハッキリさせる会

Association for Supporting the Kanpu Lawsuit

関釜裁判を支援する会

Kanpu-saiban News 『関釜裁判ニュース』

Association for Supporting the Lawsuits of Chinese “Comfort Women”

中国人「慰安婦」裁判を支援する会

Association for Taking War Victims’ Words to Heart (Memory Group)

アジア・太平洋地域の戦争犠牲者に思いを馳せ、心に刻む会

Association for Thinking about the “Military Comfort Women” Issue

「従軍慰安婦」問題を考える会

Association for Thinking about the Issue of Japanese Military “Comfort Women,” Fukuyama (ATCWF)

日本軍「慰安婦」問題を考える会・福山

Association for Thinking about the Issue of Korean Comfort Women

朝鮮人従軍慰安婦問題を考える会

Association for Walking with Halmonies, Chogak-po (Chogak-po)

ハルモニと共に歩む会・チョガッポ

Center for Research and Documentation on Japan’s War Responsibility (JWRC)

日本の戦争責任資料センター

Democratic Women’s Association of Resident Korean Women (Women’s Association)

在日韓国民主女性会

- Group for Uncovering the Facts of Japanese Military's Sexual Violence in Shanxi (China) and Acting in Solidarity with the Grandmas (Shanxi Group for Uncovering the Facts, Shanxi Group)
山西省における日本軍性暴力の実態を明らかにし、大娘たちと共に歩む会
Chukouqi 『出口気』
- Hainan NET
中国海南島日本軍戦時性暴力被害者の声を伝えるネットワーク
- Hiroshima Network for the Resolution of the Issue of Japanese Military "Comfort Women" (Hiroshima Network)
日本軍「慰安婦」問題解決ひろしまネットワーク
Hiroshima Newsletter 『ニュースレター』
- Hokkaidō Association for the Resolution of the Issue of Japanese Military "Comfort Women"
日本軍「慰安婦」問題の解決をめざす北海道の会
- Kansai Network for the Issue of Japanese Military "Comfort Women" (Kansai Network)
日本軍「慰安婦」問題・関西ネットワーク
- Nationwide Action for the Resolution of the Issue of Japanese Military "Comfort Women" (Nationwide Action)
日本軍「慰安婦」問題解決全国行動
- Network against Wartime Sexual Violence (WSV Network)
戦時性暴力問題連絡協議会
- Network for Sustaining the Shimonoseki Judgment (NSSJ)
下関判決を生かす会
- Network of Legal Teams for a "Comfort Women" Resolution
元「慰安婦」の補償立法を求める弁護士協議会
- Osaka Kōbe Association for Walking with "Comfort Women" Survivors
日本軍「慰安婦」被害女性と共に歩む大阪・神戸・阪神連絡会
- Shimonoseki Group of Amnesty International Japan
アムネスティ日本 下関グループ
- Group for the Judgment at The Hague
ハーグの会
- Support Group for Taiwanese Survivors of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery (Taiwan Group)
台湾の元「慰安婦」裁判を支援する会
Fifty Years of Silence (Silence) 『50年間の沈黙』
- Support Group for the Comfort Women Lawsuit of the Resident Korean (Support Group)
在日の慰安婦裁判を支える会
With Song-san 『宋さんといっしょに』
- Uri Yeoseong Network (Yeoseong Net)
従軍慰安婦問題ウリヨソンネットワーク
- Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET Japan, VAWW)
「戦争と女性への暴力」日本ネットワーク
- Violence Against Women in War Research Action Center (VAWW RAC)
「戦争と女性への暴力」リサーチ・アクションセンター
VAWW RAC Newsletter 『バウラック通信』
- Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM)
アクティブ・ミュージアム 女たちの戦争と平和資料館
WAM-dayori 『WAM だより』
- Women's Democratic Club
婦人民主クラブ
- "Women's Human Rights" Committee (WHRCJ)
「女性の人権」委員会