

## **Analysis of the Book *Chinese Comfort Women***

Yoichi Shimada (Professor, Fukui Prefectural University)

The highlights of *Chinese Comfort Women* are listed below together with the author's comments.

### **Original title**

*Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford Oral History Series), Oxford University Press (June 2, 2014)

This publication takes the form of a volume in the Oxford Oral History Series, and it is based on numerous testimonies gathered from former comfort women.

The book took advantage of the prestige of the Oxford name to defend itself against criticism that it cannot be called research because of insufficient work to back up the testimonies and deficiencies in the evaluation of historical materials.

### **Authors**

**Peipei Qiu**, Professor of Chinese and Japanese and Director of the Asian Studies Program at Vassar College

**Su Zhiliang**, Professor of History and Director of the Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" at Shanghai Normal University

**Chen Lifei**, Professor of Journalism and Deputy Director of the Center for Women's Studies at Shanghai Normal University

Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, university professors from China, collected the testimonies and did the writing. Peipei Qiu, a professor at Vassar College in New York State, was in charge of the English translation and publicity work.

Peipei Qiu also participated multiple times as a panelist in the comfort women symposiums hosted by the U.S.-Korea Institute at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. (invitations to two of the symposiums are reprinted at the end of this chapter in the Reference section).

SAIS is a prestigious research center that is well known for, among other things, its 38 North Group program, which analyzes satellite images of North Korea.

Dennis Halpin, who is a visiting scholar for the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS and a former staff member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, is close to Mindy Kotler (an avid anti-Japanese activist on the comfort women issue and other issues).

Halpin, Kotler, and Peipei Qiu are likely to continue to play central roles in disseminating propaganda about "Chinese comfort women" in the U.S. capital.

Claims made in the book are as follows. (Page numbers in parentheses; **bold text** following an asterisk indicates comments made by the author)

- On May 6, 2012, four Japanese Diet members visited Palisades Park, New Jersey and asked the local administration to remove the comfort women monument. (p. xix)

- The question of whether the Japanese military took comfort women by force is an important issue.

The discovery made by Professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi in 1992 was a landmark moment. (p. 3)

Cf. Asahi's publication of misleading reports on the coercive recruitment of comfort women in January 1992. (p. 160) Testimony by Seiji Yoshida (p. 217).

- Sarah Soh made an important contribution to comfort women research, but her three-step theory is problematic. (p. 4, p. 9) Her theory recognizes the existence of:

(1) "Concessionary" comfort stations; (2) "paramilitary" comfort stations; and (3) "criminal" comfort stations (since the Pacific War)

Focusing on Korean and Japanese comfort women, Soh claims that referring to comfort stations as rape centers amounts to "partisan prejudice." However, she does not take into consideration the experiences of comfort women who were forcibly drafted from occupied countries, especially China. Recent research in China suggests that about half of the estimated total of 400,000 comfort women were Chinese. (p. 4)

- The majority of the Chinese comfort women were abducted and detained by Japanese troops. (p. 4)

Since they were enemy nationals, Chinese comfort women received worse treatment than comfort women from Japan's colonies did. After the war, for example, they were persecuted during the notorious "Cultural Revolution" as women who had collaborated with the enemy. (p. 5)

- Detailed quotes from the testimony given by Reverend John Magee, who interviewed a girl in Nanjing (whose family had been killed by the Japanese army and who had been repeatedly raped herself). (pp. 7-8)

- Quote from the recollections of Corporal Kenji Tomishima about a unit treating Chinese women as playthings. (p. 8)

- Japanese comfort stations were built in China from as early as 1932, and their number increased rapidly after the Nanjing Massacre. There were also many improvised comfort facilities at the unit level. Many women were also confined to their homes and forced to become comfort women. If they tried to escape, the women were tortured or beheaded together with their families. No compensation was paid; in fact, some had to pay ransom money to the Japanese army as a condition for their release. (pp. 10-11)

**\* The point that no monetary payments were made and that it was simply rape is repeatedly emphasized.**

- The way that enemy women were treated was clearly a war crime. (p. 12) There were mass abductions of women in the occupied areas. (p. 13)

**\* The differences with Korean and Japanese comfort women are emphasized by Su. Research into the conditions has revealed that Korean and Japanese comfort women were not systematically taken by force by the military.**

- Su Zhiliang's formula for calculating the number of comfort women:

The period covered was from 1937 to 1945. The total number of Japanese soldiers was 3 million. One comfort woman was assigned for every 29 soldiers and the replacement rate for comfort women was set at 3.5 to 4.0. (p. 38)

The number of comfort women according to Su Zhiliang was thus calculated as follows:  
 $3,000,000/29 \times 4 = 413,793$ .

The authors criticize the estimate produced by Ikuhiko Hata. Hata assumes that the replacement rate was 1.5. With regard to the attrition rate (death rate), it was "presumed that 90% or more of the comfort women returned home alive" in light of the 4.2% figure for the Japan Red Cross military nurses.

**\* As for why he set the replacement rate higher (approximately 2.5 times higher) than the rate set by Hata, Su Zhiliang points out that it was not because the women had the freedom to retire, but because the Japanese soldiers preferred virgins and new women and killed those who had become physically weak.**

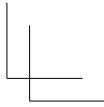
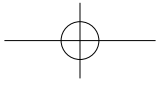
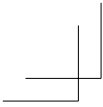
**As evidence, he lists many testimonies, such as one detailing the gang rape of two young girls aged 9 and 13 and their disposal as if they were mere consumables. There are numerous cases of brutal and cruel sex crimes.** (pp. 39–40 and pp. 67–68; the same applies to the testimonies of the 12 former Chinese comfort women [75–148] in Section 2)

**Sample description:** More than 200 Chinese women were abducted by the Japanese army in Yu County, Shanxi Province. This information was acquired from an interview conducted by the journalist Li Xiuping in the early 1990s. The source for this claim is a Chinese-language work by Li. (pp. 38–39)

The Japanese army abducted tens of thousands of women during the Nanjing Massacre. The source for this claim is a Chinese-language work by Su Zhiliang. (p. 39)

The youngest girl to be abducted was 9 years old. The source for this claim is a Chinese-language work by Wen Yan. (p. 39)

In October 1939, the Japanese 11th Army established military comfort stations in Yueyang County, Hunan Province, but even after that Japanese troops continued raping and assaulting local women. Cases involving the mass killing of women, gang rape, and forced sexual intercourse between Chinese parents and children as entertainment occurred between September and October 1941 in Xinxiang Township and in Jingzhou County. The sources for this claim are Chinese-language works by Tang Huayuan and Zhang Huaiqing. (pp. 67–68)



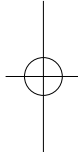
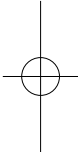
- Approximately 400,000 women were detained for a long period of time as sex slaves, and it is emphasized that the number of Chinese women who suffered sexual violence by the Japanese military far exceeded this. (p. 38)

**\* Vicious, long-term, organizational group rapes—rather than one-off rapes—are associated with the term comfort women by Su Zhiliang. In this book, the term comfort women is rarely used in its usual sense of women who provided sexual services in comfort stations.**

**Authenticity aside, a more appropriate title for this book may have been *A Collection of Testimonies on Sexual Violence by the Japanese Military in China*. However, such a title would not have been compatible with the comfort women "boom," nor would it have achieved the political objective of magnifying the comfort women issue. The title "Chinese Comfort Women" was no doubt chosen for these reasons.**

- Chinese collaborators were commonly used to round up women. (p. 42)

**\* This means that a vast number of Chinese took part in sex crimes and war crimes.**



- Parallel to the enslavement of local Chinese women, the Japanese military intensified the trafficking of Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese women to the Chinese mainland, starting in early 1938. Research suggests that Japan's increased mobilization of women in its colonies and homeland was partly due to security concerns: military leaders worried not only that the abduction of local women might spur more rebellions in the occupied regions but also that Chinese comfort women might pass military information to Chinese forces. (p. 31)

**\* If this were the case, the number of Chinese comfort women should have decreased after 1937, but this number is calculated based on the assumption that they continued to increase at the same rate as before. This is contradictory.**

- Why did the Chinese comfort women issue not surface until recently? In Chinese society, where a patriarchal ideology prevails, a woman's purity is valued more than her life. This patriarchal ideology and political bias combined to the point where surviving comfort women were seen as unpatriotic and immoral.

When women were revealed to have been comfort women, they were humiliated and persecuted. In some cases, they were sent north to engage in forced labor for the crime of "sleeping" with Japanese soldiers. They were also labeled as being "counterrevolutionary." Some committed suicide due to the post-war persecution that they suffered under Chinese Communist Party rule. This explains why the movement was slow to develop in China, the country that made the most sacrifices..

**\*Chinese society and the Chinese Communist Party should take the bulk of the responsibility for having unreasonably persecuted these unfortunate women. From the author's point of view, it is unacceptable that the Chinese Communist Party should disregard its own past and devote itself to criticizing Japan.**



References

(1) Invitation to the symposium "Unfinished Apologies: Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves in Wartime Asia," which was held on March 1, 2016 (hosted by the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS)

The U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS and Asia Policy Point invite you to

**Unfinished Apologies:**

**Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves of Wartime Asia**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2016**

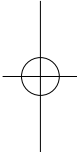
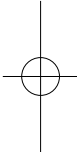
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

**Kenney Auditorium**

Johns Hopkins SAIS

1740 Massachusetts Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20036



The U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS and Asia Policy Point invite you to attend a discussion on the unexamined and unresolved history of Imperial Japan's system of sex slavery in wartime Asia. The panels will provide an overview of how the system came to be and how it was managed, discuss new research on the non-Korean Comfort Women, and bring the legacy of the Comfort Women system into contemporary understandings of conflict resolution and violence against women in warfare settings.

**Panel 1: Framing the Comfort Women History - Japanese Comfort Women and their Antecedents**

- **Carolina Norma**, Lecturer in the Master of Translating and Interpreting degree in RMIT's School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, Melbourne, Australia
- *Discussant*: **Katharine H.S. Moon**, SK-Korea Foundation Chair in Korea Studies and senior fellow at the Brookings Center for East Asia Policy Studies

**Panel 2: The Comfort Women of Japan's Occupied Asia**

- **Griselda Molemans**, Dutch researcher and investigative journalist, founder of the Task Force for Dutch Indies War Reparations (Dutch acronym: TFIR; Task Force Indisch Rechtsherstel)
- **Hilde Janssen**, Dutch Journalist and author of *Schaamte en Onschuld* [Shame and Innocent] and *Troostmeisjes/Comfort Women*
- **Peipei Qiu**, Professor of Chinese and Japanese on the Louise Boyd Dale and Alfred Lichtenstein Chair, Vassar College

- **Evelina Galang**, Professor of English, University of Miami
- **Caroline Norma**, RMIT, Melbourne, Australia
- *Moderator: Yukiko Hanawa*, Department of East Asian Studies, New York University

**Keynote: Women in warfare, how far have we come?**

- **Taina Bien-Aimé**, Executive Director, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

**Book signings with authors to follow:**

**Caroline Norma**, *The Japanese Comfort Women and Sexual Slavery during the China and Pacific Wars*

**Peipei Qiu**, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*

**M. Evelina Galang**, *Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery*

**Hilde Janssen**, *Troostmeisjes/Comfort Women*

**Margaret Stetz**, *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*

(2) Invitation to the symposium "The Untold Stories of Chinese Comfort Women," which was held on October 21, 2014 (hosted by the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS)

**The Untold Stories of Chinese Comfort Women**

October 21, 2014

12:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.

The US-Korea Institute at SAIS and Asia Policy Point present:

**THE UNTOLD STORIES OF CHINESE COMFORT WOMEN**

Featuring:

**Dr. Peipei Qiu**

Louise Boyd Dale and Alfred Lichtenstein Professor of Chinese and Japanese and Director, Asian Studies Program, Vassar College

With welcoming remarks by

**Dr. Jae H. Ku**

Director, US-Korea Institute at SAIS

And introduction by

## **Dennis Halpin**

Visiting Scholar, US-Korea Institute at SAIS and former House Foreign Affairs Committee staff

Dr. Peipei Qiu will discuss her new book, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford Oral History Series), followed by a panel discussion on the legacy of Comfort Women with **Dr. Peipei Qiu**, **Dennis Halpin**, and **Mindy Kotler**, Asia Policy Point, and moderated by **Jenny Town**, Assistant Director, US-Korea Institute at SAIS.

A light lunch will be provided. This event is open to the public and press. Lunch will start at 12:00 p.m.; program will start at 12:30 p.m. Please RSVP below.

**Dr. Peipei Qiu** is Louise Boyd Dale and Alfred Lichtenstein Professor of Chinese and Japanese and Director of Asian Studies Program at Vassar College. She has received degrees from Peking University (B.A. in Japanese and M.A. in Japanese Studies) and Columbia University (Ph.D. in Japanese Literature) and has focused her research on comparative studies of Japanese and Chinese literature, women in East Asian literature and societies, and Taoist influence in Japanese and Chinese literature and cultures. She is the recipient of a number of grants and awards, including the Japan Foundation Fellowship for Professional Researchers, Japan Foundation Dissertation Research Fellowship, Japan Society for the Promotion of Sciences Fellowship, and the National Endowment for Humanities Fellowship (US). Professor Qiu is the author of *Bashô and the Dao: The Zhuangzi and the Transformation of Haikai*, and *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. Her scholarly articles and translations have been published in English, Chinese, and Japanese.

## **Developments in the Joint Application for Inclusion in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register and Overview of China's Comfort Women Application Documents**

Shiro Takahashi (Professor, Meisei University)

### **1. Overview of the comfort women-related documents that China filed for registration as part of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register**

Led by private organizations and researchers, preparations to make a joint application for documents related to comfort women to be registered as part of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register are underway. On June 1, 2015, the South Korean newspaper Hankyoreh featured a report with the following headline: "Experts from North Korea, South Korea, and China Jointly Demand an Apology for the Japanese Military Comfort Women System—Critique of 'Sex Slaves' at the International Academic Meeting Held at Yanbian University in China, including Participants from North Korea." There were three participants from South Korea, three from North Korea, and five