What They Said and What We Remember: The Role of Personal Testimony in National Memory

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Introduction

The aunt asked me, “How was it there?” As I began to answer, she interrupted, telling me, “Do not exaggerate.” Since then I have never talked about it.¹
- Yehudit R, Holocaust survivor

I had only been back a short while when my aunt...visited and said they couldn’t allow someone like me to stay at home and disgrace the family. I was not treated like a human being by my relatives.²
- Mun Okchu, former comfort woman

In contemporary “era of the witness,” historians have valued individual testimonies for their ability to help people understand the “more extreme and unknown to humanity.”³ For example, the following descriptions of these atrocities does not fully convey the sense of great human tragedy: The Holocaust was the systematic state-sponsored extermination of the Jewish race from 1942-1945, which killed over six million Jews in Europe, and the comfort women system was the system of sexual slavery that subjected young women in their late teens and early twenties to rape and sexual torture by the Japanese soldiers from 1938-1945.

The addition of individual testimonies to history not only assists in establishing the historical record, but also generates empathy, which builds upon the idea that history is ultimately a “dialogue between the past and present.”⁴ However, in the immediate post-war years, the ideology of nation-building in Israel and Korea suppressed personal

testimonies of many Holocaust survivors and former comfort women. The quotes above by Yehudit and Okchu describe this “silencing” of the survivors as a national collective memory was prioritized their individual memories.

This thesis analyzes the influence of national narratives on traumatic events in the case of the two nations, Israel and Korea. In the case of Israel, this thesis connects the evolution of the Israeli national memory of the Holocaust with the reception of survivor testimonies. In the post-war years, the only type of acceptable survivor testimonies focused on theme of heroism and martyrdom. In time, the survivor testimonies expanded to include testimonies from all experiences of the Holocaust. In the case of Korea, this thesis examines the issue of the Korean comfort women and how the survivors came to speak after years of feeling shame. It argues that the majority of the survivor testimony continues to be framed within a Korean national narrative, as the Korean societal memory of Second World War is rooted in seeking reparations for Japanese colonization.

Chapter one describes the historical atrocities of the Holocaust and the comfort women system as a history. Chapter two presents the national narratives presented by Israel and Korea. Chapter three delves into the tensions and differences between collective memory, which was influenced by the national framework, and survivor memory. Chapter four describes how the two narratives of Korea and Israel diverged. The Israeli national narrative became internationalized, and survivors no longer were silenced for being “passive.” In Korea, the comfort women narrative became an issue of international women’s rights and became conflated with the issue of sexual slavery. Finally, chapter five discusses who should control history – society or the individual?
Through this analysis, this thesis looks at the gaps in historical understanding by these two nations. In Israel, national ideology restricted the understanding of the Holocaust survivors as only those who fought with strength and ignored the rest of the experiences. The state policies of remembrance that focused on the values of heroism and martyrdom reflected this limitation. Following the Eichmann Trial of 1961, in which a former S.S. officer was expedited and tried at Israel for his involvement in the Holocaust, the exponential research and interest in the Holocaust by international Jewry and others allowed for survivors of all experiences to testify and overcome this gap in historical understanding. In Korea, the collective memory of Japanese occupation prevented the comfort women from speaking on the involvement of Korean nationals in the crimes against the comfort women. This has led to the persistence of a clear gap in the historical understanding to this day.

This thesis attempts to integrate the survivor testimonies into the historical narrative by utilizing direct quotes from survivor narratives. A majority of quotes from comfort women come from a compilation by the Washington Coalition for Comfort women issues, who collected testimonies from fourteen interviews videotaped in Korea in fall of 1994, five interviews taped in North Korea in August 1992, one in New York City in 1994, and one in September 1996 during the international symposium at Georgetown University in Washington DC. This effort was funded from the Ewha High School Association in Washington DC, and was the effort of volunteers who translated and publish the testimonies.\textsuperscript{5} Quotes from the Israeli community draw upon Idit Gil’s work that looked at

\textsuperscript{5} Schellestede, ix.
testimonies of 73 survivors who arrived in Palestine and Israel between 1945 and 1955. Additionally, this thesis draws upon the framework of Sarah Soh who was the main source of comfort women research available in English. She is credited with the interpretation of comfort women history as being colored by multiple lenses of nationalism and feminism.

The selection of these two nations is not to compare the Holocaust with the circumstance of the Korean comfort women. Rather, this thesis selected Israel and Korea for their status as new nation-states in the post-WWII years. Both nations participated in the creation of new national values, and this process of nation-building included the shaping of memory of these traumatic events. While there is no doubt the Holocaust and the comfort women were distinct tragedies, there are similarities regarding the post-war treatment of the survivors of these atrocities, especially given how the nations of Israel and Korea claimed to represent the victimized groups. For Israel, all Jews were targeted and it was important to build up a national narrative of strength and unity, not weakness and death, hence the initial heroic narrative. In Korea, it was important to paint the Japanese as badly as possible, as the evil colonizers, and the comfort women was their emblem.

The evolution of the national narratives highlights the difference between these two survivor groups, especially given how these narratives diverged. Although Israel was the Jewish state, the Holocaust had been a persecution of European Jews. While many immigrated to Israel, others had gone to America and other countries. As such, the strength of an international Jewish community aided in breaking the national framework, and

6 Idit, 297.
encouraged understanding the Holocaust on a broader level. This eventually allowed Holocaust survivors in Israel to speak without the restraint of a national framework.

Additionally, in terms of perpetrator culture, Germany dealt with the history of Holocaust earlier than Japan, who initially denied the issue of the comfort women. This contributed to a sooner acceptance of the Holocaust in the global community, versus the issue of the comfort women, which remained a bilateral issue for longer before becoming internationalized in the 1980s. The difference in accepting historical responsibility was largely influenced by the difference in post-war treatment of Germany and Japan.⁷ Additionally, the differences in the success of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan at destroying evidence contributed to the difference in the timeline. For example, Nazi Germany had attempted to destroy evidence by burning documents and through Operation 1005, which forced Jews to reopen mass graves and burn the corpses and grind their bones; however, they were unable to destroy all evidence.⁸ Japan had greater success in destroying crucial documents regarding the comfort women system.

Finally, another key difference between these survivor experiences was the gendered nature of the crime. For the Korean comfort women, the nature of the crime was of sexual violence—which created an additional dimension in silencing the survivors. Speaking publically of sexual trauma is an obstacle on its own, and the limiting national narrative only compounded its silencing effect. Likewise, a deciding factor to speak for

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⁸ For a personal testimony of Operation 1005, see Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Janowska Road*. (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.)
many of these women was the acknowledgement of sexual violence as a war crime by the United Nations in the 2000s. While the gendered aspect of the crime certainly played a role in silencing these women, this thesis does not seek to compare the gender influence with the national narrative. Rather, this thesis acknowledges that both the gendered aspect and national narrative factored into the longer silence of Korean women. That is not to say sexual violence did not occur during the Holocaust. Jewish women were certainly sexually assaulted, raped, and tortured; however, rape occurred on an individual level, rather than on a systematic level. As such, this thesis compares the systematic extermination of the Jewish race with the systematic sexual violence against Korean women. Once again, the comparison is not the aspect of these war atrocities, but the postwar treatment of the survivors of these war atrocities.¹⁰

Society silenced both the Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Israel and former comfort women who returned to Korea in the immediate postwar years. In Israel, the Yishuv society, Jews who lived in Palestine during the war, was only receptive to the “heroes,” such as partisans and fighters. In Korea, most of the women returned quietly,

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⁹ For more on sexual violence during the Holocaust, see Sonja Maria Hedgepeth, and Rochelle G. Saidel. Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust. (UPNE, 2010).
¹⁰ That is not to say a comparison of the gendered nature of these crimes is not feasible. While this thesis looks at the survivors in Israel as a singular group, literature on female survivors in Israel exists, and indeed a comparison can be made regarding post-war life for female survivors. Many testimonies of Korean and Israeli women describe marriage as a significant aspect, and how marriage was “an ideal solution” or a coping mechanism. “I was looking for a father figure” is the typical testimony of many women survivors; said historian, Idit Gil regarding female survivors in Israel, and the testimonies collected by Howard also describe marriages as a means of economic and social survival; Gil, 507; Keith Howard, True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women: Testimonies. (London; New York: Cassell, 1995.)
with many choosing to rejoin any surviving family with little mention of their lives during wartime.

Historians have widely written about the “silence” of Holocaust survivors in Israel. Most scholars pointed to Zionist-controlled\(^{11}\) government's control over the construction of the Israeli national identity during 1945 to 1961 as being the main source.\(^{12}\) Under the Zionist government of Ben-Gurion, the majority of Israeli society marginalized most of the Holocaust survivors as they only promoted stories of heroism and rebellion against Nazi Germany, such as the stories of those that perished in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. Those who did not fight back were acting as “sheep to the slaughter,” and therefore should not be honored openly. Other historians even accuse the Israeli society at this time of not only silencing these survivors, but also ostracizing and isolating them.\(^{13}\)

At this time, survivors who chose to speak about their experiences did so within the survivor community, or through the Yitzor memoir books.\(^{14}\) Although some survivor gave testimonies in public settings, as early as 1942, under the mandate to collect survivor testimony by individuals such as Ben Katznelson and Yad Vashem radio broadcasts of 1947, these testimonies were solely from the fighters and partisans. Some historians have

\(^{11}\) In this thesis, Zionist will refer to the political Zionists in the early years of Israeli statehood. Because Zionists had the goal of establishing Israel as a state, once this goal was achieved, many Zionists like David Ben Gurion joined the first government of Israel.


utilized these testimonies to challenge the narrative that survivors were silenced. They argue that the silence was a myth, and survivors had chosen not to speak. However, the historian Idit effectively responds, “Silence is not a lack of data; rather, it is a matter of ignoring the obvious truth.” Like Idit, this thesis strictly defines silence not as the lack of commemoration or memorialization, but the lack of societal acceptance.

In South Korea, historians largely attributed the silence to Confucian values of chastity and purity. Both post-war Korean and Japanese society valued virgin girls. However, to limit the silence to this line of reasoning would be too reductionist. Other factors to be taken in consideration are the Korean patriarchal structure as well as class structure. Former comfort women often came from poor rural backgrounds; there was no platform for these women to speak out, until the feminist movement of the late twentieth century. Additionally, the Korean War in 1950-1953 pressured Korea to focus on economic and political stability before pursuing cultural development. The American military occupation of 1945-1948 and dictatorship of Park Chung-hee during 1961-1979 limited press freedom in Korea, which also contributed to the silence.

It would take fifty years before the first comfort woman gave public testimony about her experiences. In 1988, women’s organizations sent protest letters and held

15 Ofer, 24.
16 Gil, 509.
18 Soh, Chunghee Sarah; Yun Chai, Alice.
demonstrations when the Korean government decided to send an emissary to Emperor Hirohito’s funeral. They felt this dishonored the comfort women who had suffered under Hirohito’s rule, which only a few academics at this point. In the 1990s, the Japanese Diet denied the claims that the comfort women system was linked to the Japanese government or military. They stated it was under the sole control of private organizations. This denial sparked a national outrage and women’s organizations began spearheading a redress movement for comfort women. In 1991, Kim Hak-Sun became the first comfort women to speak in public.

Survivors in both Israel and Korea experienced pivotal moments in shifting from silence to speaking publically. Although the silences had different durations, both Korea and Israel initially lacked the proper framework by which to understand survivor narratives. The minimization of Holocaust survivors in Israel as fighters and partisans did not provide a comprehensive platform for all survivors to speak. Confucian values, the patriarchal system, and classism repressed the capacity for Korean women to share their experiences.

For survivors in Israel, the Eichmann Trial would mark the pivotal shift in societal perceptions of Holocaust survivors, according to many historians. Although some historians state that some survivors shared their testimonies even before the Eichmann Trial, they cannot deny the exponential growth of public testimony following the Trial.

21 Yun Chai, 78.
Importantly, the Eichmann Trial allowed survivors to speak before not only the Israeli society, but to an international audience about the horrors of the Holocaust. The impact of this trial, with numerous testimonies broadcast live all over the world, dramatically changed the landscape of Holocaust remembrance. Although official commemoration such as the establishment of Yad Vashem and Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day occurred prior to this, historians widely credit this trial with being the catalyst for Israel to begin successfully engaging with its traumatic past.

In Korea, the former comfort women had no equivalent singular pivotal moment when all society became receptive to listening to survivor testimonies. Instead, the women were swept up into the emerging national rhetoric that Japan needed to apologize overall for its war atrocities. Although three Korean women filed suit in 1991 in Tokyo District Court charging that they were forced into sexual servitude and demanding compensation, their case failed. Despite the failure of these initial trials in obtaining compensation or an apology from the Japanese government, comfort women would continue to speak up. In 2001, the Korean women finally spoke to an international audience in a mock tribunal. Although this international court ruled the women deserved reparations, the Japanese government did not honor it. On the issue of the comfort women, the testimonies would not be central; rather, the denial of the Japanese government dominated the narrative.

Though there was no singular event, like the Eichmann trial, historians of comfort women note the year 1992 when Japanese historian Yoshiaki discovered official Japanese government documents from 1938 that implicated the military in the running of the brothels. His discovery was the first evidence that sparked an official investigation by the
Japanese government from 1991 to 1993. This moment led to an international audience on the issue of the former Korean comfort women and increasing publicity.

The first articles on comfort women in English in appeared in 1993, followed by the autobiographies of two former comfort women in 1994 and 1996.\(^\text{24}\) (These were not Korean comfort women, however. Ruff-O’Herne was a Dutch-born Australian who had been a comfort woman in Indonesia and Henson was Filipina.) International organizations also began reporting on the topic, with the first report by the International Commission of Jurists in 1994. The United Nations published a report on “military sexual slavery” based on a fact-finding mission to North Korea, South Korea, and Japan in 1996.\(^\text{25}\) Another report by the U.N. in 1998 called the comfort women stations “rape camps” and “rape centers.”\(^\text{26}\) Finally, in 1995, Keith Howard published the first translated collection of testimony.\(^\text{27}\)

Both the Israeli and Korean survivors went from being silenced to speaking to the international community. The survivor testimony in Israel led to a greater international consciousness for all Holocaust survivors.\(^\text{28}\) Similarly, the testimony of the former Korean

\(^{24}\) Maria Rosa Henson, *Comfort Woman: Slave of Destiny*. (Pasig City, Metro Manila, Philippines: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1999); Jan Ruff-O’Herne, *50 Years of Silence*. (New York: Tom Thompson, 1994.)


\(^{27}\) Howard, *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women: Testimonies*.

comfort women led to major contributions in prosecution of sexual slavery internationally.²⁹

Extensive interest and study into these two issues have resulted in expansive studies on the survivor narrative in these two countries. By drawing comparisons between these two cases, this thesis demonstrates how national memory affected survivor testimonies. Historians have stated that after Zionists like Ben-Gurion no longer dominated the government, all survivors who wished to do so could speak openly about their experiences. However, because the memorial authority Yad Vashem remains state-supported, testimonies largely follow a specific framework.³⁰ In Korea, when former-comfort women began to speak of their experiences, their stories were swept up in the larger national agenda of extracting apologies and admissions from Japan. Because this issue has not been entirely resolved, their testimonies continue to be given in the framework of implicating Japanese culpability.

There are important differences between societal understandings of the survivor narratives. In Israel, the diminishing political power of the Zionist government resolved the tension between national memory and survivor narrative, along with the emergence of an international audience during the Eichmann trial. These two factors helped Israel transform their understanding of the Holocaust survivor. Following initial pivotal testimonies that broke the “silence” during the Eichmann trial, the international Jewish

²⁹ Soh, Chunghee Sarah; Yun Chai, Alice.
community became strongly committed to collecting testimonies, including American organizations such as the Shoah Foundation.

In contrast, Korea never resolved the tension between national myth and survivor narrative. When the first comfort woman Kim Hak Sun spoke, her testimony contributed to the national agenda of anti-Japanese sentiments. Testimonies then continued to be given in legal settings such as lawsuits against the Japanese governments, or a resolution by the American government. While this process ensured testimonies were being collected, the testimonies were not valued as experiences. These testimonies instead were understood mainly as evidence, in light of the destroyed or hidden evidence by the Japanese government.

Political motivations concerning this collected testimony led to accusations of illegitimacy. Anthropologist Soh stated that some women refused to testify further after an initial interview and that some modified their testimony for fear that their narrative did not fit the national narrative.31 In 2015, Historian Yu-ha Park denounced several testimonies as having been “shaped” by a nationalist-accusatory understanding of Japan as having kidnapped Korean “innocent women.”32 She was later convicted of “defaming” the survivors when Park claimed there was no evidence against the Japanese government, so Japan could not be held legally responsible for recruiting women from Korea.33

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31 Soh, 100-101.
The difference in survivor testimonies in Israel and Korea reveals the impact of national memory on survivor testimony and the need to collect testimonies outside a nationalist framework. Factors like an international audience certainly helped the Jewish survivors speak more openly. By understanding these two cases as survivor testimonies within the creation of a national memory, this thesis is a critical study of how victimization of the survivors continues through the suppression of personal testimonies by national narratives.
Chapter 1: The Survivors

Both the Holocaust and the Comfort Women System occurred during the Second World War (1939-1945). In Europe, Nazi Germany implemented the Final Solution with Operation Reinhard in October 1941, which looked to exterminate the Jewish People. In the Pacific Theater, Japan created a system of sexual gratification for the Imperial Army, which depended on the mass rape of women from their colonies. These atrocities will not be compared in their impact or the scale of tragedy; yet, both must be understood as state-led policies against a targeted group.

1.1 The Holocaust

The Holocaust has become integrated into the common global history, and this thesis focuses on the Holocaust as the Nazi Germany state program to exterminate the Jewish people. Although other groups were persecuted, such the disabled population, Communists, homosexuals, and the Roma, the Holocaust was the Final Solution for the extermination of the Jewish people. In Western Europe, Nazis and local militia rounded up Jews in every Nazi-occupied town, deporting them to labor camps and extermination sites. Auschwitz was the most infamous of these extermination camps, and over one million died there. Not all Jews were gassed; many also died from disease and starvation, along with arbitrary torture. On the Eastern Front, the Jewish people were less frequently deported, but rounded up and shot and buried in mass graves. Of the six million Jewish and other victims, there cannot be one understanding of the Holocaust experience. Rather, each
experience must be understood within the context of the relentless and senseless persecution of the European Jewish community.

Additionally, the Holocaust should be understood as a culmination of pre-war racial policies that were implemented in the authoritarian regime of Hitler. Beginning in the 1930s, the German Jews were targeted with the Nuremburg miscegenation laws. As Germany began expanding its territory, its racial laws also began applying to all Jews living in German-controlled areas. Eventually these laws led to the ghettoization, and the Final Solution, which became known as the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not limited to train transports and extermination camps like Auschwitz and Belzec. In Eastern Europe, as Germany expanded their area of conquest, Jews of each village were rounded up, lined up at trenches, and shot. Father Patrick Desbois’s organization Yahad in Unum has located these mass graves through first-person interviews with surviving witnesses.34

This brief explanation of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust does not encapsulate the full story of suffering, nor is it meant to. In the limits of an undergraduate thesis, this thesis assumes some general understanding of the Holocaust on the part of the reader, unlike the history of the comfort women, which is lesser known.35

1.2 The Comfort Women System

In the same way the Holocaust was the result of pre-war policies, the first comfort stations had their origins before WWII. According to Japanese historian Yoshiaki Yoshimi, who first discovered evidence regarding the Japanese government and military's role in the establishment of comfort women system, the Japanese navy created the first comfort stations before the war. The Consulate General of Shanghai first used the term “comfort women” in 1938 when referring to an established practice of prostitution. He wrote, “With the great increase in military personnel stationed in the area due to the sudden outbreak of the Shanghai Incident, the navy established naval comfort stations as a means to aid in supporting the comfort of those troops. [Emphasis added]” Although this document did not give an exact date as to the creation of the stations, another document from November 30, 1937 by the governor of Fukuoka Prefecture stated two Korean women received permits to become “serving women in a naval comfort station.” Combined, these documents were evidence that the naval comfort system began sometime during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, which began in 1932.

_Auschwitz: Silent Witness_, directed by Francisco Roel (1999; Los Angeles, CA: Proto Books, 1999), DVD. These works are not meant to be expansive and for even more works, see also the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s list of academic works at [https://www.ushmm.org/research/publications/academic-publications/full-list-of-academic-publications](https://www.ushmm.org/research/publications/academic-publications/full-list-of-academic-publications).

Most of the history of the Korean comfort women depended on the evidence discovered by historian Yoshimi. Due to the controversy of this history, this thesis has chosen to focus on these concrete documents of Yoshimi to recreate the history of the comfort system.


“In regards to the current state of regulations on private prostitution in the concession and the regulation of special prostitutes reserved for Japanese citizens in Shanghai during 1938,” Quoted in Yoshimi, 44.

Quoted in Yoshimi, 39.
A note by Okamura Yasuji, Vice Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, attested to the continued use of the comfort stations. He called upon the governor of the Nagasaki Prefecture to request a “military comfort women corps” based on the naval model.  

A diary entry by Okabe Naosaburo, Senior Staff Officer in the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, who worked with Okamura described the justification for this request:

Recently, soldiers have been prowling around everywhere looking for women, and I often heard obscene stories. As long as conditions are peaceful and the army is not engaged in fighting, these incidents are difficult to prevent. Rather we should recognize that we can actively provide facilities. I have considered many policy options for resolving the troops’ sexual problems and have set to work on realizing that goal. [Emphasis added]

The justification of comfort stations as a means to prevent rape underlines the perverted understanding of the women who worked at these stations. To be certain, these were not centers of prostitution, but places of mass rape and sexual torture. An account of Hwang Kumju published in 1995 described when she realized what being a comfort woman would be:

I was taken to an officer. He was sitting near his bed and asked me to come over. He tried to hug me. I resisted, saying I would do anything, cleaning, washing and so on. But he ignored me and tried to embrace me again. When I continued to resist he slapped me on the face. I begged him to leave me alone, but he told me to do as I was told, to which I replied I would rather die than oblige him. He grabbed my skirt and pulled it so hard that it was torn from the belt...Left in my underwear, I knelt before him and pleaded with him to spare me. He grabbed me by my hair, pulled me up and ripped my underwear off with a knife. I was so shocked I fainted. When I came round, sometime later, he was sitting a few paces away from me wiping his sweat from his

40 Quoted in Yoshimi, 45.
41 Quoted in Yoshimi, 45.
brow. A soldier came in and took me away. I had to grab my underwear around me and wrap myself in my torn skirt.42

At these centers, these girls served anywhere from six to twenty men a day, often contracting venereal diseases, since not all soldiers used condoms. The number of men they serviced depended on the number of troops and girls at the station. If the girls resisted, the soldiers beat them, like Hwan Kumji described. During medical checkups, the male doctors were often rough, and the treatments were only to limit the spread of sexual diseases, instead of ensuring the sexual health of the women. Additionally, many women described how doctors injected “No. 606” during these medical check-ups to induced miscarriages, and how this arsenic treatment permanently made them barren.43

Not all the Japanese military agreed with the establishment of these centers. First Lieutenant and psychiatrist Hayao Torao prepared a report on “Phenomena Particular to the Battlefield and Policies Toward Them” after he returned from Shanghai in 1939. In a section called “Sexual Desire and Rape,” he described the comfort station system:

The line of communication unit had the good sense to suppose that restraining the sexual desire of soldiers at the front for long periods of time would naturally lead to violence against Chinese women, and they quickly established comfort stations in central China. The essential purpose of these stations is to pacify the soldiers through satisfying their sexual desire and to prevent rapes that damage the honor of the Imperial Army.44

43 Schellstede, 74-75.
44 Quoted in Yoshimi, 67-68.
He testified to the popularity of the comfort stations among the military, and he expressed personal disapproval of it. He also alluded to other officers who did not use the comfort stations, to the ridicule of fellow officers:

The idea that soldiers are free to do things to enemy women that would never be permitted at home is extremely widely held...To go so far as to defile the bodies of the women and girls of enemy countries cannot be considered behavior appropriate to truly civilized people...The military leaders there, however, didn't think it strange at all. And I never once heard an admonition on this subject...But there are also some officers who insult soldiers who won't go to comfort stations, calling them crazy.45

Despite Torao’s dissenting opinion, the comfort stations continued to operate and expanded to outside China after the war broke out. According to official Japanese, American and Dutch documents collected by Yoshimi, by the end of the war military comfort stations existed in China, Hong Kong, French Indochina, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, British Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, Thailand, New Guinea, Okinawa, Bonin Islands, Hokkaido, Kurile Islands, and Sakhalin.46 According to memoirs of the veterans of the Japanese Army, comfort stations also existed in other locations.47

In addition to the military involvement, the Japanese government also participated as evidenced by a notice on March 4, 1938 entitled “Matters Concerning the Recruitment of Women to Work in a Military Comfort Stations” by an adjutant in the Ministry of War. The document warned against recruiting comfort women in a way that could be interpreted as kidnapping and urged armies to be more selective about rounding up women.48

45 Quoted in Yoshimi, 67-68.
46 Yoshimi, 91.
47 Yoshimi, 91.
48 Yoshimi, 59; Those in the Japanese government who deny that the women were forcibly recruited to become sex slaves for the Japanese Imperial Army have subsequently used this document.
The colonial relationship between Korea and Japan explained why the majority of women in the comfort station system were Korean.\textsuperscript{49} Imperial Japan annexed Korea in 1910, and part of the process included converting Korea into a loyal subject to the emperor. Economically, this ideology translated into Korea exporting more than ninety percent of Korea’s export went to Japan by the 1920s. \textsuperscript{50} Socially, Japan also set up primary education systems, but private Korean schools remained more popular.\textsuperscript{51} This rhetoric of being loyal to the emperor colored the issue of the comfort women; being a comfort woman that served the military was part of the duties of a loyal subject to the emperor.

Additionally, the colonization of Korea allowed Japan to circumvent laws regarding international slave trafficking. The Japanese government in 1925 had signed on to three international treaties that aimed to stem international slave trafficking, but these treaties did not address boundaries within colonial empires.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, migration between Imperial Japan and its colonies like Korea was not considered immigration or emigration and not subject to these treaties; thus, Japan easily transported Korean, and later others, women around their empire.

Due to the lack of economic opportunities for women in Korea, many unmarried women largely depended upon their fathers or husbands for a living. Single women mostly worked within the household before being married off. This dependency made unmarried women from lower-income classes particularly vulnerable to economic hardship, and

\textsuperscript{49} Although Japan did have other colonies at this time, Korea was its largest colony, followed by China, which is reflected in the proportion of comfort women.
\textsuperscript{51} Beasley, 149.
consequently, these women were more susceptible to the recruitment methods. Under the Japanese colonial rule, single-women had few opportunities to earn income, and living in poverty motivated these girls to find a means to support their families through these promised wages. The Confusion value of filial piety also motivated these search for economic opportunity to assist their families.

Kim Soon Dook: In those days there was a commonly used term in Japanese, “girl delivery,” just like the farmers’ mandatory delivery of harvested rice to the government. One day my mother told me to go to my sister’s house and hide there to avoid capture by the “girl delivery” collaborators. I did as she told me. But I had heard the rumor that if a girl was not delivered, her mother would have to go in her place. My mother was needed at home more than I was, so I decided to go.53

Pak Kyung-soon also stated, “Being the only offspring to look after my parents, I felt responsible for their well-being. So I decided to sacrifice myself for them and agree to go to Japan.”54 Indeed, the Japanese recruitment tactics initially targeted peasant families in poorer, rural Kyongsang and Cholla provinces where many single women lived in poverty.55

In addition, the Japanese military preferred virgins for their comfort stations. According to Korean traditions, chastity was “more valuable than life itself,” and a woman who lost her virginity was unmarriageable and socially ostracized.56 Due to the draft, Korean society also lacked single men during the wartime: “There was few Korean men to marry at that time, because they had all been drafted for labor or into the Japanese Army,” said Hwang Keum-ju.57 These factors contributed to the historians’ assumptions that most

53 Schellestede, 37.
54 Schellestede, 73.
55 Pyong Gap Min, “Korean ‘Comfort Women’: The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class.” Gender and Society 17, no. 6 (2003): 951; Chai, Alice Yun, 70.
56 Chai, 74.
57 Schellestede, 5-6.
girls were virgins when they were drafted. Many of the survivors indeed described losing their virginity with fear and violence, as they discovered they had been forced to become comfort women.\textsuperscript{58} Additionally, Pak Kyung-soon stated, “We knew that married women were less likely to be drafted for such services,” and described how a hasty marriage helped her avoid being forced to return after escaping from a comfort station.\textsuperscript{59}

Although women quickly lost their virginity once they were recruited, the demand for virgins continued to be high among the Japanese soldiers. For example, in Cholla, the Japanese police created the Virgin Girls Club that recruited elementary school girls in response to the Draft Order for Virgin Girls.\textsuperscript{60} Their virginity allowed officers to not use condoms, without fear of contacting a sexual disease.\textsuperscript{61} As a report for the International Commission of Jurist stated, “When they were brought to the comfort stations they were virgins, healthy in body and spirit. They left the comfort stations diseased in body and crippled in spirit.”\textsuperscript{62}

Finally, Japan also held a deep prejudice against Koreans, considering them an inferior race. The Japanese believed in their racial uniqueness, partly based on myth and

\textsuperscript{58} Under Japanese colonial rule, licensed prostitution was allowed beginning from 1910. There are reports that prostitutes worked as comfort women, and indeed, one line of denial has advocated this position; however, the majority of women did not know the conditions of the comfort station, as established by the reports by Dogopol and Paranjape’s report for the International Commission of Jurists and Coomaraswamy’s report for the United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights. For more on the problems of Japanese licensed prostitution, see Yoneda, Sayoko. “Sexual and Racial Discrimination: A Historical Inquiry into the Japanese Military’s "Comfort" Women System of Enforced Prostitution.” Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race. Ed. Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.

\textsuperscript{59} Schellestede, 78.

\textsuperscript{60} Shojo Kyoshutsu Reijō, “Ch‘onyō kongch’ul yongjang, Kugyosaeng ‘Chōngshindae’ Chingba” [Drafting of elementary school girls as Chōngshindae], Donga Ubo, 15 January 1992; Chai, 69.

\textsuperscript{61} Hwang Kumji described the preference of virgins to Japanese officers. Schellstede, 74; Thirty to forty percentage of Japanese soldier reported sexual diseases, Yoneda, 245.

partly on the isolated nature of the country, but as the Japanese empire went onto conquer their Asian neighbors, this racial ideology transformed into the Japanese sense of racial superiority. The ideas of Social Darwinism also reinforced the idea of a racial hierarchy, similar to how it supplemented Hitler and Nazi Germany’s racial ideology. This ideology and the colonization of the Korean peninsula contributed to a Japanese assimilation policy based on colonial racism called nissen dosoron, which stated, “Koreans shared a common origin with but were always subordinate to the Japanese. For the Japanese soldiers, raping Korean women became part of emphasizing the inferiority of the Korean race. Kim Yoon-shim said, “They told me “Chosun” (a traditional name for Korea) people are liars, distrustful, subhuman... No one cares; no one can trace if Chosen people are killed, the soldiers said.” In another incident, Kim Young-shil described how she was forced to watch a beheading of a girl who had been caught speaking Korean. She said, “Horrified, I closed my eyes and turned my face away. When I opened my eyes, I saw her severed head on the ground.”

According to Japanese sexual culture, which utilized a common metaphor of calling a brothel a toilet, all men had the right to public sex. Therefore, sexual contact with the Korean women was not a moment of intimacy, but an assertion of male superiority and entitlement to the female body. Indeed, the Japanese Medical officer Aso described the

64 Myers, 13.
66 Schellestedede, 45.
67 Schellestedede, 50.
68 Soh, 40.
comfort stations as “hygienic public toilets” connecting the idea that these women were to be “receptacles for male sexual energy.”

Although the documents discovered by Yoshimi were substantial in establishing the link of the comfort station system with the Japanese government and military, they lacked official Japanese information regarding the total number of women and the recruitment methods. Many Japanese army documents were incinerated before the Allied occupation, so one cannot provide an accurate number. The only surviving documents of such type referred specifically to Dutch comfort women from the East Indies, who had been living at the Dutch colony before the Japanese military occupation in 1942. Therefore, the number of women that worked at the comfort stations is still highly debated today, with estimates ranging from 50,000 to more than 200,000 women. In addition, in the paperwork regarding military transportation, the women were listed as military material. Unlike soldiers and animals, like horses, which were recorded in compliance with military transport regulations, the personal identities of the women were not documented.

Despite this lack of documentation, historians have utilized various methods to estimate the number of women based on various assumptions and extrapolations. However, these calculations largely relied on unstable variables such as the rate at which

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69 Soh, 41.
70 There is no clear evidence on who burned the army documents; however when the Allies took over Japan, they found burnt documents.
71 Soh, 20.
72 This particular range comes from Tongbuga Yōkka Chaedan (Korea), ed. The Truth of the Japanese Military “comfort Women.” (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2014), 11.
73 Soh, 39.
74 For Yoshimi’s methodology, see 92-93.
comfort women were replaced. Although testimonies from surviving former comfort women provided helpful information such as the high rate of sexual disease and suicide that attested to high turnover rates, exact numbers still remain elusive.

Similarly, the lack of documentation was an obstacle in describing the ethnic background of the comfort women. Official documents stated that women were from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Burma and the Netherlands; however, these documents did not speak to the exact proportion. Yet, according to the Research Team of the Army Department of the Imperial Headquarters, “the activity of the Korean women surpasses the others,” and asserted the largest proportion of women came from Korea, then China, due to medical records. The diary of Dr. Aso Tetsuo who was an Imperial Japanese Medical officer who performed gynecological exams on the women at the Shanghai military comfort station provided such evidence for a Korean majority.

The persecution of European Jews and Korean women were similar in ideologies, despite the differences in execution. First, both the Jewish and Korean populations were

\[\text{\footnotesize\begin{align*}
75 \text{ Yoshimi, 94.} \\
76 \text{ Yoshimi, 95.} \\
77 \text{ Dr. Asō was one of the first doctors who performed medical examinations of the comfort women. His father was a gynecologists to prostitutes in the red light district of Fukuoka, and his upbringing influenced his own career as a Medical Officer. Dr. Aso's testimony has been accused of transforming Japanese recruitment into targeting Korean women in particular; however, in the epilogue written by his daughter in Shanghai to Shanghai, she states this was a misattribution of causality by historian Senda Kakko in 1973. Two of my sources, Sarah Soh's The Comfort Women and David Schmidt's Ianfu-The Comfort Women of the Japanese Imperial Army of the Pacific War did mention Aso, but not as the primary reason for the Korean majority. In the same way, this thesis has deliberately refrained from commenting, as there is insufficient evidence to link Aso's recommendation that Korean women were an appropriate gift to the Emperor and a change in Japanese policies. Additionally, this thesis is based on the fact Korean women constituted the largest percentage of comfort women, and as such, does not rely upon Aso as the primary motivation for targeting Korean women.} \]
78 \text{Tetsuo Asō, From Shanghai to Shanghai: The War Diary of an Imperial Japanese Medical Officer, 1937-1941. Signature Books. (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2004), 6.}
not exclusive targets of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Nazi Germany targeted other minority populations that did not qualify under their “Aryan definition” and Imperial Japan also recruited women from other colonies of China and various countries of South Asia as they continued to expand the Japanese Empire. However, both the Jewish community and the Korean women were the primary targets, as evidenced by the proportion of victims. Although the survivors of these mass atrocities had vastly different experiences, these similarities form the basis of comparison of post-war historical treatment. The next chapter explores how the Korea and Israel absorbed the Jewish identity and the Korean women identity to construct a national narrative.
Chapter 2: Nation Building

Both Israel and Korea emerged from the Second World War as new nation-states. The State of Israel was created first in May 1948, and Korea established an independent government in August 1948.\textsuperscript{79} As new nation-states and self-proclaimed ethnic homelands, Israel and Korea underwent processes of constructing national identities while accepting waves of Holocaust survivors from Europe and former comfort women from Imperial Japan’s conquered territories. Part of constructing a new nation involved creating a historical narrative to respond to the extreme persecution of their citizens. The Holocaust had been an attempt to eradicate the Jewish people, and the comfort women system had been part of an attempt to persecute Koreans, by dehumanizing Korean women into receptacles of sexual abuse. Other persecution included forced labor into Japanese companies, who often beat the workers and did not pay them.\textsuperscript{80} Both Israel and Korea had to respond, lest the Holocaust and the comfort women system colored their national identities as historically weak and susceptible to foreign oppression.

During these postwar years of the 1940s and 1950s, the silence of the survivors was not absolute. Some survivors were able to speak about their experiences if their testimonies corroborated the emerging national narrative of these events. However, the vast majority of Holocaust and comfort women survivors were not able to speak freely. The ’40s and ’50s marked a period of nation building for Israel and Korea, and a national

\textsuperscript{79} American troops liberated the Korean peninsula from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, but the Korean government was not established until 1948.
\textsuperscript{80} The Supreme Court of Korea recently ruled on the issue of forced labor in 2012. For more on this case, see Seokwoo Lee and Youngkwan Cho, "Historical Issues between Korea and Japan and Judicial Activism: Focus on the Recent Supreme Court Decision on Japanese Forced Labor." 2.1 Korean J. Int’l & Comp. L. 5, 26 (2014).
framework constrained the initial historical narratives of the Holocaust and the comfort women.\textsuperscript{81}

These initial attempts at constructing a historical narrative during the period of silence of the 1940 and 1950s occurred on the national level. In Israel, the Zionist government utilized the Holocaust narrative to focus on Jewish heroism and martyrdom in keeping with their agenda to present Israel as a strong nation. In Korea, the historical narrative focused on the injustice of Japanese colonial rule, and the comfort women were included in the narrative as a symbol of Korean victimhood.

2.1 Israeli National Narrative

On May 14, 1948, the Jewish People’s Council declared the formal establishment of the state of Israel.\textsuperscript{82} This declaration included not only the historical claim to the land as the “birthplace of the Jewish people” but also the history of Zionism, from Theodore Herzl to the Balfour Declaration, and the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{83} In addition, the new state of Israel described the Holocaust as a “clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of [Jewish] homelessness,” and Israel would be the solution. Furthermore, the survivors of the Holocaust had migrated to the land of Israel and “never ceased to assert their right to a life

\textsuperscript{81} Steven Mock also explored this intersection of historical trauma and nationalism in his work, and while Israel is an example for Mock, he focused on the Masada myth rather than the Holocaust. His analytical method contributed to the analysis in this chapter. Steven Mock, Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.)


\textsuperscript{83} Zionism in this context referred to the movement for the Jewish nation to have their own territory. Herzl first expressed this sentiment for a Jewish state, and the Balfour Declaration was an important document by United Kingdom’s foreign secretary that declared support for a Jewish state in Palestine in 1917.
of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland” and as such, the Jewish community had, “by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort,” gained the right to statehood.

Such language, in the very document founding the state of Israel, represented the “nationalization of the Holocaust” in Israel and how Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion attempted to create a nation out of what he called avak haadam—the human debris of the survivor immigrants.\textsuperscript{84} Distinct from the individual experiences of the survivors, Israel constructed a national Holocaust narrative in which the Holocaust became another example of Jewish “dignity, freedom and honest toil.”\textsuperscript{85} The creation of this narrative was partly deliberate: for example, in the state efforts to memorialize the Holocaust. At the time, the Israeli society was generally unreceptive to the Holocaust survivors. Although the state had physically accepted the European refugees into the land, Israeli society mentally maintained a clear distinction between a Diaspora Jew and an Israeli Jew during the initial years of the state. By 1951, immigration had doubled the population from what it was in 1948.\textsuperscript{86}

Largely due to the myth of Diaspora negation perpetuated by the Zionists,\textsuperscript{87} the Israeli Jews believed the Diaspora Jews to be inferior to them. The myth stated that living

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\textsuperscript{84} Efraim Sicher, “In the Shadows of History: Second Generation Writers and Artists and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in Israel and America.” Judaism 47, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 171.
\textsuperscript{85} Jewish Council. “Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel.”
\textsuperscript{86} Jewish Virtual Library, “Immigration to Israel: Introduction and Overview,” American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.
\textsuperscript{87} Diaspora negation existed before World War II; it was first a reaction to the effects of the Enlightenment on the Jews in Europe. In the late nineteenth century, scholar Yosef Haim Brenner understood the Enlightenment as having changed very little; despite the rights of citizenship, the European society still largely despised and rejected the Jews. Such negative personal life experiences caused Brenner to become one of the earliest proponents of Diaspora negation, stating that not only were Jews in Diaspora unable to live a full life but also
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outside the land of Israel had eroded the moral characters of the Jews who lived away from
the homeland. By attempting to assimilate into other cultures, these European Jews had
lost their original Jewish characteristics. For example, in the Jewish ghettos, the natural
courage of the Jews evolved into “submissiveness towards others” and “cowardice and
timidity in their relation with neighbors and rulers.” Indeed, the myth of Diaspora
negation was so powerful that this rhetoric was present during deliberations of rescuing
European Jews during the war.

After the war, even as the State of Israel accepted the wave of immigration of
European Jewish refugees, the characterization of Diaspora Jews as undesirable fellow
citizens continued. In a government meeting in 1949, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion
stated, “the survivors...would not have been alive were they not what they were—hard,
mean, and selfish—and what they have been through erased every remaining good quality
from them.” Although his characterization of the European refugees as “hard, mean and
selfish” contradicted the image of the weak Diaspora Jew, his rhetoric perpetuated the
same line of distinction between an Israeli Jew and a European Jew. Regardless whether
they were weak or passive, or mean and hard, they were different from an Israeli Jew.

Others contributed to the social separation of the European Jews; they accused European

the Diaspora Jewry were doomed to destruction, unable to assimilate and unable to maintain true Jewish
culture in face of persecution. Early Zionists like Theodore Herzl utilized Diaspora negation to promote the
idea of a Jewish homeland, stating that living in Europe had forced Jews dually to assimilate and to be
rejected, trapping them in an anti-Semitic atmosphere, which corroded their Jewish character. As such, that
Jews must leave Europe to experience true freedom and safety. Anita Shapira, Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life.
(Stanford University Press, 2014) 24–25. Theodor Herzl, Sylvie d’Avigdor, and Jacob De Haas. A Jewish State:
An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question. Federation of American Zionists, 1917.

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the socialist Zionist leader who later became Israel’s second President. Cited in Kenan, 1.

Present, but not practically applied. Diaspora negation did not change the Yishuv's commitment to rescuing
European Jews during the War. See Chapter 14: Diaspora Negation and Rescue during the Holocaust in Porat.

Mapai Central Meeting of 1949, quoted in Porat, 341.
Jews of a “great sin”: being complicit in the Holocaust through their passive attitude towards the process of annihilation. 91 Rivka P. remembered,

I was embarrassed by the question: how did I survive? What it really meant, what did I do in order to survive? It was intimidating. I was blamed as if I went like sheep to the slaughter. I felt horrible. At some point I said I had not been there. 92

Nina M. added, “Even though questions such as: ‘how did you survive, what did you do, were you a whore, a Kapo?’ were not directly asked, I felt they were always there under the surface.” 93 These societal conceptions of an Israeli Jew as vastly different from a weak or mean Holocaust survivor ultimately contributed to the Holocaust narrative in the 1950s. This narrative focused on honoring the partisans and ghetto fighters who actively resisted the annihilation of the Jews and largely ignored 94 the experiences of the rest of the European Jews who had gone to their deaths like “sheep to the slaughter.”

In addition to accepting the huge waves of immigration, the young state of Israel had to defend its very existence. A Jewish state surrounded by Arab ones, the continuation of its presence had yet to be guaranteed, and the Zionist government needed a means of demonstrating Jewish strength. One way was to create a history of the Holocaust that illustrated the Jews as a strong people. By focusing on stories of open rebellion like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Zionist government hoped to use this history of the Holocaust to symbolize Jewish power. This agenda ultimately shaped Israel’s first attempt on remembering the Holocaust, as an example of Jewish struggle in face of great adversity.

91 Moshe Carmel called it a “great sin” in a speech entitled “From the Uprising—We are strengthened” on the Holocaust Remembrance Day in 1956. Cited in Ofer, 42.
92 Gil, 503.
93 Gil, 503.
94 To clarify, this “ignorance” is strictly in the sense of the Holocaust narrative. The State of Israel faithfully accepted each new immigrant and provided food, clothing, and land. See Porat, 341.
For Israel, the Jewish nation had existed before the state of Israel, and the Holocaust helped justify the establishment of a Jewish state. Yet, the Holocaust *narrative* in Israel needed to combat the perception of the survivors as passive Jews, which was based on the myth of the Diaspora Jews. In order to fight the image that Jews had been led like sheep to the slaughter, the Zionist government chose to highlight moments of heroism in the first Holocaust narratives, such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, to create a model for the “new Jew.” For example, in the 1956 Holocaust Remembrance Day, Moshe Carmel, one of the leaders of the Zionist left, stated:

> Armed resistance was the only source of comfort in the history of the Holocaust, and that one should be cautious in pitying and understanding the will of individuals and leaders to live during the period of the Holocaust. If survival itself was turned into a supreme value, then it would cause an inability to fight for the preservation of the human spirit. The next step would be the disappearance of the Jewish people and eternal shame.\(^95\)

Viewing themselves as “the keeper of the memory and history of the ghetto rebels,” the Zionist left utilized their partisan press to emphasize the similarities between those who actively resisted during the Holocaust and those who lived in Israel.\(^96\) They stated that “the same spirit was behind the founding of Israel and the idea of armed resistance in the ghettos,” and the stories of resistance in the Holocaust were promoted as representative of Zionist values of strength and resiliency.\(^97\) Through this narrative, the Zionist left hoped to create an appealing paradigm that compared the rebels during the Holocaust to Israeli Jews.

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\(^95\) This summary of Carmel’s speech is provided by Ofer, 42, as a translated version of the original speech could not be obtained.


\(^97\) Stauber, 79.
in order to form a new national identity. This “new Jew” was to be filled with strength and resiliency and would be defined as the “very opposite of the rejected exilic Jew.”

In response, many Holocaust survivors, whose experiences did not fit this paradigm, remained silent about what they had witnessed during the Holocaust. Only survivors with tales of heroism spoke up, while the majority of Holocaust survivors faced societal pressure to deny their own experiences during the Holocaust. Those who did share their experiences did so solely within the survivor community through the Yizkor memorial books. These survivor communities existed independently of Yad Vashem, the official memorial authority, because these survivors could not participate in the early official Holocaust remembrance, which utilized the rhetoric of heroism and martyrdom.

However, this exclusion did leave a path for survivors to become integrated into Israeli society. If survivors chose to stay silent about what they had been through and if they worked hard in the community to demonstrate strength and resiliency, they were able to embrace the Zionist conception of an Israeli Jew. For example, Nina M. said, “While I was in the kibbutz, I worked very hard in order not to be insulted. I consumed myself in work.” Ultimately, the Zionist narrative asked the survivors to prioritize an Israeli identity over their Holocaust survivor experiences, unless they could be considered a hero. Indeed, these feelings of inferiority associated with being a Holocaust survivor even

98 Kenan, 64.
99 For more on the reception of Holocaust survivors in the early years of Israel, see Gil.
100 Porat, 341-345; Gil, 503.
101 Gil, 503.
102 For a fuller discussion of societal discrimination faced by Holocaust survivors in Israel, see Gil, “Between Reception and Self-Perception.”
led Rivka P. to deny being a survivor: “I was blamed as if I went like sheep to the slaughter. I felt horrible. At some point I said I had not been there.”

2.2 Korean National Narrative

In Korea, a similar national narrative impeded the surviving former comfort women from speaking freely about their experiences. The first mention of the comfort women in a Korean publication was on February 14, 1964 in the national daily newspaper Han’guk Ilbo, equating comfort women with “members of the Patriotic Chonsindae.” It was an obituary of the former comfort woman Kim Chun Hwi, but it provided no details about her experience during the war. Although the newspaper used the term “wianbu” to describe Chun Hwi as “patriotic,” the term “wianbu” referred to the Japanese term for comfort women, “ianfu.” By utilizing the Japanese term for the women, it was perceived as an acceptance of the Japanese definition of these women as voluntary prostitutes.

The next mention of comfort women in a Korean publication was in August 1970, in a newspaper series that commemorated the anniversary of Korea’s liberation. This was the first publication that attempted to describe the comfort women. The article in the Seoul Sinmun described the former comfort women as 50,000 to 70,000 “mobilized” Korean women between 1943 and 1945. It did not go into details about what were the comfort women, but rather discussed a former soldier’s memory of running into former comfort

\[\text{\textsuperscript{103}}\text{Gil, 503.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{104}}\text{Notably, Korea did not engage with the comfort women on the same timeline as Israel created their Holocaust narrative. Mainly, this can be attributed to the breakout of the Korean War in 1950-1953, as the war effort took precedence over other matters.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\text{Cited in Soh, 160; Chonsindae translates as Women Volunteer Corps.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{106}}\text{Also cited in Soh, 160.}\]
women in Singapore who were waiting to return to Korea. Importantly, this article reaffirmed that the comfort women were part of the Women's Volunteer Corps and did not explore what they experienced during the war. These early reports had little impact, which demonstrated how the comfort women were not a public issue.\textsuperscript{107}

The national narrative of the comfort women began with the publication of journalist Kim Tae-sang’s 1975 book of Korean’s forced mobilization during the war that included a short chapter called “Women’s Volunteer Labor Corps.”\textsuperscript{108} In this chapter, Kim noted that while Korean forced labor and Korean atomic victims had been topics of public debate, society had largely ignored the “sacrifice of the chongsindae”—such as in the 1964 article in Seoul Sinmun.\textsuperscript{109} Kim’s chapter was the first to suggest that the Korean comfort women should be perceived as part of Korean suffering under Japanese colonial rule. By doing so, Kim cast a national framework for understanding the experiences of these women; they had not suffered as individual women, but as female members of the Korean nation.

The framework of anti-Japanese sentiment proved powerful in capturing the national sentiment. During the war, Japanese colonial administration had attempted to completely eradicate the Korean identity; schools could not teach Korean history, culture, or languages, and Koreans were forced to adopt Japanese names.\textsuperscript{110} Then, when Korea achieved independence, nationalism surged as a response to these years of brutal

\textsuperscript{107} Privately, some parts of society might have suspected the truth behind these women’s lives as the Japanese had already begun publishing stories of sex slaves.
\textsuperscript{109} As described by Soh. ( Might change footnote depending on ability to get Tae-sang’s book)
\textsuperscript{110} Hundt and Bleiker, 65.
repression. A central element of the new Korean nationalism was the “exclusion of ‘Japaneseness’ from Korean public discourse. Similar to postwar Israel, post-liberation Korea pursued an ideology of strength based on the ideas of self-reliance (cha-ju) and independence (tongnip). Kim’s rhetoric of Korean comfort women fit perfectly into this narrative of national victimhood.

At this time, Korean authors began publishing fictional accounts about experiences of comfort women; however, these accounts were not based on a survivor’s experiences but on Japanese literature, which had begun discussing sexual slavery during the Second World War. The only published account by a real comfort woman was by No Su-bok, who had moved to Thailand. In her story that she reported to Korean and Japanese newspapers in 1984, she agreed with the national narrative and described how she was “forcibly recruited by Japanese policemen in 1942,” echoing the idea of victimhood. Yet her story had little impact, and although the framework of injustices under Japanese colonial rule mentioned the comfort women issue, the public largely ignored the issue outside of the framework of suffering under Japanese colonialism. In addition, many of these women faced a societal stigma of shame, which was attributed to being a “spoiled” woman, much like the Israeli society had accused the Holocaust survivors of being passive.

Some women chose not to speak about it when they returned to their families, because the internalization of Confucian values had instilled a deep sense of shame. Their

111 Hundt, 65.
112 Park, 72.
114 Japan had their own history of the comfort women issue, and they did not have a period of silence like in Korea. For more on this, see Soh, 161-165.
115 For full testimony, see Soh, 167.
testimonies reflect this internalization of shame, as these women did not directly blame others for their shame. Park Ok-nyon said, “I evaded my parents questions about my life by telling them I worked as a hospital nurse in Japan all that time. It was impossible for me to tell the truth.”\textsuperscript{116} Yi Young-sook said, “I am reluctant to talk about it because it is my shameful, terrible past,”\textsuperscript{117} Another halmunee identified as Ms. K said in an anonymous interview, “I was glad to have survived, but very ashamed and angry about my past life. I decided not to go to my home because of the shame and potential harm to my family.”\textsuperscript{118} In all three of these statements, the women utilized “I” alluding to a personal decision; however, other testimonies and experience of comfort women allude to external source of feelings of shame. For example, Kim Hak Sun, the first halmunee to speak, said, “I had to suffer the hurt and indignity of being debased by my own husband who, when drunk, would abuse me in front of our son by calling me a ‘dirty bitch’ who prostituted herself for soldiers.”\textsuperscript{119}

In addition, being from mostly poor, rural backgrounds, many former comfort women needed to prioritize finding a means of living. Unlike the survivors who received aid from Israeli government in terms of food, clothing, and housing, the women received no initial government aid. Some women looked to marry; however, finding a husband was difficult, as the years of rape and sexual abuse had made them barren, which was undesirable in a wife. Some, like Kim Bun-sun, became concubines or became prostitutes to support themselves.

\textsuperscript{116} Schellestede, 85.  
\textsuperscript{117} Schellestede, 101.  
\textsuperscript{118} Schellestede, 104.  
\textsuperscript{119} Quote from Soh, 177.
Kim Bun-Sun: [My mother] asked me about those four years I was away. I vaguely told her that the Japanese authorities sent me to Japan where I worked for four years. I could not tell her the truth and details…There I made a living by peddling almost everything I could lay my hands on…Then I met a man and moved into his house as his concubine.\textsuperscript{120}

After the war, both survivor groups lacked a public audience to recount their experiences, and there was little public discussion of the Holocaust or the comfort women outside of the national framework. In Israel, society only discussed the Holocaust when discussing examples of Jewish heroism like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In Korea, the limited knowledge of the Korean comfort women was swept up into one issue of Korean suffering under Imperial Japan. Both nations ultimately focused on prioritizing the issue of nation building, which shaped the historical narratives. Israel prioritized the creation of an image of strength according to the Zionist agenda. Korea focused on the development of a Korean nation and the narrative of victimhood that worked to suppress the comfort women issue. The next chapter describes the differences in the collective national memory and the individual survivor memories.

Chapter 3: Collective vs. Survivor Memory

Once these national agendas were set, various organizations emerged to manage the emerging collective memory. In Israel, the memory of the Holocaust was assigned as the responsibility of Yad Vashem, a state-run organization. In Korea, the Korean Women's Council eventually was formed to advocate for the comfort women issue. Both organizations adapted their models as more survivors began to speak up. There was an important distinction, however, in the remembrance strategies of the Holocaust survivors versus the Korean women. Survivors in Israel began setting up survivor organizations to organize a space to speak about their experiences to fellow survivors; Korean women did not organize in the same manner. This can be attributed in part to the feelings of shame that silenced the women as well as the gendered aspect. Similarly, Israeli women’s testimonies in the Holocaust did not receive attention until the feminist criticisms of the 1980s, and indeed male narratives dominated the Holocaust narrative.121 In the same way that Holocaust survivors found comfort in hearing a fellow survivor share their experience, when the first comfort women speak publically in 1991, the former comfort women begun organizing survivor communities as well.

3.1 Collective Memory

In 1953, the Martyrs’ and Heroes Remembrance Law established Yad Vashem as the official “Memorial Authority.”122 The name Yad Vashem came from Isaiah 56:5, “And to them

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121 Loew, 4-5.
will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (a "yad vashem")... that shall not be cut off.”

It was tasked with gathering all the material regarding the Holocaust in order to preserve the Jewish memory that was destroyed. Among its function and power, Yad Vashem was given the task “to collect, examine and publish testimony of the disaster and the heroism it called forth, and to bring home its lesson to the people.”

Heroism, in this case, consisted of nine types, specifically outlined in the bill. The “Memorial Authority Yad Vashem” explicitly listed the types of “martyrs and heroes” to be remembered. First and foremost were the six million who gave their lives in a “martyr’s death.” The next two were the families, communities, synagogues, movements and organization that were destroyed in “a heinous attempt to erase the name and culture of Israel.” Five and six were the underground and ghetto fighters. Number seven commemorated the “sublime, persistent struggle of the masses of the House of Israel, on the threshold of destruction, for their human dignity and Jewish culture.” Eight, was the “unceasing effort of besieged to reach Eretz Israel,” and the heroism of those who went to liberate and rescue the survivors. Finally, number nine honored the Gentiles who risked their lives for the Jews.

The language echoed the state rhetoric that honored the active heroism during the Holocaust. The specific language and lines devoted to the underground fighters, the ghetto fighters, and the Zionist government illustrated the state’s continual commitment to these “active” heroes during the Holocaust. Furthermore the use of the word Israel to substitute

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123 Translation from Yad Vashem website. Accessed December 18, 2016. The name was originally proposed in September 1942, along with the idea to create an institution to commemorate the events of the Holocaust and the Jewish fighters when the first reports of Jewish destruction arrived in Israel. See Kenan, 43
Jew ("attempt to erase the name and culture of Israel" and "the masses of the House of Israel") clearly demonstrated the reach of this "Memorial Authority." The Holocaust was no longer left in the memories of the individual survivors, but a part of the national narrative, an Israeli narrative. At the same time, the inclusion of six million in this document also reflected the inclusion of survivors, and perhaps their ability to contribute to the narrative as well.

For example, one of the earliest tasks of Yad Vashem was collecting, examining, and publishing the testimonies of the disaster. Unlike the Yizkor books, which were written by the survivor communities for humble reasons— for the survivors to remember their communities, or pass down the stories of their communities to future generation—Yad Vashem began collecting testimonies to commemorate the nine types of martyrs’ and heroes, which referred to all that had died during the Holocaust.

Initially, its task of collecting testimonies was in a literal sense. Even before the formal establishment of Yad Vashem, Jewish refugees had started documenting their testimonies, and these were preserved in the underground archives of Warsaw and Bialystok. In addition, collection of Holocaust documents had begun in Israel as early as 1946 as part of Mordechai Shenhavi’s Commemorative Project for the Jews of Europe, and these were named the Yad Vashem archives. After the passing of the Yad Vashem Law in 1953, historian Shaul Esh, tasked with formulating a publishing program for the institution, stated that first, they would publish diaries, memoirs, documents from the archive, and

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124 Tor Malka, the Director of the Oral History Section in an interview with Lital Beer, "Preserving Their Memories: Survivor Testimony Over the Years." Yad Vashem Jerusalem, October 2009. 10.
research works. Under this general guideline, two diaries were published in 1958: one by 16-year-old Moshe Flinker, who wrote while his family was in hiding in Brussels, and another by Eliezer Yerushalmi, who was the secretary of the Jewish council of Šiauliai Ghetto. In addition, Yad Vashem began publishing the journal *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance* in 1957, wherein the editors Dinur and Esh devoted space for the publication of documents and testimonies. However, the most prolific and wide dissemination of Holocaust survivor testimony occurred in 1961, and it was not through the Yad Vashem memorial authority.

In the 1980s, a wave of feminist movements washed over Korea and intersected with the democratization movement to give rise to Korean women’s organizations. On January 7, 1988, when the Korean government publicized a plan to send an emissary to Emperor Hirohito’s funeral, various Korean women’s organizations drafted a protest letter that included a statement on the issue of the comfort station system and organized a demonstration march. They continued to place political pressure on the Korean government, and on June 6, 1990, the Korean president raised an official inquiry in the Japanese National Diet, which is the legislative branch. While waiting for a response, on November 1990, Professor Yun Chung-Ok officially formed the Korean Council as a coalition of thirty-six women’s organizations whose mission was to uncover the truth.

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126 Stauber, 133.
127 Chai, 76-77.
128 Chai 78.
129 Soh, 22; Chai, 78.
regarding the issue of the comfort women. In April 1991, the Japanese government released a statement that stated there was no evidence of forced drafting, which increased efforts by women’s organizations and sparked a national outrage.130

In the context of the growing support on the issue of comfort women, sixty seven-year-old Kim Hak-sun testified to her experiences in public on August 14, 1991, and became the first survivor to give public testimony. She and two other women also filed a lawsuit at the Tokyo District Court. The Korean Council, the organization that came to champion the redress movement for former comfort women, pointed out how a culture of shame had contributed to a lack of public testimony prior to Kim Hak-Sun. The former director of the Korean Council Kim Haeng-Ja stated in 1991:

I was shocked by Kim Hak-Sun's willingness to testify her experiences as a former 'comfort woman.' If Kim halmunee reveals her story of sexually serving dozens of soldiers every day in front of TV cameras, it would bury her in the Korean patriarchal cultural milieu. I did not want to kill her twice. Therefore I was initially hesitating to arrange a press conference for her testimony.131

Even after Kim Hak-Sun testified, halmunee Cho Myongsun132 was not convinced that the patriarchal culture had dissipated. She said:

I am anxious in case anyone recognizes me. I have a husband and children, so I cannot bewail my life and be so resentful in public. If, by any chance, my children's spouses and families discover I was a comfort woman, what would become of them?...My story, as hidden as it is from those around me, will follow me to my grave. 133

130 Soh, 23; Chai, 79.
131 Quoted in Min, 949.
132 Grandma in Korean. This term will be used to refer to Korean women who served in the comfort station system.
133 Howard, 176.
Then, in January 11, 1992, Japanese daily newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* reported on Yoshimi’s discovery of official documents that implicated Japan in the comfort station system, and together these two events began the movement for the national redress for the Korean former comfort women.\(^{134}\)

The national redress movement was a frustrating cycle of apologies, retractions, denials, and unaccepted actions. The Korean Council sought the following demands on behalf of the former comfort women:

1. Acknowledge the war crime  
2. Reveal the truth in its entirety about the crimes of military sexual slavery  
3. Make an official apology  
4. Make legal reparations  
5. Punish those responsible for the war crime.  
6. Accurately record the crime in history textbooks.  
7. Erect a memorial for the victims of the military sexual slavery and establish a historical museum.\(^{135}\)

One response to these demands was the establishment of the Asian Women’s Fund. In 1995, Japanese Prime Minister Murayama expressed a “painful reflection and feeling of sincere apology” for Japan’s actions during Second World War, but claimed that Japan had no obligation to provide individual compensation to former comfort women.\(^{136}\) He instead proposed the creation of privately funded reparation called the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF). However, this Asian Women’s Fund was largely criticized as an insincere gesture, and former First Lady of Japan and activist for comfort women Mutsuko Miki said, “The new government showed no indication that it was prepared to catalyze support for the

\(^{134}\) The details of the history of the redress movement will not be addressed in this thesis due to its complexity.  
\(^{135}\) These demands are from the official website of the Korean Council. [http://en.womenandwar.net](http://en.womenandwar.net).  
\(^{136}\) Yoneda, 238.
comfort women of Asia or other parts of the world. In short, the Asian Women's Fund was not serving its stated purpose.\textsuperscript{137} The Korean Council also rejected this fund as legal reparation, but some comfort women did individually accept money from the AWF. The reaction to the Asian Women's Fund demonstrated the underlying national character of the Korean Council, even in the speech by First Lady Miki, who said it was a national obligation, rather than a human obligation. Although its demands drew upon the requests of comfort women for apologies and reparations, this mission was invariably linked to resolving historical tensions between Japan and Korea.

In its publication of nineteen testimonies, \textit{True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women} by Keith Howard, the Korean Council introduced the issue of the comfort women as a Korean tragedy. Yet, the Korean Council also included testimonies of women who placed additional blame on Korean society as contributing to the initial years of forced silence and shame of the former comfort women. In these testimonies, the halmunees expressed diverse emotions: anger towards the Japanese government, anger towards the Korean government, anger towards Korean society for having silenced them, previous fear from talking, inspiration for Kim Hak-Sun's testimony, resentment at Korean complicity, mental and physical pain from their experiences and even some little peace of mind after finally testifying to their experiences.

The issue of Korean complicity sparked debate, similar to the debates in Israel regarding the complicity of \textit{kapos} and the Jewish Councils. In describing their ordeals, some comfort women had alluded to Korean compliance, describing the local police who were

\footnote{\textsuperscript{137} Speech by Mme. Mutsuko Miki at "Comfort Women of WWII: Legacy and Lessons" at Georgetown University Sept 30, 1996 in Schellestede, 131-133.}
involved in the recruitment. For example, Ms. K said local policeman recruited her, but she omits whether the police were Korean or Japanese.\textsuperscript{138} Other women directly accused the Koreans of having collaborated. Kim Tok-chin said, “Of course Japan is to blame, but I resent the Koreans who were their instruments even more than the Japanese they worked for.”\textsuperscript{139} Yi Yong Suk said, “The Japanese were bad. But the Koreans were just as bad because they put their own women through such terrible ordeals for personal profit.”\textsuperscript{140} In the end, however, the issue of Korean collaboration was largely ignored by the redress movement, which directed its accusations solely against the Japanese government.

In this period of nationalism, the idea of complicity or collaboration threatened the sense of national unity. The idea of Korean collaboration lessened the accusations against the Japanese government and even led to historical denial. If Koreans willingly assisted with the recruitment comfort women, was there not a possibility that the women willingly assisted as well rather than be forcibly recruited? Historical evidence and legal proceedings indeed denied this idea. In the conclusion to the report “Comfort Women – an Unfinished Ordeal,” they conceded “The recruiters were actively assisted by the military and local police to ensure that the girls and women ‘volunteered,’” but they emphasized that “it is indisputable that these women were forced, deceived, coerced and abducted to provide sexual service to the military.”\textsuperscript{141} The Coomaraswamy report again repeated, “Methods of recruitment...involved the increased use of deception and force in many parts of East Asia,

\textsuperscript{138} Schellestede, 103.
\textsuperscript{139} Howard, 49.
\textsuperscript{140} Howard, 57.
\textsuperscript{141} Report reproduced in appendix of Schellestede, 108.
especially in Korea.” 142 Additionally, the testimonies of many halmuneees who have come forward described the high frequency of coercive or duplicitous tactics: various agents and local collaborators utilized considerable amount of deceit and pretense.

The variety of demands in the survivor testimonies, however, did little to change the redress movement. Although some halmuneees expressed anger towards Korean government and Korean society, the redress movement continued to only seek reparations from the Japanese government, and continued the national tone of the comfort women issue. The conversation remained fixated on a narrative of post-colonial victimization, dominated by anger towards the Japanese government directly. From the national understanding, the comfort station system and the halmuneees were symbols of the oppression suffered under Japanese colonial rule, and the campaign for proper historical redress focused on anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism and new national pride. This nationalism also drew upon han, a core Korean characteristic of deep anger resulting from the history of invasions and famine. 143 Han was the unifying sentiment that helped cement the comfort women as a symbol of Korean oppression by the Japanese. Even comfort women utilized han in their testimonies. Halmunee Pak Sunae said:

I decided to report my past in the hope that my case might be of some help to my country. I think that Korea should never be controlled by another country again. I have lived with resentment buried deep in my heart for what I was made to go through. 144

142 Report reproduced in Schellestede, 114.
143 Soh, 81.
144 Howard, 167.
The media, looking to capitalize on the feelings of han, relied heavily on the rhetoric of forcible recruitment to shape the national memory. The key symbol of the national narrative of the comfort women came to be a helpless Korean girl viciously dragged away from her family. This national framework failed to capture the complex and nuanced suffering that Korean women faced as comfort women. It failed to include the deep impoverishment that forced many girls to be persuaded by the promise of a good job. It failed to include the crucial element of Korean complicity and involvement of local Korean police in the recruitment. But most importantly, it failed to address the postwar suffering faced by the comfort women when they returned to Korea.

3.2 Survivor Memory

Running parallel to the creation of organizations like Yad Vashem and the Korean Women’s Council was the survivors’ strategies of remembrance. The Israelis had already begun to organize among themselves, creating survivor communities that produced the Yizkor books, in response to the national framework while former Korean comfort women remained largely isolated from each other as they returned to their mostly rural, impoverished families, many of whom lacked emotional and economic capacity to support these women.

Given the national narrative, the majority of Holocaust survivors that arrived in Israel during these years found their experiences excluded from official remembrance that sought to commemorate active resistance. Rather than “passively” accept the circumstance,
as proposed by the myth of Diaspora negation, many survivors actively created their own means of memorialization. Survivor organizations called *Landsmanschaftn* organized the survivors into the communities of their European city of origin and held their own memorial services, usually on the anniversaries of the liquidation of their ghettos.\(^{146}\) In addition, these organizations encouraged many members to write memoirs, in what came to be known as memorial, or *Yizkor* books. These books were collectively written by the members of each community who "got together, exchanged recollections, gathered testimonies, impressions and memoirs, and wrote them down."\(^{147}\) Between 1954 and 1972, around four hundred of these books were published by the *Landsmanschaftn* and each had a circulation of two to three hundred, in both Hebrew and Yiddish.\(^{148}\)

The purpose of the Yizkor books was for the survivors to find a way to remember, in a way the state narrative of "honoring heroism" did not allow. The survivors did not let the state paradigm of Holocaust remembrance limit their own remembrance, and through these memorial books, the survivors found a means to record their memories. These were humble endeavors. As indicated by their forwards, the authors never claimed a greater purpose than to remember. In the introduction of the memorial book of Yurburg, the editor wrote, "The Book of Remembrance is not a historical documentary of the Jewish people in Yurburg, but a collection of authentic testimonies of the survivors of this special

\(^{146}\) Kenan, 72.
\(^{147}\) Kenan, 72.
\(^{148}\) Kenan, 72.
community, which arose from the smoke of the Holocaust. Similarly, the preface of the memorial book of Horodenka stated:

We who have survived are the sole orphans and heirs of what was a flourishing community. We do not set out to produce a volume, which is exclusive, nor do we aim at a work of outstanding literary value... What we aim to do is to give the children of those who came from our little birthplace some idea of the fate of their grandparents and kinsfolk, in order that they may from time to time remember those thousands who were slaughtered by the Nazis during the Second World War, with all the resources of modern science and organization.

These memorial books, humble in purpose yet significant in retrospect, serve in sharp contrast to the memorial efforts by Yad Vashem, which was established as the “official memorial authority” in 1953.

For the comfort women, they did not begin organizing survivor communities until the first woman spoke in 1991. However, there was a sense of responsibility to each other during the wartime as evidenced by the following report by an American soldier. After the end of Second World War, the U.S. military released an internal report conducted in 1944 called the “Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49.” The document, which was a summary from the interrogation of twenty Korean women, represented the earliest survivor testimony, although it was a summary of interrogations conducted by an American soldier. The soldier’s subjectivity was obvious:

150 Sefer Horodenka, eds. Shimshon Meltzer, Tel Aviv, Former Residents of Horodenka and Vicinity in Israel and the USA, 1963. Translated by Heckman, Mark. Yizkor Book Project. JewishGen Inc.
The interrogations show the average Korean "comfort girl" to be about twenty-five years old, uneducated, childish, and selfish. She is not pretty either by Japanese or Caucasian standards. She is inclined to be egotistical and likes to talk about herself. Her attitude in front of strangers is quiet and demure, but she "knows the wiles of a woman." She claims to dislike her "profession" and would rather not talk either about it or her family. The majority of the girls were ignorant and uneducated, although a few had been connected with the "oldest profession on earth" before. A "comfort girl" is nothing more than a prostitute or "professional camp follower" attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers.¹⁵²

Despite this reported "ignorance," the soldier stated that the women asked that "leaflets telling of the capture of the 'comfort girls' should not be used for it would endanger the lives of other girls if the [Imperial] Army knew of their capture," which demonstrated an intelligent awareness of their situation overlooked by the American soldier. These newly freed women had realized if the American Army began publicizing their capture, the Imperial Army might kill women in other stations as to destroy evidence of the comfort station.¹⁵³

This document was also important, because it could be considered one of the first records of survivor testimony through the direct quotes or collective sentiment from the women, because these sections were free from the American soldier's bias.

The average Japanese soldier is embarrassed about being seen in a "comfort house" according to one of the girls who said, "when the place is packed he is apt to be ashamed if he has to wait in line for his turn."

But all likewise agreed that even though very drunk the Japanese soldier never discussed military matters or secrets with them. Though the girls might start the conversation about

¹⁵² Although not further discussed in this thesis, the use of the word "prostitution" in this report later served as a defense by the Japanese government who claimed the comfort women system was a form of licensed prostitution.
¹⁵³ Much like how Germany began digging up and burning mass graves in Operation 1005 when Germany began realizing they might lose the war. This was a similar pattern in which perpetrators tried to destroy evidence of a crime.
some military matter the officer or enlisted man would not talk, but would in fact "scold us for discussing such un-lady like subjects. Even Col. Maruyama when drunk would never discuss such matters." This quote demonstrated why the interrogation of these women was dismissed as unimportant. Because these women had no military knowledge of the Japanese troops, the American army had no use for the women and took no effort to explore the possibility that these women were more than prisoners. As such, the report represented the silence of not understanding, which begun almost immediately after the war ended.

As survivors began speaking about their experiences, the national framework either adapted the stories into the narrative such as in the case of Israel, or continued to limit the survivor testimonies to a national framework, such as in the case of Korea. In Israel, the Yizkor books and survivor organizations began creating pressure for national to include all survivor testimonies into the historical narrative. In Korea, even when the women began organizing, an external group called the Korean Women’s Council led the organizing effort, and although they published survivor experience of all types, publically they only advocated for a national framework that only asked for reparations from the Japanese government. In the following chapter, the divergence between these two survivor groups became even more distinct as the national narratives became internationalized.
Chapter 4: Breaking the National Narrative

The ultimate catalyst that broke the national narrative of the Holocaust was the Eichmann trial in 1961. A televised trial that utilized survivors as witnesses against Eichmann, the trial presented Holocaust experience to the public that did not necessarily fit into a national framework. With the mass amount of testimonies, the trial used these stories of survivors to reconstruct a history of the Holocaust and present it to Israeli society. Prosecutors asked each witness why they had not protested or why they had not revolted, in keeping with the national framework that there had only been a choice between displaying "Israeli heroism" and "submissive meekness." Their testimonies about their experiences, however, collectively answered this question: each witness spoke to how the Nazi project had stripped the Jews of everything, and how the Israeli concept of heroism was an ignorant label. These testimonies shifted the portrayal of survivors not as passive and weak, but as true victims. In the years following the trial, the Israeli public became more receptive to Holocaust testimony, and more survivors began to speak about their experiences. The Holocaust narrative also became internationalized, as the Holocaust became a topic of interest in America. For example, in 1978, President Jimmy Carter announced the creation of a President’s Committee on the Holocaust, which later recommended the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

In Korea, the national framework also shifted as the issue became internationalized with the advent of the feminist movement of the late twentieth century. As the Balkan War exposed crimes of sexual violence, the issue of Korean Comfort Women was swept up in the

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international discussion of women’s rights during wartime, and the Korean Comfort women became symbols of “sexual slavery in wartime” while continuing to be a symbol of “Korean victimhood.”

4.1 Israel: From National to International

On May 23, 1960 Prime Minster Ben-Gurion stood before the Israeli Parliament and declared the “discovery” of Adolf Eichmann, “who was responsible together with the Nazi leaders for what they called the final solution of the Jewish question.” Four days later, Ben-Gurion made another announcement in which he promised a trial that would simultaneously present three different stories for three different audiences. The first story was an indirect threat to Arab countries to respect the sovereignty of Israel, because the trial would “to inform the world that Arabs who plot the destruction of Israel are disciples of the Nazi’s.” The second was so that “World public opinion should learn the truth” regarding the horrors of the Holocaust. And finally it was for the generation of Jews born after the holocaust, so that “facts should be known and remembered by the youth of Israel, who have grown up and received their education after the Holocaust, and only a faint echo of that atrocious crime, unparalleled in history, has reached their ears.”

After the extradition proceedings between Argentina and Israel were resolved, the state of Israel officially indicted Eichmann on April 11, 1961 on 15 criminal charges, including

156 Excerpts from letter written by Ben-Gurion to Parliament member Israel Galili, published in Davar, cited in Tumolo, 28.
After eleven months, the Israeli court found Eichmann guilty on all counts on December 11, 1961 and he was sentenced to death on December 15, 1961. Over the course of his trial, nearly ninety Holocaust survivors took the stand and together, these survivors told a detailed account of the Holocaust, not only the acts of resistance, but the full horrors of the experiences. The depth of these testimonies demonstrated it was not a simple question of whether to rebel or not. As a judge concluded, the secretive nature of the extermination program acted to

delude the victims themselves and make them believe that they were merely brought to labor camps... even at the gates of Auschwitz they inscribed Arbeit macht frei - that is, Labor liberates...[this] served the purpose of momentarily allaying apprehensions, fostering illusions and dampening the will to rebel, since it seemed to indicate that the deportees were still alive and that the horrible stories about extermination were perhaps not true. [Emphasis added] 158

Although the judgment itself questioned the relevance of all the testimony in terms of prosecuting Eichmann, the trial was no doubt a powerful account of the Holocaust to not only Israel, but also to the international community.

The sensational nature of the Eichmann trial captured media attention—here was a man, a physical being that Israel could put on trial to stand for the crimes of the Holocaust. As evidenced by the Prime Minister’s words upon his capture, the trial was a powerful opportunity to educate the world, including Israelis, on the Holocaust, and the media eagerly flocked to Israel. The popularity of the Eichmann trial was such that during the

157 United Nations Security Council Resolution 138 condemned the kidnapping as infringing on national sovereignty, and recommended that Israel apologizes to Argentina, but is not required to return Eichmann; Crimes against humanity and crimes against the Jewish race were defined separately by the Israeli court and had different punishments; All information regarding the Trial, unless cited otherwise, comes from the Nizkor Project that have digitized the files from the State of Israel Ministry of Justice and put them online in http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/
158 The Attorney General’s Opening Speech, Session 6-7-8, Part 5 of 10, vol. 1, Nizkor Project.
trial's first two weeks, foreign journalists from all over the world packed the Jerusalem Civic Center Beit ha-Am. As witness after witness described the horrors of their experience during the Holocaust, and journalists continued to report on the trial, the trial demonstrated that the Holocaust was clearly a crime against the Jewish community. As many foreign journalists found themselves unable to report on yet another horrible experience, local Israeli continued to attend the trial, granting survivors the public audience they had lacked during the initial postwar years.\footnote{159}{David Cesarani, \textit{After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961}. (London: Routledge, 2005), 20.}

An important figure that remained even after two weeks was Hannah Arendt, a German-Jewish intellectual and a reporter for \textit{The New Yorker}. By that time, she was an established political theorist, and a large figure in the Jewish American community. She remained a critical voice throughout the trial and accused Ben-Gurion of being "the invisible stage manager of the proceedings."\footnote{160}{Hannah Arendt, \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil}. (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 5.} Arendt argued that the Eichmann Trial should be about one individual, Adolf Eichmann, rather than be a trial used for education as stated by Ben-Gurion. She pointed to the irrelevance of the survivor testimonies—many of them did not even know Eichmann, and in a court of law, the only relevant testimony should come from Eichmann, or at least survivors who knew Eichmann. Some of Arendt's critique, however, revealed her lack of understanding of the role of the Holocaust as history in Israeli collective memory. One example is such when she said:

The contrast between Israeli heroism and the submissive meekness with which Jews went to their death - arriving on time at the transportation points, walking on their own feet to the places of execution, digging their own graves, undressing and making neat piles of their clothing, and lying down
side by side to be shot - seemed a fine point, and the prosecutor, asking witness after witness, "Why did you not protest?," "Why did you board the train?," "Fifteen thousand people were standing there and hundreds of guards facing you - why didn't you revolt and charge and attack?," was elaborating it for all it was worth. But the sad truth of the matter is that the point was ill taken, for no non-Jewish group or people had behaved differently.

Although in her terms, this solution seems to be a simple "sad truth," for much of Israeli society, it was not a simple matter of asking a survivor directly "why did you not protest?"

As stated earlier, survivor communities existed separately from the rest of Israeli society, and many survivors lacked the framework to speak publicly about their experiences. With the state promoting only stories of partisans and ghetto fighters, and the myth of Diaspora negation still permeating, survivors had no incentive to speak about experiences outside the national paradigm. This was the simple "sad truth" – Holocaust survivors could not tell their stories to the public for fear of shame. Even in the Yizkor memorial books, there was no question of defending one's actions. The memorial books and other survivor accounts had been simple chronologies of what had happened, not the why.

Logically, Arendt provided a simple solution to the Jewish community—of course, the Diaspora Jew's "submissive meekness" was a "fine point," but non-Jewish groups had reacted as equally passive. However, the passivity of non-Jewish groups did not largely concern the Jewish community; this question was not about human morals, but Jewish morals, and the myth of Diaspora negation had long argued that the culprit for the degradation of such morals was the Diaspora Jew him/herself. To overcome this stereotype, it was perhaps necessary for the Israeli society to be bombarded with endless testimony. Israeli society required the immense number of over ninety witnesses over a period of three months that created a "process of individuation" that facilitated a
previously unattainable comprehension of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{161} As such the trial was, in one sense, “the rescue of the testimonies of these unfortunate people from the danger of being perceived as all alike, all shrouded in the same immense anonymity.”\textsuperscript{162} And once freed from the anonymity, the survivors could not be categorized as “Diaspora Jews” but were individuals who had suffered greatly under the Nazi Germany project of annihilation.

Indeed, the Eichmann Trial marked the shift in public perception of the Holocaust survivors as neither hero nor “passive” victims, but survivors of an extremely traumatic experience.\textsuperscript{163} The significance of the Eichmann Trial was that it forced the Israeli society to listen to survivors for the first time. Previously, survivor recalled how people were simply unwilling to listen to their stories. “We tried to tell. We desperately wanted someone or some families to adopt us...if only they had talked to us.”\textsuperscript{164} Rivka B said, “I wanted to tell of [my experiences], but there was always a barrier between us... At survivors’ parties one could talk about the Holocaust. One would not dare to do so among Israelis.”\textsuperscript{165} In addition, the immense volume of testimony that resulted from the trial led to the serious historical research of anti-Semitism, which further helped to nuance understanding the Holocaust experience.\textsuperscript{166}

The 1967 war also helped internationalize Holocaust memory. The threat of war struck Israeli society with the fear of a second Holocaust, and one soldier said,
We tend to forget those days before the war, and perhaps rightly so—yet those were the days in which we came closest to that Jewish fate from which we have run like haunted beings all these years. Suddenly, everyone was talking about Munich, about the Holocaust, about the Jewish people left to its own fate.\footnote{167 Quoted in Kenan, 87.}

This panic of a second Holocaust along with the definitive victory of Israel also cemented fostered a stronger sense of an international Jewish community, as American Jews were vocal in expressing support for Israel in this war.\footnote{168 Navon, 350.} The sense of an international community also helped break the national narrative, as Israel could not claim authority to the testimonies in other nations. This reframed the Holocaust in terms of a Jewish community, which countered the national paradigm for an exclusively Israeli understanding of the Holocaust.

4.2 Korea: From National to International Feminist

Parallel with the Korean national narrative, the issue of the comfort women also became a symbol for the international women’s rights movements of the 1990s. Mass rape during the Balkan conflict in the early 1990s captivated the international media attention and created a platform for women’s human rights and issues of sexual violence against women in armed conflicts.\footnote{169 Soh, 41.} This movement included the issue of Korean comfort women when the United States National Organization of women invited the Korean Women Council to participate in the demonstration against mass rape in Bosnia on February 24,
This international women’s rights movement changed the issue of the comfort women. Rather than focus on Japan’s wrong doings, this paradigm presented the issue as another example of the “lack of respect toward women, and its tendency to strip sex of any sense of dignity and respect.”

In Korea, the international feminist movement of the late twentieth century challenged the national framework, and rather than focusing on comfort women as Korean victims, portrayed the former comfort women as female victims. Such feminist reframing of the narrative helped break down the masculine stigma in Korean society that had forced many former comfort women to suffer in shame of being a “spoiled” woman. In addition, by the 1990s, many former comfort women were no longer young women but female elders, which also granted them the privilege to speak in public. In addition, the passage of time had allowed them to become relatively economically secure, as some of these survivors were able to find work during the postwar years. They also were freed from the shackles of shame as many of their parents and older relatives had passed away by this time. Indeed, many of the comfort women that began to speak initially were widowed and childless, while those who had children were discouraged from speaking up by their family.

This paradigm of the comfort women being a matter of women’s rights became formalized through a series of reports by international organizations. In 1994, the International Commission of Jurists published “Comfort Women - An Unfinished Ordeal,” which recommended that the Japanese government make efforts to rehabilitate the

170 Soh, 33.
171 Yoneda, 245.
172 Unfortunately, sometimes this work included selling themselves back into prostitution, as it was the only job available to the women.
In 1996, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Radhika Coomaraswamy published a report, which definitively reframed the comfort women system as a type of military sexual slavery. In 1998, the United Nations continued this rhetoric when Special Rapporteur Gay J McDougall included the comfort station system in her report “Contemporary forms of Slavery.” These reports raised international public consciousness on issue of the Korean comfort women; however, by framing it as mainly a form of military sexual slavery, like the national narrative, the international narrative placed the entirety of the blame on the Japanese government. While the reports were more thorough in including proper context of the impoverished conditions of the Korean women who were recruited and utilized survivor testimonies as sources, the resulting international narrative became yet another campaign that spoke on behalf of the survivor women, rather than allowing surviving halmunee to control their narrative.

Individual countries that advocated on the issue of the comfort women continued to accuse the Japanese government on behalf of the halmunee. In July 2007 the United States passed the House of Representatives Resolution 121 for Japan to formally apologize after petitions by the Korean Council and Amnesty International. Other countries like Canada

176 Honda, Michael. H.Res.121 - 110th Congress (2007-2008): A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces’ coercion of young
and the Netherlands also took legislative action that called upon the Japanese government to provide redress. On November 25, 2010, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women activists and survivors presented a petition for redress to the Prime Minister of Japan that included 620,000 signatures.\footnote{Michele Park Sonen, "Healing Multidimensional Wounds of Injustice: Intersectionality and the Korean "Comfort Women"." Berkeley La Raza Law Journal 22 (2012): 299.}

Although the international movement overall failed to encompass the complexity of the issue of the comfort women, an important event occurred in December 2000: the Women’s International War Crimes tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery. Partly set up as a response to the failure of the International Military Tribunal in 1946 which did not prosecute the Japanese Emperor or his family as part of the amnesty deal struck with America, this trial became a platform for the surviving halmuneees to give live testimony on an international scale. However, even in this trial, “Japan’s prewar system of licensed prostitution” was not prosecuted as a crime against humanity; rather, the trial defined the system as an institution of slavery, which violated the international antislavery treaties of the time.\footnote{Hideko Mitsui, “The resignification of the “comfort women” through NGO trials.” Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience. Ed. Gi-Wook Shin, Son-Won Park, and Daqing Yang. (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 49.} Ultimately, this attempt failed to return agency to the halmuneees, by conflating their issues with the larger issue of sexual slavery.

Kim Hak-Sun had used this new international feminist platform when she testified testimony in public in 1991, which had inspired other former comfort women to speak for the first time. An anonymous former comfort woman said in response to the appeal to speak on her experiences, “I felt I had to swallow the shame and step forward to reveal the...
truth.” Yet, this testimony of Kim Hak-Sun did not completely overcome the feelings of shame. As another comfort woman Yi Young-sook said, “I am reluctant to talk about [my past], because it is my shameful, terrible past.” In addition, even with the international feminist framework, some former comfort women continued to construct their testimonies as victims of Japan. Former comfort woman Yi Yong-nyo said,

I sorely miss the ordinary life that most women enjoy: getting married and having a family. The Japanese took that away from me. I rightfully expect an apology and compensation from the Japanese government for these crimes.

In a way, despite being nominally a feminist organization, the Korean Women’s Council also continued the national framework by advocating for the redress and reparation campaign against the Japanese government.

4.3 Evolution of Survivor Testimony

The motives for giving testimony clearly evolved as the platforms changed. In Israel, the survivors initially spoke of their experiences within survivor communities, but with the Eichmann Trial and Yad Vashem, the opportunities to give testimony expanded. In Korea, however, testimony continued to be utilized as a tool, either in the redress movement between Korea and Japan, or as another example in the international women’s fight against sexual slavery.

179 Schellstede, 79.
180 Schellstede, 101.
181 Schellstede, 97.
In Israel, the survivors largely spoke within their survivor communities, through the Yizkor books; not to prove anything but simply to provide tools of remembrance—for themselves, for their communities, and for their children. Next, the survivors were given an opportunity to speak through a “memorial authority;” but in its initial years, the memorial authority remained within a national framework, rhetorically bound to a duty of recording “heroism” during the Holocaust. Survivors that decided to write memoirs though the authority needed to emphasize the “victims’ heroic collective acts” and avoid “personal accounts that could be interpreted as unpatriotic in Israel.”\textsuperscript{182} Finally, during in Eichmann Trial, the survivor testimonies were less limited, but still had a purpose—to “let the world know” what had happened. Faced with the public accusations of “Why did you not protest?” “Why did you board the train”—survivors once again had to frame their experiences into a different type of narrative.

Having institutions like Yad Vashem structure the testimony of survivors, or having trials presenting the survivors in a courtroom had largely resulted and continued to result in survivors taking on the role of the “witness.” Unlike the spirit of humble remembrance in the \textit{Landsmanschaftn} survivor communities, survivor testimony has now evolved into a historical tool, always within the greater framework.

Standard practice in the collection of oral history has now become to ask the subjects their motives for telling their stories. In the case of Holocaust survivors in Israel, the response has been “to remember” in the spirit of the Hebrew commandment

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\textsuperscript{182} Gil, 496.
\end{flushright}
“vehigadeta levinkha” or you shall tell your son.\textsuperscript{183} Such an answer illustrates perhaps the subconscious limiting of an oral history. Survivors are not actively choosing to limit their stories, or curate it to a certain standard, but they are merely answering the questions as presented to them. Director of the Oral History Section of Yad Vashem stated in 2009,

Eliciting testimony is a very complex task, requiring extensive knowledge of the period as well as the ability to conduct open, sensitive interview. A combination of openness and honesty by the survivor, and compassion and expertise by the interview creates meaningful testimony, and a positive, sometimes cathartic experience for all present.\textsuperscript{184}

Unlike the survivor communities in Israel, which were created out of a desire to share experiences among survivors, the Korean comfort women largely initially were isolated. Only when they were elderly and had reached the top of society as elders in the 1990s did many comfort women choose to speak. Even then, it was often a difficult decision. For example, her nephew told halmunee Kim Tok-chin, “You will only bring trouble on your family and your children will be traumatized” when she first discussed reporting her story with him.\textsuperscript{185} In addition, some halmunees still subscribed to idea that chastity was “more important than life itself.”\textsuperscript{186} Korean societal stigmas acted to effectively gag the comfort women, and many suffered in silence in the immediate postwar years. Despite the initial nineteen testimonies published by the Korean Council speaking of the shame and anger at being silenced, these testimonies reflected the strong influence of the national narrative, as the shame was more self-inflicted rather than direct societal

\textsuperscript{183}Gil, 496.
\textsuperscript{184}Lital Beer, “Preserving Their Memories: Survivor Testimony Over the Years.” \textit{Yad Vashem}, Jerusalem, October 2009, 10.
\textsuperscript{185}Howard, 49.
\textsuperscript{186}Chai, 71.
pressure. Many halmuneees who spoke of the shame described the pain at recalling such memories, but also feeling the obligation to speak. Although the Korean Council and the media raised the issue of comfort women was certainly raised in Korean public consciousness, the halmuneees were not the central actors in shaping the comfort women narrative on a national level.

However, when these halmunee began speaking, they did create survivor communities, along with a state-registry of survivors. First, by 1991, more than 200 Korean survivors have registered as former comfort women with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and then in 2000, the Ministry of Gender Equality began handling the comfort women cases. The first survivor organization was a Buddhist-supported social welfare facility called the House of Sharing, which was established in 1992. It became a permanent shelter for many survivors, and was open to visitors who often bring gifts or donations. These funds eventually helped create the first Japanese Military Comfort Women History Museum in August 1998. Next, about twenty survivors organized and lived independently in government-owned rental buildings, and these women regularly met with the Korean Council. Finally, the third community was the survivors who became members or associates of the Korean Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families. Among these women were those who accepted the money from the Asian Women’s Fund, and were among those deemed “traitors.” Despite the creation of these organizations, other survivors remained silent.

187 Soh, 92.
188 Soh, 93.
Internationalization helped both the Israeli Holocaust survivors and Korean women broaden the framework to speak about their experiences. Especially for the Israeli Holocaust survivors, the emergence of parallel Holocaust remembrances around the world, such as in Germany and America, established how the Holocaust narrative existed outside of Israeli control as it could not effectively claim control over the global Jewish community. Jewish victims were not all Israeli; therefore, it was easier to breakout of a national narrative. In April 1996, Yad Vashem announced Masterplan 2001 in response to the changing landscape of Holocaust remembrance, and focused on global Holocaust commemoration. This master plan also included addressing the passing of the Holocaust generation, and a renewal of efforts to videotape Holocaust survivors for future generations. In March 2005, the International School for Holocaust Studies began conducting seminars that taught survivors how to recount their testimony, led by a Holocaust survivor Hana Greenfield with a grant from the German Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility and Future. In such a way, Yad Vashem acknowledged the crucial role of survivors in contributing to the memory of the Holocaust.

In Korea, however, the mainstream historical narrative remained within a national framework, despite survivors speaking about their varied experiences. The testimonies Kim Tok-Chin and Yi Yong-suk revealed the under-represented voice of the former comfort women who also asked for redress from the Korean government; however, like stated earlier, the Korean Women Council did not change their list of demands to include any

demands for reparations from the Korean government, despite these women feeling angry at the Korean government.

Throughout the history of the redress movement, the surviving comfort women never took control of the narrative. Rather, their stories became symbols for two separate movements—the national and the international women’s movement. Both these movements utilized survivor testimony to fit certain paradigms and promote more current agendas. The national narrative utilized it as a symbol of Korean victimhood, and the international community utilized it to rebuke Japan as a warning to other nations not to enact systems of military sexual slavery.

As a result of these platforms, halmunees like Kim Hak-sun, Pae Pong-gi, Yi Yong su, who continued to give testimony, began to give performances, and public testimonies that described their experiences as a story of victimization by the Japanese government.\(^{191}\) Accusations against the Korean government also diminished, and other narratives were excluded entirely. There was no room in the narrative for more nuanced accounts of a Korean-Japanese relationship during wartime. In an interview with historian Soh in 1995, the Korean Council expressed embarrassment when approached by a halmunee who expressed a desire to be reunited with a sympathetic Japanese soldier.\(^{192}\) In addition, as testimonies focused on the brutality of recruitment methods, halmunees whose stories did not fit this mold chose not to speak.

This critique is not to dismiss the accomplishment of the redress movement. The Korean Council has done significant and important work on supporting the surviving

\(^{191}\) Soh, 99.
\(^{192}\) Soh, 185.
halmunee’s livelihoods. The Japanese government should address the issue of the comfort women, rather than issue denials or attempt to move on without meeting with the halmunees. Yet, the role of the Korean Council and international organizations in shaping the narrative and speaking on their behalf has continued to treat the halmunees like young girls they once were, by speaking on their behalf.
Chapter 5: Criticism of the Narratives

As survivors began to speak more publicly about their experiences, critics of the national framework emerged. For Israel, German-born American journalist Hannah Arendt accused the Eichmann Trial of being a show trial put on by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. For Korea, the Korean Professor Yu-Ha Park criticized the symbolization of the comfort women in the campaign for redress against the Japanese government. Notably, Arendt voiced her criticism during the time of the Eichmann Trial while Park wrote her critical book in 2013.

In Israel, Hannah Arendt was overall very critical of the Eichmann Trial.193 She stated that the trial was more about spreading a message to the world about the Holocaust rather than putting the SS officer Eichmann on trial. Indeed, while justifying the sensational kidnapping of Eichmann from Argentina, Ben-Gurion had stated, ““We want the nations of the world to know … and they should be ashamed.”194 Arendt also pointed out the national framework’s perpetuation of the Diaspora myth when she described Ben-Gurion’s aspirations for the trial:

The Jews in the Diaspora were to remember...how only the establishment of a Jewish state had enabled Jews to hit back, as Israelis had done in the War of Independence, in the Suez adventure, and in the almost daily incidents on Israel’s unhappy borders...the Jews outside Israel had to be shown the difference between Israeli heroism and Jewish submissive meekness. 195

193 Arendt, Hannah. “Eichmann in Jerusalem.”
194 Quoted in Arendt.
She called the framework of heroism and meekness as “the deliberate attempt in Jerusalem to tell only the Jewish side of the story distorted the truth.” And she stated that even the so-called heroes and rebels had testified to “the small place the uprising had in this history of the holocaust.” This admission ultimately confirmed how only the very young had been capable of taking the “decision that we cannot go and be slaughtered like sheep.”

In Korea, another critic of a national framework emerged as Professor Yu-ha Park, a professor of Japanese literature at Sejong University in Seoul published “Comfort Women of the Empire” in 2013. In this book, she attempted to shift the blame from the Japanese government to mainly Korean collaborators, whom she claimed had coerced and tricked the young Korean girls into becoming comfort women. Her aim was to challenge the mainstream understanding, because she claimed,

The issue has arisen not by discrepancies in information and points of view on comfort women themselves but rather by the fact that the current political positions of various individuals and emotions associated with them have found their way into this issue.

In short, she claimed that the national framework had overtaken the story of the comfort women, who were not allowed to speak too much on their own behalf. She said,

It is necessary for learned individuals and ordinary citizens, whose involvement in this issue does not affect their livelihood or political positions, to engage with this issue and consider it together with the directly involved parties.

196 Arendt, Hannah. “Eichmann in Jerusalem.”
197 Arendt, Hannah. “Eichmann in Jerusalem.”
199 Yu Ha Park, “How We Should Consider the Comfort Women Issue Based on Discussions between Ikuhiko Hata and Yoshiaki Yoshimi.”
By "directly involved parties" she accused the political situation of having overtaken the movement and silencing the survivors further by speaking on their behalf.

Both Arendt and Park’s criticisms sparked outrage from the survivors who felt the criticisms were unjust. In Israel, the Holocaust survivors accused Arendt of blurring the line between victims and perpetrators, when she described Eichmann’s collaboration with Jewish organizations to profit off Jewish emigrants, as well as the Nazi collaboration with Jewish Councils.200 Apart from survivors, Holocaust historians even went as far as to accuse Arendt of betraying the Jewish people by suggesting this supposed-collaboration.201 In Korea, researchers called Park an apologist and posts on social media called her a "pro-Japanese traitor."202 She also faced a civil suit of defamation by nine former comfort women. The court ruled in their favor on January 14, 2016 and stated that Park had defamed the women with “false, exaggerated, or distorted content in the book.”203 By challenging the national framework, Arendt and Park both faced a clear backlash, and were both accused of being traitors to their own people.

200 Cesaranj, 7.
203 Choe. San-hun, “Professor Ordered to Pay 9 Who Said ‘Comfort Women’ Book Defamed Them.; A year later, however, she won the criminal case against her on January 25, 2017, when a court ruled in her favor for her academic freedom of expression.
5.1 Who owns history?

The criticisms of Arendt and Park demonstrated a “politics of remembrance” that occurred when historical narratives crystallized.\textsuperscript{204} The politics of remembrance includes “history and experience of survivors as commodities for the infotainment industry.”\textsuperscript{205} However, this theory can be equally applied to the Korean former comfort women whose testimonies were utilized in the campaign for redress against the Japanese government. By shaping the comfort women into a symbol of Korean victimhood under Japanese colonial rule, the comfort women had become a “commodity for the infotainment industry.”

Comfort women who talked of Korean collaboration did not face the same criticism as Yu-ha Park; they were not accused of being traitors.\textsuperscript{206} Herein lay the paradox of Yu-ha Park’s book. She had conducted research based on interviews with Korean comfort women, which had contributed to her conclusion that Korean collaboration played a role in the comfort women recruitment. Yet, the publication of her book caused other former comfort women to accuse her of presenting “false” and “distorted” information. The results of her legal proceedings provided further evidence of this paradox—she lost the civil suit on charges of defamation, but won the criminal suit. In the second decision, the judge said, “But academic expressions must be protected not only when they are right but also when they are wrong.”\textsuperscript{207} Park was correct in pointing out Korean collaboration; however, she

\textsuperscript{204} Cesarani, 10.
\textsuperscript{205} Cesarani, 11; in this context, “infotainment industry” is referring specifically to the Eichman Trial, and how the survivors were used to inform the Israeli Public about the Holocaust.
\textsuperscript{206} For a discussion of Korean collaboration, see page 46-47.
was wrong to absolve the Japanese government of any responsibility to these women based on the idea of local collaboration.

Yet, her book was not necessarily just an academic expression, but a non-national platform for the comfort women that Yu-ha Park had spoken with. The national narrative had reduced the identity of the former comfort women to be nothing more than victims; in doing so, the national narrative had not given room in the narrative to criticize the Korean collaboration, by continuing to talk about the Japanese perpetrators. Because these women had to be understood as only victims, women who had originally accepted wages could not tell their experiences in public, because it contradicted the idea of “kidnapped girls.” Yu-ha Park’s book tried to create space for these women to tell their stories as well, and break out of a purely victim narrative. Unfortunately, the publication of these survivor experiences was the accusation of these former comfort women of telling stories that were “distorted” and “false.” Ultimately, the verdict of this case demonstrated how for these comfort women, whose stories did not fit into the neat paradigm of victimhood, they continued to be silenced, except this time, it was not only the Korean society, but also fellow comfort women.
Conclusion

On January 6, 2017, Japan recalled its ambassador from South Korea in protest against the establishment of the comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese Consulate in Busan, Korea. The Tokyo bureau chief and the Korea correspondent of the New York Times jointly authored an article on the event and its opening paragraph described the statue as “commemorating Korean women who were forced into sexual slavery for Japanese soldiers during Second World War.” This description notably omitted crucial information: who forced these women into sexual slavery? According to the Korean national narrative, it was the Japanese. According to one professor, it was Korean collaborators. Others argued however that the phrase of “forced recruitment” was problematic.

The diversity of answers to the simple question symbolized the continuing complexity and controversy surrounding the issue of the comfort station system. This thesis argued that the issue of the comfort women was not only an issue on the national level, which complicated contemporary Korean-Japan relations but also was as an issue on an international level, as it symbolized sexual slavery in the modern era. However, on both these levels, because the survivor testimonies had to fit into the paradigm of the national or female victim, the experience of these women became political tools wielded by various organizations. Unfortunately, with the inevitable passage of time and the dwindling amount

209 Sang-hun and Motoko.
211 Soh, 101.
of survivors, the Korean Council and international organizations will have no choice but to continue to speak on the behalf of former comfort women, and frame their testimonies into tools to generate political support.

The former comfort women continue to face restrictive paradigms for their testimony much like how Holocaust survivors in Israel initially only had the option to be rebels or fighters. Israel was able to break out of the national framework through the internationalization of Holocaust memory; however, for Korea, the internationalization only seemed to lock in the idea of victimhood for the women rather than create the sense of agency to advocate for themselves. For Israel, the Eichmann Trial provided an international platform, which catalyzed the acceptance of different Holocaust experiences, instead of just the tales of heroism. For Korea, the feminist wave of the 1990s allowed Kim Hak-Sun and other former comfort women to speak to the international community; however, their stories perpetuated their victimhood rather than create an understanding of the diverse experiences of the comfort women.

Cesarani stated that historical narratives at the end of the Cold War utilized stories of moral absolutes, in which there are clear perpetrators and clear victims.\textsuperscript{212} The Holocaust narrative was an example, and it is still held up as an example of the extent of human cruelty today, especially as the German perpetrators largely atoned for their crimes in a public manner, and Germany continued to make amends to the Jewish community. The historical narrative of the Korean comfort women somewhat echoed this model by

\textsuperscript{212} Cesarani, 12.
portraying the Japanese as the clear perpetrator. However, the denial of Imperial Japan, and the politicization of the event had resulted in a different treatment of the survivors.

The Holocaust narrative was universally accepted while the comfort women narrative became a bilateral issue between Korea and Japan. Even when the United Nations got involved and the international feminist movement began incorporating Japanese crimes into a narrative of sexual slavery, the comfort women remained entangled in a politics of remembrance. This also involved a question of Korean collaboration that had yet to be publicly acknowledged. The national narrative remained reluctant to discuss Korean collaboration for fear of damaging an already difficult history; any acknowledgement of Korean collaboration threatened the case for clear Japanese government culpability, and damaged the campaign for redress.

This crystallization of the historical narrative, however, did provide opportunities for survivors to speak, at least those whose testimonies conformed to the established narratives. In doing so, the survivors transitioned into being “repositories of memory” and took on the role of promoting public awareness.213 Yet, the public awareness had often led to the reductionism of the narrative into a simplistic story. Although Israeli society accepted a larger diversity of stories and experiences following the Eichmann Trial and the internationalization of memory; Korea still limits the comfort women issue in a narrative of victimhood, allowing no space for experiences that contradict methods of forced recruitment, or testimony that highlighted postwar suffering, for fear of damaging the redress movement. Yet, many former comfort women continue to pass away while waiting

213 Cesarani, 7.
for an adequate apology or admission from the Japanese government, and the failure to collect testimony of all types of survivor experiences will become obstacles in understanding the true tragedy of these women. Indeed, even the recent 2015 work by S.J. Friedman collected comfort women testimony to draw a conclusion about national healing or international justice. She said, “In our generation, we can help bring an end to modern day slavery and to blocks to peace and unity between Japan and nations in Asia and nations affected by the Japanese military invasion.”214 Once again, the voices of the comfort women were co-opted by the sense of historical interpretation.

In the modern era, oral history has become accepted as an important part of historical knowledge, as those who experienced history are given an opportunity to contribute to the contemporary understanding of an event. However, these stories have more value than as being part of the historical record. These stories allows human to access understanding the human capacity for evil. By restricting the understanding of survivor testimonies to historical interpretations and political interpretations, the experiences of the men and women who suffered continue to be silenced, rather than fully understood as experiences of great human tragedy.

The Holocaust survivors and the halmunees who have experienced this extreme human evil understand the power of their testimonies as something greater, and as such, many have continued to voice their experiences, despite the limitations of political frameworks. In April 12, 2016, halmunees Yi Ok-sun and Kang Il-chul met two women who

survived the Holocaust in New York. This was their third meeting together, and the women wiped tears while talking to each other about their experiences. Together they called for greater awareness for the Holocaust and the issue of the comfort women, awareness for the sake of remembering, which can be separate and just as important, if not more than the idea of justice.

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