

“Our Bodies, Their Battlegrounds”
the Conservation of Comfort Stations in China

by

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To the hundreds of thousand “comfort women” in the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Acknowledgement

It took me years of preparation to write this thesis – a long journey that began in China and continued in the United States. I have dreamed about the completion of this thesis many times, and I thought it would be a moment full of excitement, but it is not. It is an ordinary moment: now I am sitting in my apartment, in front of my desk, wearing my pajamas. But I understand this accomplishment is built upon numerous unusual moments in the past and it marks the beginning of the academic journey I will continue through my doctoral study at UCLA.

This thesis starts from my internship at the Shoah Foundation, an organization affiliated with the University of Southern California that advocates for recording oral histories of difficult history survivors, including the Holocaust and Nanjing Massacre. My task was to process the interview videos of Peng Zhuying, a victim of the Japanese military “comfort women” system from Hunan Province, China. I was touched by Grandma Peng’s stories, but the stories of the “comfort woman” seemed far away from my life. However, from a conversation with my parents, I learned that there was a comfort station near my childhood school, but I knew nothing about it. From that moment on, “comfort women” was no longer a term that only appeared on news reports but was also part of the history of my hometown. My heart hurts thinking that most of the “comfort women” were violated at my age, at a time when I am able to study abroad and do what I enjoy. As a result, I decided to do something to help commemorate their lives, and this is where my thesis came from.

This thesis would not have been completed without the encouragement and support of Trudi Sandmeier, my thesis committee chair and the director of the Heritage Conservation program. My original thesis topic was about the dangers of architecture-related lead poisoning in

underprivileged communities. When I told Trudi I was thinking about switching my topic from lead paint to “comfort women” issues, she encouraged me to do so without any hesitation, which surprised me and made me confident. I deeply appreciate what she did for the Heritage Conservation program and she was the reason I chose to study at USC. I was holding admissions offers from different programs two years ago, and I hesitated to choose USC for several reasons. First of all, I have never taken any architectural history classes in my undergrad studies. The field of heritage conservation was something new to me, and I was afraid I could not handle it. In addition to the fact that I was based in Long Island at that time, Los Angeles was too far away from the East Coast and from my friends, so USC was almost my last choice although USC gave me a considerable scholarship. However, after talking to Trudi over Zoom as a prospective student, I decided to choose USC. She was so kind and patient in answering my questions, believing that I could ace this field. Trudi is not only the most supportive professor I have ever met but also the one who unites the whole MHC family.

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Abstract

Difficult heritage is usually connected with a country's or a specific community's painful memories, not limited to wars and holocausts. In recent decades, conserving difficult memories has become a more prominent topic in the field of heritage conservation. One of the most common strategies to remember the painful past is to set up memorial museums. As a result, a great number of memorial museums have been set up in memory of the painful past in recent years. In 2015, the first "comfort women" memorial museum in China was opened in Nanjing. The museum's mission is to conserve the painful history of "comfort women," who were forced to become the Japanese military's slaves during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The museum was established on several previous comfort station sites, the war-time residences of "comfort women." Historic comfort station sites have always been an essential topic in research on "comfort women" since they represent difficult memories. It can be difficult for people to discover and conserve these already forgotten places

Focused on historic comfort station sites in China, this thesis will discuss and analyze the conservation work of heritage with painful memories. The thesis will examine several examples: the Nanjing Museum of the Site of Liji Lane Comfort Stations in Nanjing, and the "Grand Taimen" and "Hanazono Mineto" in Zhuji, China, to show the public's attitude toward these sites, to understand the situation comfort stations are facing, and to study the conservation strategies of "informal historic sites" in China. In addition, this thesis will give some suggestions for improving the conservation of comfort stations.

Introduction

Though it is common knowledge that history should be unbiased and objective, the focuses of history is on important events and significant people. Histories related to women and difficult topics are easy to ignore. In recent decades, due to the feminist and civil rights movements, those histories that were neglected by the public in the past have started to attract more attention. The history of “comfort women” fits this category.

The “comfort women” system was set up during the Second Sino-Japanese War by the Japanese military, aiming to “provide women for the sexual comfort of soldiers in war zones.”¹ The term “comfort women” was directly translated from the Japanese term *ianfu*. Because women suffered greatly under the dehumanized “comfort women” system, it is inappropriate to name them “comfort women” without quotation marks.²

Many scholars have studied the history of “comfort women” and their studies are inclusive, ranging from the personal history of each “comfort woman” to the system’s formation. However, only a small number of these studies focus on comfort stations, where the crimes occurred. As these comfort stations bear witnesses to the tragic history, it is important to conserve comfort stations, which not only help to remember the painful history of “comfort women,” but also provide spaces for educational purposes. By discussing the conservation of comfort stations in China, this thesis tries to analyze how difficult heritage should be conserved.

The first chapter provides a theoretical base for the thesis. It introduces some basic background knowledge on this topic from three aspects: What makes difficult heritage difficult?

¹ George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 16.

² Peipei Qiu, with Zhiliang Su, and Lifei Chen, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan’s Sex Slaves*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_askewsholts_vlebooks_9780199373901.

What should the government do to conserve difficult heritage? And finally, as the most common approach to conserving difficult heritage, what should a memorial museum's mission be?

The second chapter introduces the history of “comfort women” to readers since it is not a well-known history, and there are many details that need to be explained. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section talks about the formation of the “comfort women” system and who are “comfort women.” The second section echoes the contexts of the first chapter to further explain why “comfort women” history is a difficult one. The last section focuses on the classifications of comfort stations.

The final two chapters are two case studies. The third chapter is a historic site of comfort stations in Liji Lane, Nanjing, China, or the Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum, which can be regarded as a successful example of difficult heritage conservation. The chapter introduces the historical background of the two comfort stations in Liji Lane, then explains how they were reshaped into a memorial museum, as well as how it practices its role as a memorial museum. Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum is a meaningful example for other existing comfort stations in China. However, not all existing comfort stations are well conserved. The last chapter focuses on two forgotten historic comfort station sites in Zhuji, China revealing their unknown histories and discussing their unclear fates and some potential solutions.

Due to the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to do the field research in person. As a result, this thesis is primarily based on other scholars' research results, some interviews with people in the field, and my own recollections of the sites in Zhuji.

Chapter 1

Difficult Heritage: Why and How to Conserve?

Introduction

Human rights have always been a well-studied concern for international affairs, public history, and other related fields. After the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement became a nationwide movement, the public began to pay more attention to human rights and underprivileged communities. One of the most common approaches for the public is visiting museums, which has made “atrocities tourism” a trend in recent years.³ Take the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, as an example; the number of visitors has steadily increased since 2015.⁴ Why do people conserve painful memories? It might have already been a common acknowledgment that difficult heritage is critical for history and public education, but what makes difficult heritage difficult? Furthermore, what are the strategies to conserve difficult heritage? Is a memorial museum the best way to conserve difficult heritage? Even though some believe it is necessary to conserve the painful past, the questions mentioned above should not be overlooked by the public and academia. This chapter aims to explore the broad perspective of difficult heritage, trying to provide guidelines for the remaining chapters.

³ William Logan and Keir Reeves, “Introduction: Remembering Places of Pain and Shame,” in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with Difficult Heritage*, ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁴ Corey Davis, “National Civil Rights Museum Remains Huge Tourist Draw, Year after Year,” *Bizjournals.com*, January 17, 2020, <https://www.bizjournals.com/memphis/news/2020/01/17/national-civil-rights-museum-remains-huge-tourist.html>.

What Makes Difficult Heritage Difficult?

Difficult heritage can have various formats of representation; people usually connect difficult heritage with a descriptive word such as violent, sensitive, sexual, discriminative, and xenophobic. As a result, some scholars use words like sensitive past, violent past, difficult knowledge, and traumatic past to describe difficult histories.⁵ These indirect words suggest that the term “difficult heritage” is not only painful but also hard to speak about. It is often sensitive to discuss difficult heritage with people who have survived these historic events. All modern countries have periods of sensitive and difficult history.⁶ Few people are willing to discuss it openly. Though the difficulty of difficult heritage originates from the history itself — as discussed above, violence, sexism, discrimination, and xenophobia — other critical elements that make difficult heritage become more difficult frequently happen in the period after the trauma happened.

There is no commonly agreed definition for difficult heritage. Different people have different definitions of “difficulty.” Even when a single huge traumatic event happens to a group of people, it is highly possible for them to have different perspectives of the difficulty they experienced. For example, during the second Sino-Japanese War, some Chinese women suffered from sexual violence and were enslaved as “comfort women,” and some women were relatively lucky to skip those difficulties. As a result, for the first group of women, sexual violence might have a larger influence on their understanding of difficult histories. For the second group, sexual violence might not be the first thing that comes to their minds when talking about difficult histories. Since difficult heritage can be personal, it is impossible for scholars and other relevant

⁵ Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra, “What Makes Difficult History Difficult?,” *Phi Delta Kappa* 99, no. 8 (April 30, 2018): 53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26552405>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

professionals to set up a system of standards to evaluate difficult heritage. Consistently, for each traumatic historic event, it is inappropriate only to conserve a single angle of difficult history; the difficult heritage is multi-perspective. Conserving difficult heritage requires scholars and professionals to design conservation plans for each case, which increases the difficulty of conserving difficult heritage.

Another fundamental characteristic of difficult heritage is that it is often unspoken. Difficult heritage relates to trauma, which makes victims or survivors intentionally avoid talking about their difficult heritage. It can be difficult for outsiders or people who have never experienced the trauma to find a proper way to interview victims without risking re-traumatization. As a result, for individuals who are directly involved in difficult histories, it is natural and reasonable for them to stay away from the trauma to protect themselves.

Ignorance also plays an important role in difficult heritage's unspoken characteristics. The history textbooks and classes primarily focus on heroic and legendary events and figures, giving the public a misleading impression that only monumental events and heroic people are worthy of remembering. There exists a huge space for scholars to promote the concept of difficult heritage to the public through history books and classes. Only after the public realizes the importance of difficult heritage and starts to speak about them that hidden histories will have the opportunity to be passed down across generations.

Some uncovered difficult histories might also be lost as the witnesses pass away. Then, this difficult heritage remains silent. Even if scholars discover the unknown difficult history in the future, nothing can replace the first-hand survivor or witness accounts. The witnesses are a part of history; their experiences embody the historical past. Take the Holocaust that happened in the last century as an example. Many Holocaust survivors are willing to talk about their

experiences, providing testimonies to the public. As a result, these testimonies create a comprehensive view of the Holocaust, making it possible for scholars and the public to know this difficult history.

Some unspoken difficult heritage is caused by traditional concepts, especially when the difficult heritage is related to sexual violence. This thesis' primary focus, the "comfort women" system, is an example of how the patriarchal tradition has silenced the survivors. Influenced by Confucianism, many people in East Asian countries held — and still hold — the opinion that a woman's virginity is the most important thing of her life. In pre-modern East Asian countries, the dominant social bias is that a raped woman was unclean and brought shame to her family, and people would laugh at her and her family. If a woman had sex with a man other than her husband, even if it was a rape, she should end her life to prove her purity. A "comfort woman" from Taiwan said she felt shameful because her sexual organs were touched by men other than her husband.⁷ Facing such a patriarchal social environment, "comfort women" did not speak out about their sufferings until recent decades, when society gradually became less strict about a woman's sexual relationships.

National reasons for conserving difficult heritage are usually macroscopic, including diplomatic relationships and social stability. Among all national-level concerns, the economic factor is the primary one. As Marx said, the economic base determines the superstructure.⁸ It is hard to deny that heritage protection is more difficult in underdeveloped countries, especially in the case of difficult heritage.⁹ For less developed countries, economic development is the highest

⁷ Ching-Yuan Chou, "A Cave in Taiwan: "comfort women"'s Memories and the Local Identity," in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with Difficult Heritage*, ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2009), 121.

⁸ Raymond Williams, "Raymond Williams, Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory, NLR 1/82, November–December 1973," *New Left Review*, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/182/articles/raymond-williams-base-and-superstructure-in-marxist-cultural-theory>.

⁹ Logan and Reeves, "Introduction," 12.

priority for the nation. Compared with something that cannot directly boost the economy or feed the people, under-developed nations would rather do something that can have immediate effects on their economy.

However, some exceptions exist. The Lushun Russo-Japanese Prison Museum was established at the site of a prison in 1971, at a time when heritage conservation was not a priority in China. The Museum's establishment is related to the Zhenbao Island Incidents—armed conflicts between China and the Soviet Union from 1969 to 1971.¹⁰ The Chinese government hoped to use the Lushun Russo-Japanese Prison Museum to educate its citizens, helping them remember the nation's difficult history and tension with the Soviet Union. The Second-Sino Japanese War (1931-1945) created numerous difficult histories for the Chinese people, including the “comfort women” issue and the Nanjing Massacre. The concept of difficult heritage was not popular in the first decades immediately after the war, and China was impoverished. Thus, it is understandable that the Chinese government did not pay attention to conserving difficult heritage. In 1972, China and Japan restored their diplomatic relationship. In their Joint Communique, China renounced its right to war compensation from Japan.¹¹ More disappointingly, the infamous Nanjing Massacre was regarded as an impediment to the reestablished diplomatic relationship. Some Chinese people believed that restoring the diplomatic relationship with the Japanese government was denying history; as a result, the two governments chose to ignore the negative effects of the Nanjing Massacre temporarily.¹² Though

¹⁰ Shu-Mei Huang and Hyun-Kyung Lee, “Difficult Heritage Diplomacy? Re-Articulating Places of Pain and Shame as World Heritage in Northeast Asia,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 2 (May 22, 2018): 145, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1475410>.

¹¹ “MOFA: Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China,” www.mofa.go.jp, accessed February 16, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint72.html>.

¹² Yujie Zhu, “Hot Interpretations of Difficult Heritage: The Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre in China,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* 12, no. 1 (2022): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1108/jchmsd-05-2021-0085>.

in 1992, Chairman Jiang Zemin said that the Chinese government would not stop Chinese citizens seeking compensation from Japan, this statement hurt survivors' feelings, making them question the importance of difficult histories they suffered.¹³ For academia in China, the ambiguous attitudes of the government toward these events made recording difficult histories more challenging.

Additionally, other countries' diplomatic relationships can also influence the difficult heritage conservation work. In contrast to the Holocaust, the difficult heritage of the Second Sino-Japanese War is less-known by Western countries. As Iris Chang analyzed in her book *The Rape of Nanking*, in the post-war era, the United States was eager to have a dominant status in the Cold War; thus, it expanded its control in Japan and fostered Japan's development. The United States also condoned the Japanese government's denial of the difficult history. Hence, the Japanese government never seriously acknowledged their mistakes like the German government did. As a victimized country, China had been isolated from the global community for decades, decreasing the possibility of telling these difficult histories to the world.¹⁴ The erasure of difficult history is secondary victimization.

Diplomatic relationships largely influence the process of difficult heritage conservation. The Lushun Russo-Japanese Prison Museum was first established at the beginning of the twentieth century when Tsarist Russia and Japan controlled the whole Lushun-Dalian region. The museum itself has a deep connection with the Seodaemun Prison in Seoul, South Korea, which was established during the Japanese colonial period in Korea.¹⁵ China and South Korea

¹³ Zhiliang Su, 苏智良. "Rijun 'Wei'an Fu' Yanjiu" 日军"慰安妇"研究 [the Research on Japanese Military "comfort women"]. Yuanjie chuban she 团结出版社 (2015).

¹⁴ Iris Chang, "The Forgotten Holocaust: A Second Rape," in *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (Boulder: Basic Books, 2012), 199–214, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_askewsholts_vlebooks_9780786727605.

¹⁵ Huang and Lee, "Difficult Heritage Diplomacy," 144.

had deep cooperation on the two prisons' issues, including holding a joint exhibition and protesting the Japanese' denial of their brutalities.¹⁶ According to some materials, the two sites planned to have a joint world heritage nomination.¹⁷ However, in 2016, the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system was established in South Korea, which ruined the peaceful and cooperative diplomatic relationship between China and South Korea.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the nomination plan was postponed, and there have been no recent updates. In the cases of Lushun and Seodaemun prison museums, it is not hard to see that the fates of international difficult heritage are tightly connected with diplomatic relationships. When a diplomatic relationship is good, the fates of difficult heritage are clear and positive; otherwise, their future is blurred. Difficult heritage conservation is a reflection of politics and international affairs.

Besides international political influence, domestic politics sometimes can be another burden for conserving difficult heritage. A major concern of difficult heritage is that it might be far away from the widely accepted history versions.¹⁹ Japanese history textbooks seldom mention the Nanjing Massacre or similar difficult histories since the Japanese government always tried to create a relatively positive image of Japan during the war. Moreover, difficult heritage can reflect current social problems, which may potentially disrupt the stability of a society. At the beginning of 2022, a video of a chained woman was widely circulated on Chinese

¹⁶ Huang and Lee, "Difficult Heritage Diplomacy," 155.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁹ Gross and Terra, "What Makes Difficult History Difficult?," 54.

social media.²⁰ Many internet users put the video together with the “comfort women” issue that happened decades ago and questioned the government’s credibility, as well as women’s rights changes in the past decades. A huge number of commenters believe that Chinese women’s rights have not improved after the “comfort women” issue and ask for more attention to gender equality.

After all, since difficult heritage is hard to speak about in public and usually unknown, it is highly possible that difficult heritage has fewer written documents to prove it, which increased the difficulty for officials to have a formal record. For example, the Japanese military left few written documents related to their “comfort women” policies since they understood these policies were against universal morality and they therefore intentionally concealed the facts. As for the Kuo Ming Tang government who ruled wartime China, there was a lack of proof because of their corruption and ignorance; many written documents are lost and not well-organized. As a result, scholars today need to discover useful information from numerous but incomplete historical documents. In addition, ordinary people may not realize the importance of difficult heritage because of the lack of difficult heritage education in the long term. Thus, sometimes the community may refuse the public's interest in their difficult past.²¹

What makes difficult heritage difficult is the difficult history itself: violence, discrimination, xenophobia, and other issues. However, these post-traumatic elements mentioned

²⁰ In January 2022, a TikTok video of a chained woman attracted Chinese internet users’ attention. The living condition in the video is horrible, and the woman probably has a mental problem. People widely believe the woman was trafficked and forced to have eight children with her “husband,” or better described as the buyer. According to some news, the buyer’s brothers and father also violated her, and they might also be her children’s biological fathers. Even worse, there exist other trafficked women in the village as well as the whole city. However, the local government provided four contradictory announcements to explain this, which disappointed many people. More: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/02/17/1080115082/the-mystery-of-the-chained-woman-in-china>.

²¹ Logan and Reeves, “Introduction,” 12.

above, no matter from the individual perspective or the national level, make the difficult heritage more difficult to conserve and to access by the public.

Conserving Difficult Heritage: A Government Responsibility

As discussed above, conserving difficult heritage is not a simple task. It is usually large scale (which can be national or worldwide), needs sufficient budget and labor, and takes years to achieve. Whether a person has professional training or not, an individual has a very limited role in such a large-scale activity. Individuals' functions and abilities can only be maximized when the government takes responsibility to provide basic support, such as providing public history education and help to the victims. For example, public history education aims to make more ordinary people engage in the process of conserving difficult heritage. With more people paying attention to the preservation of difficult heritage, there are more opportunities for the public to discover related historical items and materials, thus providing greater possibilities to conserve difficult heritage. As a result, in the cases of conserving difficult heritage, people should focus more on the government's responsibilities rather than individuals. However, this is not to deny that some responsible and great individuals, such as Steven Spielberg and his Shoah Foundation, have made huge contributions to the conservation of difficult heritage.²² Conserving difficult heritage is a complicated task. If the government takes more responsibility, it will encourage more people to join this program, thus, creating a better environment for difficult heritage conservation.

²² The Shoah Foundation is an organization affiliated with the University of Southern California. It was founded in 1994 by director Steven Spielberg, and the name was from his documentary Shoah. The foundation is established to preserve interviews with survivors and victims from the Holocaust. Today, the Shoah Foundation has nearly 55,000 audio-visual testimonies in sixty-five countries and in forty-three languages. More: <https://sfi.usc.edu/about>.

One thing that should be on the government's priority list is encouraging the victims to tell their sufferings. Though victims have suffered a lot from difficult histories, and it might take a long time for them to open their hearts, it is still necessary for the government to have professionals, like psychologists and social workers, to provide mental help for the victims. The victims' willingness to tell their stories does not mean their trauma has healed; professional psychologists could help the victims to face their nightmares better. Also, for those who are concerned about telling their stories, social workers can encourage victims to share their stories.

Psychological support or mental health counseling is essential for survivors of sexual-crime-related difficult histories, especially when the victims are in a community that has patriarchal social norms on female virginity. It is reasonable that the victims might worry about being bullied and laughed at by others after talking about their past in public. Zhuying Peng, a "comfort women" system survivor, stated in an interview that she worried that her experiences as a "comfort woman" would bring her family shame and be laughed at by the neighbors; as a result, she kept the secret for decades. Grandma Peng did not tell her stories until her elder sister and social workers invited her to tell her stories several times. However, Grandma Peng has never received any professional therapy from psychologists.²³ On the one hand, the government should provide mental help for survivors to untie the knots in their hearts. On the other hand, if it is necessary or is requested by the survivors, the government or other institutions should not disclose any personal information of victims. The government should have relevant policies to protect the victims' privacy. In 2019, the Beijing News, a newspaper in China, interviewed two "comfort women." The journalist ignored the two women's requests to use fake names and insisted on using real names in his reports. Not surprisingly, the article brought attention to the

²³ Zhuying Peng, Interview 766439. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 2020. Accessed February 16, 2022.

peaceful lives of the two “comfort women.”²⁴ Since China does not have relevant laws in protecting victims’ privacy, even though the journalist was blamed by the public, he did not receive any punishment.

Besides mental help, another thing worth mentioning is that the government could provide some material help for the victims. Providing material help for people who are willing to tell their difficult histories not only can encourage more people to stand out but also can help those who are in need.

Additionally, it is the government’s responsibility to educate the public in various ways. Public history education, especially the history textbooks and classes, should not only focus on heroic figures and historical events. They are undeniably important to history, but they are not the only items worthy of study by the students. The education of difficult histories is absent in current educational systems, no matter in which country. In the United States, schools teach about the history of slavery, but many teachers use the word “slaves” instead of “enslaved people,” which may cause potential secondary victimization to the relevant communities. In China, history classes usually focus on a particular period of history rather than a comprehensive one. A comprehensive educational system that includes difficult history can help the young generation better understand the country’s development and provide a basic concept of difficult heritage.

Oral history projects are another critical method which the government should support to conserve difficult heritage. Oral history projects use video to record the victims’ testimonies. It is an effective way to preserve difficult heritage, providing scholars first-hand materials for future

²⁴ Jianhua Zhu, “‘Xinjingbao Jizhe Beizhi Xujia Baodao Zhongguo ‘Wei’an Fu’ Shijian Rezhongnu ’新京报记者被指虚假报道中国‘慰安妇’事件 惹众怒 [Beijing News Journalist Was Blamed for an Unreliable “‘comfort women” ’Report, the Public Was Angry about It”,” Dwnnews.com, March 19, 2019, <https://www.dwnnews.com/>.

studies. More importantly, some oral history projects can be exhibited in museums, creating a realistic atmosphere for visitors — the victims are so close to their lives. Displaying oral history projects in museums is a great way to attract the public’s attention to difficult histories.

Establishing a memorial museum is a method widely used to remember difficult history today. Generally, memorial museums carry out an educational function on behalf of the government, providing a physical space for the public to learn about difficult history. They make up something lost in the current educational system. As discussed earlier, visiting memorial museums has become a trend in recent decades. A considerable number of people flood into the museums for education or just for relaxation, which brings an economic boom for the museums, as well as the local community. Though “atrocities tourism” might retraumatize some communities, with the revenue brought by “atrocities tourism,” the government has more opportunities to help conserve difficult heritage. In addition, a great number of memorial museums are built at the sites where the events occurred, and the architecture is usually historical. Establishing a memorial museum in a meaningful historical building can bring a more immersive experience to the visitors.²⁵ Also, setting up a memorial museum on the original site can help protect historic buildings, especially those that are meaningful to a specific community but are not eligible for national-level or regional-level registered historic status. The Nanjing Museum of the Site of Lijixiang Comfort Stations in China is such an example. Historically the buildings were occupied by several comfort stations; after the war ended, they were used as residential houses. Since it was not recognized as historical architecture, the site was facing demolition in the 2000s. Fortunately, several scholars suggested modifying the building into a

²⁵ This is also an environmentally friendly way to re-use a historical structure; modifying an existing architecture is more energy sufficient than constructing a new building.

memorial museum to conserve it. The site first opened as a memorial museum in 2015, then became a national registered historic architecture in 2018.

Missions of Memorial Museums

Generally, memorial museums provide exhibitions, education, and tourism. Dr. Yujie Zhu, a researcher at Australian National University with a concentration on difficult heritage, stated in his research “Hot Interpretations of Difficult Heritage: the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre in China” that there are four primary missions of memorial museums: knowledge and fact sharing; imagination and reflection; understanding and recognition; and peace-building and reconciliation.²⁶

The most fundamental and important function of a memorial museum is to tell a clear and non-biased story of what once happened in this place. As a result, the essential mission of the memorial museum is to create a space for knowledge and fact sharing. To achieve this mission, most memorial museums use chronological displays to tell the story, providing visitors an organized order to understand the history.²⁷ Since the visitors are from all ages, social status, cultural backgrounds, and educational levels, using a chronological order is the easiest and most accessible way for people with different backgrounds to understand the contexts, especially historical materials. In order to make the exhibition more convincing, the displays related to historical facts usually use written documents, which requires cooperation from the museum, academia, and the local community. The knowledge and fact-sharing mission are based on credible historical documents.

²⁶ Zhu, “Hot Interpretations,” 35.

²⁷ Ibid.

Unlike the mission of knowledge and fact sharing, imagination and reflection do not focus on rigorous historical documents. Instead, in order to achieve this goal, memorial museums also widely employ items that can activate visitors' sensibility in exhibitions. Displayed items belonging to the victims, especially personal items, not only provide emotional access for visitors to imagine the suffering but also create an immersive atmosphere. In the section related to feelings, memorial museums prefer to use visual exhibits rather than texts. Velvet Nelson gave an example in her essay "Liminality and Difficult Heritage in Tourism" - a museum used lynching photographs in the Southern United States to describe the brutalities of the slave system. Although these images received some complaints from visitors, the majority of people who view the exhibit have an intense visual and emotional experience with these visual materials.²⁸

Some memorial museums also use oral history projects so that the visitors can have more direct and straightforward conversations with the victims. The Shoah Foundation has cooperated with multiple memorial museums all over the world, including the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre. In Nanjing, they interviewed Madam Shuqin Xia, a survivor of the Nanjing Massacre, and put her answer clips in a computer system. When visitors ask Madam Xia questions, the system will automatically find the best answer for the visitors. Visitors can interact with the survivors with the system and the project, which is immersive and reflective. The visitors can imagine what they would do if they faced the same issues as the victims. The mission of imagination and reflection is also to make people reflect on themselves, especially on the questions of what they can do for world peace. After all, exhibiting trauma is not to open the

²⁸ Velvet Nelson, "Liminality and Difficult Heritage in Tourism," *Tourism Geographies* 22, no. 2 (September 16, 2019): 300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1666161>.

victims' vulnerabilities but rather ask more people to remember the sufferings the victims have experienced.²⁹

A critical reason for establishing a memorial museum is to visualize the trauma, making it no longer an abstract concept in historical documents. For example, it is widely believed that over 300,000 people were killed during the Nanjing Massacre; the number is huge but abstract, so the public might not be able to imagine how large the number is. To address this problem, the Memorial Hall designed a large space, filling it with 300,000 black stones to represent the victims of the Nanjing Massacre.³⁰ [Figure 1.2] For people who are from the United States, when introducing the number of 300,000, it is easier for them to have a more practical understanding by telling them the population of Pittsburgh is around 300,000.³¹ Such design is common in memorial museums or monuments' designs; the Vietnam Veterans Monument in Washington, D.C. inscribed the names of dead soldiers' on it. [Figure 1.1] This kind of design provides a practical and straightforward impression for the visitors rather than an abstract concept, providing a better method for them to understand difficult histories. And thus, it can help memorial museums to reach the goal of education.

²⁹ Wang Siyi, "Memorials and Memory: The Curation and Interpretation of Trauma Narratives—Using the Examples of Exhibitions on the Theme of "comfort women" 'in East Asian Society," *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094633.2019.1682405>.

³⁰ A video about the black stones:

http://www.19371213.com.cn/information/news/202008/t20200818_2335310.html.

³¹ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pittsburgh City, Pennsylvania," www.census.gov, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/pittsburghcitypennsylvania>.



Figure 1.1: Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Photo by Barry Winiker, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, online Image, accessed May 8, 2022, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/vietnam-veterans-memorial-in-washington-dc-1039289>.

In “Hot Interpretations of Difficult Heritage” Dr. Zhu also mentioned that memorial museums have a minor mission in China since the majority of memorial museums are under government control. Dr. Zhu believed that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the memorial museums to stabilize their authority.³² China has an idiom saying that “call to mind past sufferings and think over the good times;” remembering the past sufferings is an important activity for Chinese people. As a result, the CCP believes that having memorial museums can help the citizens to remember the miseries of the past and make people appreciate its leadership. And thus, memorial museums help stabilize their power.

Conclusion

Since difficult heritage comes from difficult history, what makes difficult heritage more difficult is what such heritage means to us and how people deal with it.³³ However, the government should take responsibility to conserve difficult heritage, since the help that individuals can provide is generally limited. In an idealized scenario, the government would help the victims to speak about their sufferings, and support large projects like recording oral histories. Among all approaches available, establishing a memorial museum is a method used most widely to conserve difficult heritage. Memorial museums can educate a large number of visitors while also helping the local economy, which can directly influence the region and bring more opportunities to conserve difficult heritage. Memorial museums should follow four primary

³² Zhu, “Hot Interpretations,” 36.

³³ Erica T. Lehrer and Cynthia E. Milton, “Introduction: Witness to Witnessing,” in *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*, ed. Erica T. Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton, and Monica Patterson (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7.

missions: knowledge and fact sharing; imagination and reflection; understanding and recognition; and peace-building and reconciliation.³⁴

³⁴ Zhu, "Hot Interpretations," 35.

Chapter 2

“Comfort Women”: A Term that Conceals Women’s Sufferings

Introduction

The difficult history of “comfort women” was not noticed by the international community until the end of the twentieth century and is still not as known as well as the Holocaust by the world, especially in Western countries. This chapter will first discuss the concept of “comfort women” and then explain why the history of comfort women is difficult heritage. Additionally, the nature of comfort stations, where “comfort women” were confined and the place where brutalities happened, will be explored. Finally, the chapter will introduce three classifications of comfort stations, based on location, the relationship with the Japanese military, and the purpose of the comfort stations.

Who are “Comfort Women”³⁵

Japan and China had their first war in July of 1894. The war lasted until the next year, and Great Qing (1636 - 1912), the Chinese emperor at the time, lost the war. The Great Qing had to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki with Japan. Imperial Japan not only required a huge amount of compensation through the Treaty but also asked the Great Qing to give up its sovereignty in the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan. The Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, as a result, became Japanese colonies after that.³⁶

³⁵ Since the primary focus of this thesis is “comfort women” in China, in the following texts, if there is no other further information, the term “comfort women” will refer to “comfort women” in China.

³⁶ “Treaty of Shimonoseki, 1895 | US-China Institute,” china.usc.edu, accessed June 1, 2022, <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-shimonoseki-1895>.

Japan continued trying to control China in the following years; minor but multiple harassments and conflicts were seen between the 1890s and the 1930s, especially after the Great Qing's fall. Japan officially started its invasion in China on September 18, 1931, which also marked the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, or the Anti-Japanese Resistance War.³⁷ The war lasted for fourteen years, resulting in countless deaths and astonishing economic losses to the two nations. However, one of the most infamous legacies of the war was the “comfort women” system set up by the Japanese military to “provide women for the sexual comfort of soldiers in war zones.”³⁸ The word “comfort women” itself is directly translated from the Japanese word *ianfu*, which was far away from these women's terrifying sufferings under the comfort women system.³⁹ As a result, though the term is widely known and acknowledged by the international community, it is inappropriate to directly use the term to refer to those females who have endured traumas. Therefore, quotation marks are necessary when using the term “comfort women.”⁴⁰

The origin of the “comfort women” system can be traced back to the 1880s, after the First Sino-Japanese War.⁴¹ The first comfort station that was directly controlled by the Japanese military was not built until 1932 in Shanghai.⁴² The site was one of the biggest and earliest comfort stations in Shanghai. Today, located on East Baoxing Rd, Hongkou District, Shanghai,

³⁷ Both of them refer to the war that happened between China and Japan from 1931 to 1945. The first phrase is more commonly used in the Western world, while the later terminology, “Anti-Japanese Resistance War,” is more frequently used in China. In the following contexts, the two terminologies may be used alternatively.

³⁸ George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 16.

³⁹ Peipei Qiu with Zhiliang Su and Lifei Chen, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_askewsholts_vlebooks_9780199373901.

⁴⁰ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 1.

⁴¹ Zhiliang Su, *Rijun “Wei'an Fu” Yanjiu 日军“慰安妇”研究 [the Research on Japanese Military Comfort Women]* (Beijing: Tuan Jie Chu Ban She, 2015), 29.

⁴² Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 45.

China, it is used as a residential building and faces demolition and conservation problems. The establishment of the Dayi Saloon, one of the first major comfort stations established by the Japanese, served the purpose of lowering international criticism about the rising rape crimes by the Japanese military.⁴³ From the Japanese official perspective, establishing comfort stations helped to maintain the good reputation of the military by legalizing sexual crimes.⁴⁴ And a good reputation was essential for them to take control over China with less controversy.



Figure 2.1: The First Comfort Women Station in Shanghai.

Online Image, accessed December 11, 2021, <http://world.kbs.co.kr/special/kfuture/chinese/women/truth.htm>.

⁴³ Su, *Research on "Comfort Women"*, 34.

⁴⁴ Ching-Yuan Chou, "A Cave in Taiwan: Comfort Women's Memories and the Local Identity," in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with Difficult Heritage*, ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2009), 118.



Figure 2.2: Today's Dayi Saloon,

Today's Dayi Saloon, n.d., Image, "Erzhan Shiqi Riben Qiangzheng 'Wei'an Fu' Zuixibg Caifang Jishi" [二战时期日本强征“慰安妇”罪行采访纪实] Interview Documentary of "Comfort Women" System Survivors, n.d., accessed April 25, 2022.



Figure 2.3: The Building of Dayi Salon on Dong-Baoxing Road in Shanghai Today,

Zhiliang Su, 2012, Book Print, Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves, 2012, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/hs9vaa/alma991043224786003731.

Although comfort stations sometimes were also open to non-Japanese, another important reason to establish a military “comfort women” system is to stabilize the regime’s authority and thus increase the Japanese military’s cohesion.⁴⁵ This purpose was achieved by two approaches: the relief of soldiers’ fear and stress of the war and venting their anger toward the enemy countries’ women. In Japanese cultures, it is widely believed that having sex before fighting will bring good luck to soldiers, and they will not get injured during the battle.⁴⁶ It is believed that if someone suppresses his or her libido for an overlong period — though this statement might only refer to males in some East Asian cultures — driven by deprivation, it is highly likely that the person will make a wrong and impulsive decision during the war.⁴⁷ The Japanese military had strict rules and tough training. For most ordinary soldiers, inexpensive sex in comfort stations was the only entertainment. It was an efficient method to relieve their fear of war and death.⁴⁸ According to several testimonies from different “comfort women,” every time the troop had a break, soldiers would line up in front of comfort stations to get some “recreation.”

Additionally, most of the comfort stations in occupied regions were staffed by abducted local women.⁴⁹ In the case of occupied China, enslaving Chinese women was a way that Japanese soldiers could vent their anger toward China.⁵⁰ During the conflict, Japanese men as occupiers had superior status in China; they felt that they were entitled to “enjoy” everything on this land, including women that were regarded as important sexual resources. On the other hand, the enslavement of Chinese females shamed all Chinese people, as it suggested that the nation

⁴⁵ Chou, “A Cave in Taiwan”, 118.

⁴⁶ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 32-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Chou, “A Cave in Taiwan”, 118.

⁴⁹ “Comfort women” were mainly from China, Korea, Japan, Southeast Asian countries, and even some Pacific Islands and European countries.

⁵⁰ Chou, “A Cave in Taiwan”, 118.

was too weak to protect their people. The Japanese, especially the military men, put themselves in a higher psychological status through the “comfort women” system.

Another traditional Japanese concept worth mentioning was that Japanese males should have at least one sexual interaction before their deaths.⁵¹ Comfort stations, as a result, became places to save those young soldiers from regrets. Besides, the Japanese soldiers also held a belief that amulets could bless them during the war. They believed that their amulets should include something belonging to “comfort women,” like pubic hairs; the Japanese collected pubic hairs from “comfort women” and braided them into amulets.⁵² Ironically, when Japanese officials first transported women from Japan to China as “comfort women,” they were listed as “war supplies” rather than “women,” because the soldiers, as well as the officials, believed women on board would bring bad luck to the warship.⁵³

For the Japanese officials, in an ideal situation, a “comfort women” system could prevent the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among the military.⁵⁴ STDs could significantly influence the soldiers’ health and eventually lead to the decrease of troops’ combat powers. However, the first “comfort women” were primarily prostitutes from Japan; a great number of them were already infected by STDs. Combined with the lack of the use of condoms, STDs soon became common among the military. Some veterans even brought STDs to their hometowns after the war. As a result, in subsequent “comfort women” recruitment, the Japanese preferred to abduct inexperienced women rather than hiring prostitutes. As the “comfort women” system evolved, doctors were supposed to check the health conditions of “comfort women”

⁵¹ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 33.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 32-3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁴ Chou, “A Cave in Taiwan”, 118.

regularly, and condoms were required. An infected “comfort woman” would not be allowed to “provide” sexual services until she was recovered.⁵⁵

Finally, for higher military officers, comfort stations were safe places for them to relax and socialize without worrying about secrets leaking.⁵⁶ The majority of “comfort women” were uneducated Chinese women who did not speak Japanese. Because of their social status before being abducted in comfort stations, it was almost impossible for ordinary Chinese women to get in touch with any Chinese ranked officers and become spies. On the other hand, it was also hard for Japanese or Korean “comfort women” to contact Chinese military men. Though some intelligence might be leaked by prostitutes before the appearance of comfort stations, it would be very difficult for the women confined in the comfort stations to contact people outside after the “comfort women” system was established.

As Japan expanded its occupied territory in China, the need for “comfort women” was greatly increased; countless comfort stations popped up. It is widely believed that “comfort women” were primarily from Japan, Korea, and China. Some scholars, including George Hicks, an Australian scholar in the field of East Asian Studies, believe that Korean Peninsula once had the largest number of “comfort women,” while others believe it was China, since China had over 200,000 victims.⁵⁷ It is difficult to prove which claim is true. It is impossible to count each country’s real number of victims due to the lack of historical records. What made it more difficult to estimate is that in most cases, the personal identities of “comfort women” were removed. They were regarded as figures rather than objects. However, all “comfort women” are victims of the atrocity; it means nothing to argue which country is the biggest victim. By

⁵⁵ Su, *Research on “Comfort Women”*, 253-6.

⁵⁶ Chou, “A Cave in Taiwan”, 118.

⁵⁷ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 18; Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 38.

studying the nationalities and “recruitment” of “comfort women,” people could uncover more historical details.

As discussed above, the Japanese recruited a great number of domestic prostitutes from Japan to work as “comfort women” in China. Japan had a history of licensed prostitution before the war. A “comfort women” issue expert Professor Su Zhiliang believed that Japan once had 250,000 to 300,000 legal prostitutes and it was not hard for the Japanese officials to export a satisfying number of “comfort women” to China.⁵⁸ Japan also has a tradition of *karayuki*, or, the traveling prostitutes.⁵⁹ The Japanese official soon abandoned this idea due to STDs. The Japanese turned to young, inexperienced, and unmarried women, because these women were less likely to be infected by STDs. On the other hand, the Japanese military, especially those higher-ranked officers, believed that women’s virginity could bring them good luck during the battle.⁶⁰ However, the recruitment of Japanese women resulted in an unstable social environment, and the public questioned the government’s motivation for doing so.⁶¹ In order to maintain their regime in Japan, the Japanese authorities shifted their recruitment to Korea and Taiwan, two of their colonies.

Compared with Taiwan, Korea has a larger population and is adjacent to mainland China, which was convenient for the Japanese to transport women to China. Thus, Korea became another major place where the Japanese military drafted “comfort women” to China. Unlike Japanese “comfort women,” Korean “comfort women” were primarily recruited by three different approaches. First, Korean “comfort women” were threatened by the ruling class, including police, the chief of the village, and even local gangsters. Facing superior and absolute

⁵⁸ Su, *Research on “Comfort Women”*, 239.

⁵⁹ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 28.

⁶⁰ Su, *Research on “Comfort Women”*, 254.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

public power, most Korean “comfort women” had no choice but to agree. Second, a considerable percentage of Korean “comfort women” were tricked by false offers of “well-paid jobs” out of their hometowns. The person tasked with recruitment usually told these naïve women that they would work as support staff in the military, such as nurses and waitresses, to lower their guard. The third commonly-used recruitment method was human trafficking — the recruiter directly bought women from traffickers, then transported them to China.⁶² Sometimes, the recruiters used combined methods to abduct women. Park Young-Shim was a Korean “comfort woman.” When she was seventeen years old, a policeman forced her to board a train, telling her there was a high-paying job in China. She struggled to refuse, but it did not work. She was taken into a comfort station in Nanjing, China, which was one of the comfort stations in Liji Lane, which will be discussed later in this thesis.⁶³

Another thing worth mentioning is that in many cases the Japanese were not directly involved in the recruitment of “comfort women” in Korea, either. They appointed a great number of Korean males to complete this task. This behavior could avoid potential stains on the government’s good reputation, helping the Japanese to stay away from the illegal and unethical activity if it was noticed by the public. Such behavior, however, suggested that a great number of Korean men came to China to open comfort stations in China for a living. Unsurprisingly, these comfort stations largely employed Korean women.⁶⁴ The rape of “comfort women” was not only done by the Japanese. It was a crime made by the whole patriarchal system of society.

⁶² Su, *Research on “Comfort Women”*, 239.

⁶³ Joseph Joh, “The Seoul Times,” theseoultimes.com, accessed March 23, 2022, <https://theseoultimes.com/ST/?url=/ST/db/read.php%3Fidx=1846>.

⁶⁴ Chunghee Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2008), 3-4.

At the same time, the Japanese abducted Chinese females as “comfort women.” They primarily used violence to abduct and force Chinese women. Peng Zhuying, a “comfort women” system victim in China, was forced to be a “comfort woman.” When she was nine years old, she lost her sight after a gas bomb attack. Years later, when the Japanese military invaded her hometown, she was unable to flee from the Japanese without other people’s help. She struggled but failed; the Japanese used violence to stop her and took her to a comfort station nearby.⁶⁵

Offering “job opportunities” was also very common in Chinese “comfort women” recruitment. These job opportunities were usually located in an unfamiliar environment so that the Japanese or comfort station owners could better control “comfort women.” Yuan Zhulin was another victim from Wuhan, China. In 1940, when Yuan Zhulin was eighteen years old, she heard that another local woman was seeking cleaners for a hotel in other cities. Yuan Zhulin was hired and transported into a comfort station near Wuhan. She did not realize that she was recruited as a “comfort woman” until she arrived at the comfort station. The woman who posted the job information was a Chinese who was married to a Japanese; she used her identity as a Chinese woman to trick other females.⁶⁶ From some perspectives, in a patriarchal society, females can be accomplices of males to suppress other women. Again, crimes like the “comfort women” system should not be simply blamed on a specific community or a group of people; it is a brutality by the whole society.

The third recruitment approach in China was different from that of Korea. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, there were many local collaborators, or Chinese citizens who served

⁶⁵ Zhuying Peng, Interview 766439. *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2020. Accessed February 16, 2022.

⁶⁶ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 102-7. For Yuan Zhulin’s story, there is a non-fictional novel *Yanhua Sanyue* (Foggy and blossoming March) written by Lilian Lee Pik-Wah. The novel tells Yuan Zhulin’s life, from childhood to her late days, in detail. The words are so touching that readers could experience Yuan Zhulin’s struggle among her sufferings. So far, the book is only printed in simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese.

the Japanese military. Helping the Japanese deal with unpleasant jobs was one of the most important functions of local collaborators. Thus, many Chinese “comfort women” were selected and forced into the system by local collaborators rather than the Japanese. There did not exist a standard rule for local collaborators to choose “comfort women;” the selection of “comfort women” was highly dependent on the local collaborators’ personal preferences and dislikes. Peng Renshou, Peng Zhuying’s older sister and another victim of the “comfort women” system, was noticed by a local collaborator when she was in a market. The local collaborator asked her to be his concubine and promised her good fortune. Peng Renshou rejected the offer, stating that she would rather beg for food than become his concubine. Later, the local collaborator told the Japanese military that Peng Renshou was a good choice as a “comfort woman” and led them to Peng Renshou’s home. The Japanese gang-raped her and took her back to the comfort station.⁶⁷

Classifying “comfort women” by nationalities and the way they were abducted would oversimplify the sufferings they have experienced. Due to various reasons, for example the loss of historical materials, “comfort women” are less mentioned as individuals; they are more like a group of people. As mentioned above, the “comfort women” issue is a crime that happens in a patriarchal society. They were not simply raped by the Japanese military men; in fact, they are victims of the patriarchal system. And being forgotten by the public — no matter on purpose or unconsciously — is secondary victimization from the whole society.

“Comfort Women” as a Part of Difficult Heritage

It is undeniable that the story of the “comfort women” is important and difficult heritage. They experienced terrible suffering, and their stories were not noticed by the public until the late

⁶⁷ Zhuying Peng, Interview 766439. *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2020. Accessed February 16, 2022.

twentieth century. What is worse, there are numerous controversies around “comfort women;” some extreme and irrational nationalists in Japan even claim that the “comfort women” issue is a lie made up by other countries. Such statement shows great disrespect to the sufferings of the “comfort women.”. People cannot travel back to fix a past mistake, but it is still possible to prevent it from happening again by learning from history.

The difficulties of “comfort women” can be divided into three major types: their sufferings during the war, their encounters after the war as an unknown history, and the long-time controversies as well as misunderstandings around them.

The sufferings of “comfort women” when they were in comfort stations were both physical and mental. The most apparent suffering they had was the enforced sexual interaction with the Japanese military. A “comfort woman” was forced to serve forty to fifty soldiers at peak times; the Japanese soldiers usually lined up outside of comfort stations during their breaks or before a battle started.⁶⁸ They had no time to clean themselves after each sexual encounter or even wear clothes. Even during training days, a “comfort woman” might still serve ten soldiers on average.⁶⁹ In addition, the Japanese military had a set of general and strict rules to better control comfort stations and “comfort women,” including the enforced regular STDs check, condom use, opening hours, and sanitary requirements.⁷⁰ These rules were for the Japanese soldiers and seemed to partly protect the “comfort women,” but in fact, they were essentially aimed to protect the Japanese soldiers’ rights, and they were not always practiced. Comfort stations that were in large cities or were larger scale sites might have had spaces for “comfort women” to clean themselves after sexual interactions, while most comfort stations did not have

⁶⁸ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 123.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Qiu, Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 59-60.

sanitary facilities for “comfort women.” They could only clean themselves in small wooden bowls.⁷¹ Lin Lindi’s father was a carpenter, and her family lived close to the Dayi Saloon in Shanghai. When she was a child, the staff of the Dayi Saloon frequently came to her father and purchased wooden bowls, which were for “comfort women” to clean themselves.⁷² However, in a comfort station located in Wuhu, a mid-sized city near Shanghai, “comfort women” were only allowed to take showers three times per month.⁷³

The actual use of condoms was also far away from the regulations. Everything was in short supply during the war, including condoms. The Japanese soldiers would choose either not to use condoms or use the used ones. The used ones were cleaned with water, which actually could not protect anything. Besides, some soldiers claimed that they did not like using condoms because they thought this was uncomfortable for sex. The condoms provided free in comfort stations were not good qualities either, which led to permanent damage to the health conditions of “comfort women.”⁷⁴

Thus, combining the two reasons mentioned above, it was not surprising that healthy women were soon infected by STDs after being forced to be “comfort women.” According to the general regulations, once a “comfort woman” was confirmed with STDs, she should immediately stop providing services for the soldiers to receive treatments. However, this was seldom obeyed in real life due to the lack of “comfort women” and “economic consideration.”⁷⁵ For the Japanese military, since their “comfort women” were primarily abducted with little to zero cost, it was not worth it for the military to cure a “comfort woman” with unpredictable costs. The common way

⁷¹ Qiu, Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 61.

⁷² Zhiliang Su, Lifei Chen, and Fei Yao, *Zhengju: Shanghai 172 Ge Wei'an Suo Jiemi* 证据：上海 172 个慰安所揭秘 [Evidence: Reveal 172 Comfort Stations in Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong University Press, 2018), 90.

⁷³ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁵ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 61.

was to abandon or kill the infected woman or just not to give any treatments to them.⁷⁶ In some situations, “comfort women” were able to receive treatments, official or unofficial. In some regions, the “comfort women” were sent to a hospital for STD treatment, but the costs were not paid by the Japanese military or the comfort station owners; “comfort women” had to pay for their treatments after they were raped and became ill. If they were abandoned by the Japanese and could not afford the money, they would seek treatment from herbal remedies.⁷⁷ In order to control the STDs’ spread, the Japanese military also took another strategy: they injected the “comfort women” with Salvarsan. Salvarsan contains arsenic and is harmful to human bodies; the injection results in pain and potentially damages the reproductive system.⁷⁸

In addition, though comfort stations were supposed to have limited opening hours, in actual practice, “comfort women” had to serve the Japanese soldiers — especially higher-ranked officers — at any time. The conditions were worse if the Japanese military men were drunk, which usually meant violence for “comfort women.” “Comfort women” were commonly beaten by the Japanese military men. The Japanese never treated “comfort women” as individuals; they were vessels, containing the Japanese’ fits of anger to the enemy countries’ women.

Besides physical violence, verbal violence was another issue every “comfort woman” encountered. The Japanese usually used the character “p” to refer to “comfort woman.” They divided “comfort women” by nationalities: Japanese “comfort women” were “Japanese p,” Koreans were “Korean p,” and Chinese were “Chinese p.” There are two explanations of “p.” One believes that “p” is short for prostitution; the other argues that “p” is from the Chinese slang

⁷⁶ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 61.

“pi,” an extremely dirty word referring to vagina.⁷⁹ The Japanese also referred to comfort stations as “public toilets.” The Japanese believed that, unlike brothels, comfort stations were no place for the military to enjoy sexual behaviors. Indeed, comfort stations were more like spaces for the soldiers to release their desires, like using a restroom.⁸⁰ On the other hand, “public toilet” is a common slut shaming phrase in China, suggesting a woman can be “used” by everyone for free.

Accordingly, the basic human rights for “comfort women” were brutally violated when they were in comfort stations. Some comfort stations even set up additional strict rules for “comfort women,” such as:

- “Comfort women” were not allowed to leave the comfort station, or their family would be killed;
- “Comfort women” should unconditionally follow the order of the Japanese;
- “Comfort women” should obey comfort station operators’ words, or they would be punished;
- “Comfort women” should provide services to the Japanese at any time.⁸¹

It is not hard to conclude that “comfort women” experienced dehumanized treatments in comfort stations, both physically and mentally. None of the regulations and the terms the Japanese used treated them as human beings. The Japanese applied various methods to lower “comfort women’s” self-esteem, so to achieve their goals of manipulating these women. An enormous number of “comfort women” died—they were killed, died of illness, or committed suicide because of these torments. For survivors, these dehumanizing treatments resulted in huge shadows on their mental health, which discouraged them from speaking out about their experiences after the war. The majority of “comfort women” never had a chance to do therapy; they have no idea how to reconcile with themselves.

⁷⁹ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 39. The pronounce of “pi” is close to “pea.” In fact, “cunt” will be a better translation for “pi.”

⁸⁰ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 40.

⁸¹ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 58-9.

Another burden that has stopped them from telling their sufferings is the traditional concept of chastity in East Asian countries, which requires women to be virgins before marriage and maintain fidelity after marriage. Their family will be shamed if women are unchaste. Most “comfort women” were born in poverty and most of them were uneducated or received little education. Chastity as a social norm was still deeply rooted in society during the war, especially in the underprivileged regions. Even though feminism and the women’s liberty revolution began to appear in the first half of the twentieth century in China, it advanced slower outside the major urban sites. The victims of the “comfort women” system were afraid to speak their experiences in public.

The period immediately after the war would have been the best time to invite survivors to tell their stories, but society’s atmosphere was too conservative for “comfort women.” Additionally, in the post-war period, the Kuomintang government (1925-1948), the ruling government of China at that time, did not ask for compensation from Japan. Decades later, in 1972, when the People’s Republic of China re-established her diplomatic relationship with Japan, the Chinese government stated that they would no longer ask for compensation from a national perspective. The ignorance from the government level also discouraged some victims from telling their stories. Though society became more open to women’s sexual activities before marriage and victims of rape after the end of the war, a great number of victims had already died due to disease or old age. In some respects, the best time to ask “comfort women” to speak about their suffering has passed since the majority of them are no longer alive.

However, it is never too late to start something to address the problem. In recent decades, encouraged by other “comfort women,” researchers, activists, and legal specialists, more “comfort women” began to tell their sufferings. However, their testimonies were frequently

questioned in Japan for various reasons, including the lack of supportive historical documents. Influenced by some right-wing politicians and ultranationalists, a considerable number of Japanese do not admit the existence of “comfort women;” indeed, they believe “comfort women” were “volunteers” or “paid prostitutes,” which deeply hurt the feelings of “comfort women” and discouraged them from speaking in public.

A very common false portrayal of “comfort women” is that they were paid prostitutes. This description is inaccurate. First, the majority of “comfort women” were never paid; only a small number of them were paid a small amount of money, which did not even cover their living expenses in the comfort station. The Japanese procurers usually paid a cash advance to those “comfort women” who were recruited from Japan and its colonies and thus required them to work in comfort stations to pay back the debt. Thus, for these “comfort women,” they were supposed to receive 40% to 60% of their incomes. However, “comfort women” were required to save three yen per one hundred yen to their savings and use two-thirds of the remaining to pay their debt.⁸² The remaining balance had to cover the living expenses of “comfort women;” the Japanese charged for food, clothes, and cosmetics.⁸³ Besides, as discussed in previous contexts, “comfort women” needed to pay for their treatments if they were ill.⁸⁴ Even if a “comfort woman” was lucky to save some money from such strict conditions, her saving might be valueless due to post-war inflation. In the so-called “formal” military comfort stations, what the “comfort women” received was usually a “military ticket” (*junpiao*). The tickets could be regarded as the common currency among the Japanese military and the areas they occupied,

⁸² Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 145, quoted in Peipei Qiu with Zhiliang Su and Lifei Chen, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62.

⁸³ Su, *Research on “Comfort Women”*, 361-2.

⁸⁴ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 95.

while it was worth nothing after Japan surrendered.⁸⁵ In fact, many “comfort women” claimed they never received any money.⁸⁶

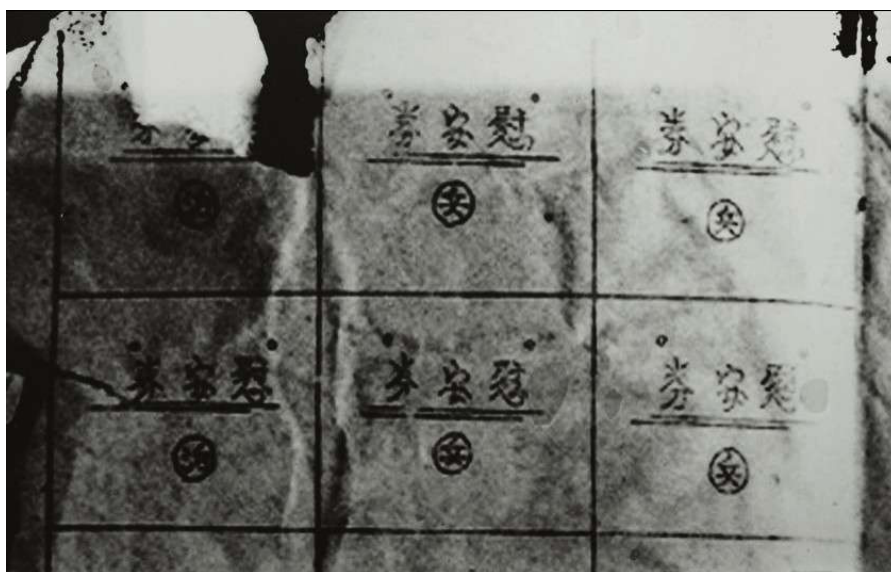


Figure 2.4: A Comfort Station Ticket

A Comfort Station Ticket, n.d., Image, “Erzhan Shiqi Riben Qiangzheng ‘Wei’an Fu’ Zuixibg Caifang Jishi” [二战时期日本强征“慰安妇”罪行采访纪实] Interview Documentary of “Comfort Women” System Survivors, n.d., accessed April 25, 2022.

The other common controversy around “comfort women” is that they were volunteers. The recruitment approaches were discussed earlier, and it is clear that a significant percentage of “comfort women” were abducted and enforced. They were never “volunteers.” In the case of Chinese women, judging from Chinese traditional cultures and social atmosphere, there does not exist a tradition that permits female bodies to be regarded as rewards to the military. In other words, Chinese women will not use their bodies to “comfort” their national military, not to mention the enemy’s soldiers, therefore it makes no sense to say “comfort women” volunteered to serve the Japanese military.

⁸⁵ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 63.

⁸⁶ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 123.

The difficulty of the “comfort women” issue is closely connected to three features: their sufferings in comfort stations, unspeakable experiences in the post-war period, and the long-standing controversies and rumors around them. It is regrettable that the number of surviving victims of the “comfort women” system is decreasing, and it is inevitable that one day all survivors will become history. Besides recording as many of the survivors’ oral history and testimonies as possible, it is also essential to conserve comfort stations as important evidence; they witnessed the traumatic history.

Classification of Comfort Stations

The term “comfort station” is directly derived from Japanese *ianjo*, referring to facilities that housed “comfort women.” Most crimes related to “comfort women” happened in comfort stations. The location of comfort stations, their relationship with the military, and motivations behind comfort stations are focused on by scholars.

The formats of a comfort station could vary, but due to its function, a comfort station usually required multiple individual rooms to host large volumes of Japanese men at the same time.⁸⁷ The Japanese military usually occupied already-existing facilities when they successfully controlled or arrived at a new place; their choices included school buildings, religious centers, and private residences.⁸⁸ On some occasions, established properties might be unable to be accessed, especially in frontlines, then the Japanese would choose to build temporary barracks or tents to host “comfort women.” Generally, there are two types of comfort stations according to

⁸⁷ Cheeyun Lilian Kwon, “Sexual Violence, Imperialism, and Museum Activism: The Case of the War & Women’s Human Rights Museum.,” *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2020): 48, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_crossref_primary_10_1080_13500775_2_020_1743056.

⁸⁸ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 50.

locations: pre-existing buildings and temporary facilities; pre-existing buildings can be further divided by their ownership: public building and private residence.



Figure 2.5: Yuan Zhulin Revisiting the Old Temple Where the Japanese Kept Her in 1940 as a “Comfort Woman”

Book Print, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan’s Sex Slaves*, 2013, https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/hs9vaa/alma991043224786003731.

Comfort stations set up in public buildings were usually in schools, temples, and community centers. These usually had multiple and individual rooms to contain soldiers and “comfort stations,” and were usually landmarks so that the Japanese troops stationed nearby could find comfort stations easily. Besides, for the Japanese, establishing comfort stations on enemy country’s public buildings — some of them even were sacred — was also a form of psychological warfare. According to Yuan Zhulin’s testimony, the Japanese modified a temple into a comfort station, and she was abducted in the temple for years.⁸⁹ Another victim in Jinhua City, a city located in Southeastern China and approximately two hundred miles from Shanghai,

⁸⁹ Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 103-4.

stated that there were three comfort stations in Jinhua during the war; one of them was located in a local elite family's temple.⁹⁰

Besides public buildings, the Japanese military also largely occupied private residences as comfort stations. The former Liji Lane Comfort Stations in Nanjing belonged to a Kuomintang officer, Yang Chunpu. The Liji Lane site was constructed between 1935 and 1937, consisting of ten buildings. In 1937, after Nanjing fell into Japanese control, the Japanese, along with Koreans, soon opened several comfort stations on the site, which lasted until the end of the war.⁹¹ Today, Liji Lane has become an important site for people to learn the “comfort women” history. After several years of conservation work, the government established a memorial museum for “comfort women” on Liji Lane comfort stations’ historic site.

Sometimes when the Japanese were unable to find a suitable established facility for a comfort station, they would choose to build a temporary and simple barrack near where they were stationed. Expecting the frontline conditions, the Japanese military might not be stationed in this place for a long while; thus, a makeshift comfort station will be easier for them to travel with. This type of comfort station, in fact, made up the majority of comfort stations.⁹² A famous example of a simply-constructed comfort station is Yangjiazhai Comfort Station in Shanghai, which opened on January 13, 1938, and was the first military-controlled comfort station in China.⁹³ Yangjiazhai Comfort Station had twelve individual wooden units for services, as well as

⁹⁰ Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, “A Valuable Document Revealing the Japanese Army’s ‘Comfort Stations’: Reading the Jinhua Gyerim Association Articles and Register,” *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094633.2019.1682398>.

⁹¹ Zhixiu Yuan, “‘Nanjing Liji Xiang Wei’an Suo Jiuzhi Chenlie Guan Yu ‘Wei’an Fu ’Lishi de Guhua“ 南京利济巷慰安所旧址陈列馆与‘慰安妇’历史的固化 [the Museum of the Previous Site of Comfort Station in Liji Alley, Nanjing and the Historical Solidification of ‘Comfort Women’],” *Dang’an Yu Jianshe* 档案与建设, no. 2 (February 2016): 53, <https://doc.paperpass.com/journal/20160075dayjs.html>.

⁹² Qiu, with Su, and Chen, *Testimonies*, 54.

⁹³ Su, Chen, and Yao, *172 Comfort Stations*, 488.

other supporting facilities. They were single-story Japanese-style buildings and constructed in pine from Northeastern China.⁹⁴ Compared with other temporary comfort stations, Yangjiazhai Comfort Station had a larger scale; most temporary comfort stations usually only had very simple facilities and shabby facilities.



Figure 2.6: Comfort Station in Yangjiazhai, Shanghai

Comfort Station in Yangjiazhai, Shanghai, 1943, Online Image, accessed December 9, 2021, <http://www.williamandrewsbooks.com/PhotosofComfortWomen.html>.

Though comfort stations that were completely controlled by the military, like the Yangjiazhai Comfort Stations, were commonly seen after the Second Sino-Japanese War expanded, in order to maintain a good reputation, the Japanese military frequently found some representatives to manage comfort stations for them. Thus, based on the relationship with the military, comfort stations could be divided into four categories. The first was completely controlled by the military, like Yangjiazhai Comfort Station. Similarly, there were also completely civilian brothels. Another two common types of comfort stations based on the relationship with the military were 1) military-controlled but with a civilian front; 2) civilian-run comfort stations but provided services to the military.⁹⁵ Under these two situations, the

⁹⁴ Su, Chen, and Yao, *172 Comfort Stations*, 496.

⁹⁵ Chou, "A Cave in Taiwan", 120.

representatives or the owners of the comfort stations usually had deep connections with the military, like veterans. As discussed in previous contexts, a large number of Koreans worked for the Japanese military and recruited young women in Korea, and they also started comfort stations in China to finish the whole “supply chain.” For the Japanese, people from their colonies were easier to control.

The third classification system was first proposed by Professor Sarah Soh in her book *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*. In this book, Professor Soh divided comfort stations according to their establishment motivations. She believes that comfort stations had three motivations: concessionary, paramilitary, and crimes.⁹⁶ Though they were not profitable all the time, the concessionary comfort stations were primarily established for profit reasons by the Japanese or Koreans. In contrast, the paramilitary comfort stations were non-for-profit and had a closer relationship with the military. The criminal comfort stations were more casual, usually established by soldiers on the battlefields or the frontlines.⁹⁷

In Professor Soh’s book, according to the difference of targeted consumers, she further divided the concessionary comfort stations into two subgroups: the House of Entertainment and the House of Prostitution. The House of Entertainment primarily served ranked officers, providing spaces for them to socialize and recreate. Thus, besides sexual services, the House of Entertainment also served food and alcohol. The “comfort women” of House of Entertainment were also selected. A comfort station, which belonged to this category, near the China-Russia border, only admitted “comfort women” who had been trained as kisaeng or geisha. It is noteworthy that some Houses of Entertainment in China not only provided services to ranked officers but also for general soldiers. The comfort station operators would divide different

⁹⁶ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 117-132.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

service time periods for soldiers and officers to make sure the officers had better experiences. As for the Houses of Prostitution, though they were usually owned and managed by civilians, they had a closer relationship with the army; they were monitored and regulated by the Japanese military.⁹⁸ A major function of the Houses of Prostitution was to control the troop's access to sex.⁹⁹ As a result, the Houses of Prostitution usually had to report which "comfort woman" provided services to which soldier daily.¹⁰⁰ Like the House of Entertainment, the House of Prostitution also ranked officers as their priority; the overnight service was only provided to officers.¹⁰¹



Figure 2.7: "Comfort Women" Travel in a Truck

"Comfort Women" Travel in a Truck, n.d., Image, "Erzhan Shiqi Riben Qiangzheng 'Wei'an Fu' Zuixibg Caifang Jishi" [二战时期日本强征“慰安妇”罪行采访纪实] Interview Documentary of "Comfort Women" System Survivors, n.d., accessed April 25, 2022.

⁹⁸ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 120-1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 121-2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

Similarly, Professor Soh also divides the paramilitary comfort stations into two subgroups: Maiden's Auxiliary and Quasi-Brothel.¹⁰² As the name suggested, "comfort women" at the Maiden's Auxiliary type comfort stations were supposed to provide other services besides sex. The Maiden's Auxiliary was generally run by the military for its exclusive use; they were located somewhere hard to reach or frontlines. As a result, "comfort women" were supposed to play traditional female roles for the military, including nurses and maids. "Comfort women" were regarded as another kind of "necessity" under this condition.¹⁰³ One example of this type can be seen in Zhuji. Japan occupied Zhuji City, a small city in Zhejiang Province, on May 17, 1942. In June, they transported six Korean women and five Taiwanese females to Zhuji for their comfort stations.¹⁰⁴ Since Zhuji was not as busy as Hangzhou, an adjacent city and the principal of Zhejiang Province, it was highly possible that these "comfort women" also had to provide manual labor. The Quasi-Brothels were usually located in relatively isolated places or frontlines. Unlike the Maiden's Auxiliary, the Quasi-Brothels generally did not require "comfort women" to do manual jobs.¹⁰⁵ In most cases, the Quasi-Brothels only opened on specific dates and times to control each soldier's visits. These type of comfort stations became a trend in Central China after 1938.¹⁰⁶ "Comfort Women" in Quasi-Brothels, from some perspectives, became vessels to contain the soldiers' desires and anger; they completely lost their self-esteem as individuals.

A common feature of both concessionary and paramilitary comfort stations was their claimed goals; they aimed to minimize the sexual crimes toward the locals, build the moral character of the military, and prevent the STDs' spread among the army.¹⁰⁷ Professor Soh

¹⁰² Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 124-30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁴ Su and Chen, "A Valuable Document," 18.

¹⁰⁵ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 124.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 118.

believes that the claimed goal and war situations were completely different when criminal comfort stations began to appear, which were operated by soldiers on the battlefields. Professor Soh believes that only a part of comfort stations were criminal, which is far away from the truth. Since the “comfort women” system is criminal and unethical, comfort stations, as the “products” of the “comfort women” system, are inherently criminal. The purpose of comfort stations was to provide an authorized space for Japanese military men to practice their sexual violence. The soldiers usually presumptuously raped and abducted enemy country’s women and imprisoned them in garrisons.¹⁰⁸ There did not exist a “non-criminal” like Soh assumed in the previous two categories. The sexual crimes happened in random places and hours from the very beginning of Japan’s invasion of China. In some cases, when the Japanese were stationed somewhere, they would look for some women and rape them anywhere — sometimes even in public. After the crime, the Japanese would not imprison these women in a certain place like a comfort station. The Japanese would let these women go home and call them back when they wanted sexual interactions. They would repeat this again and again until the Japanese left the place. The appearance of so called “criminal” comfort stations, on the one hand, suggested the brutalities of the Japanese became increasingly worse. They lost their hypocritical masks to maintain a good international reputation. On the other hand, it also indicated that the Japanese military began to reach its limits. They had more anger that needed to be vented because they were unable to conquer China as soon as they had wanted.

Again, the classifications of comfort stations are also rough and might be inaccurate. Some comfort stations might meet multiple classifications, while some might meet none of them. The classifications of comfort stations are tools for people to better understand and analyze the

¹⁰⁸ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 130.

brutalities that happened to “comfort women,” observing how they were dehumanized by the Japanese.

Conclusion

This chapter provides some basic background of the “comfort women” issue so that viewers can have a better understanding of it as a part of difficult history. “Comfort women” in China were primarily abducted or kidnapped from areas under Japanese occupation. They are neither “volunteers” nor “paid prostitutes.” They are the victims of the brutal and dehumanizing “comfort women” system. By tracing the history of comfort stations, people can better understand the history of the “comfort women” system and can advocate the importance of conserving difficult heritage. Scholars have proposed different classification systems of comfort stations for further studies. However, no classification of comfort stations can be comprehensive and accurate. The classifications are just tools for people to study and preserve this difficult history.

Chapter 3

Case Study: the Nanjing Museum of the Site of Liji Lane Comfort Stations in Nanjing, China

Introduction

Establishing a memorial museum is an essential and effective way to conserve difficult heritage. In recent decades, as public attention to “comfort women” has increased, several “comfort women” related memorial museums have been established in Asia. Unlike other “comfort women” memorial museums, Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum in Nanjing, China, is established in a previous comfort station site, which helps conserve both the tangible and intangible difficult heritage of “comfort women.” This chapter will trace the history of Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum, discuss its conservation process, and analyze its performance as a memorial museum. This chapter also hopes that the case of the Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum can provide an example and solution for other similar historic sites.

Historical Background of the Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum

Liji Lane is located in one of the busiest neighborhoods in Nanjing, China. The history of the Liji Lane site as a residential place can be traced back to 1910; early residents built traditional Chinese courtyards around the site.¹⁰⁹ A vertical pedestrian alley divided the site into two sections: the east side had a pond and several buildings, and the west had some traditional

¹⁰⁹ Jimin Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci -- the Study of the Public Space of the Modification from Chinese Modern City Small Residence and Its Street Blocks to the Memorial Place” (Master Thesis, Nanjing University, 2016), 32. In the following texts, the “Liji Lane site” refers to the buildings from 2 Liji Lane to 18 Liji Lane, which were used as comfort stations during the Japanese occupation.

Chinese residences.¹¹⁰ The two-section structure of the Liji Lane site remained at least until 1934 or 1935, when the site first started its development.¹¹¹



Figure 3.1: Location of Liji Lane Site, from Google maps

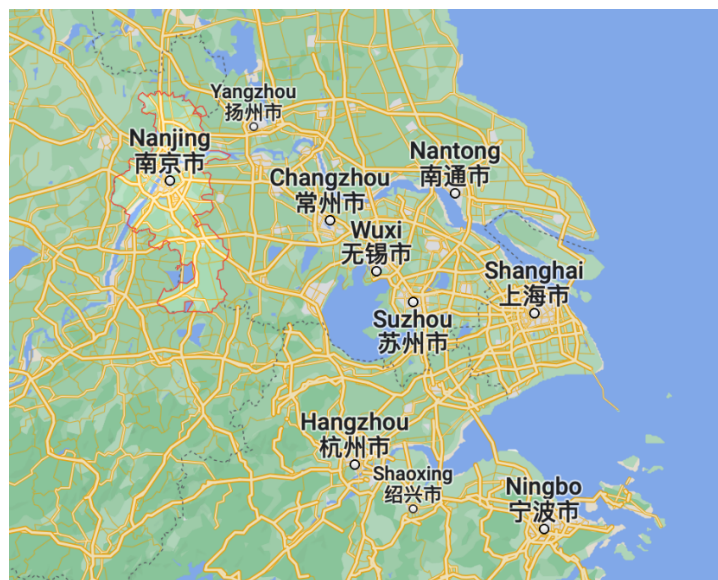


Figure 3.2: Location of Nanjing, from Google Maps

¹¹⁰ Guangjian Liu and Zhixiu Yuan, “Yang Chunpu Yu Nanjing Liji Xiang Wei’an Suo Jiuzhi ---- Guanyu “Puqing Xin Cun” de Kaozheng” 杨春普与南京利济巷慰安所旧址 --- 关于“普庆新村”的考证 [Yang Chunpu and Nanjing Liji Lane Historic Comfort Stations -- a Study about "Puqing New Village],” *Japanese Invasion of China History Research*, 2018, 81, <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.libproxy2.usc.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjIwMzIyEhByYnFoc3lqMjAxODAxMDAxMDA5GghoZm81Yjk3Mw%3D%3D>.

¹¹¹ In fact, the structure even influenced today’s museum planning.

A great number of articles, whether academic or for the public, mention that the Liji Lane site was purchased and developed by a Kuomintang official named Yang Puqing. However, the name “Yang Puqing” is a rumor; the real name of the person should be Yang Chunpu. Yang Chunpu was born in Tianjin City in the late Qing Dynasty and served in the military for decades.¹¹² He served the Qing court (1636 - 1912), the Beiyang Government (1912-1928), and the Kuomintang Government (1925 - 1948). It is unclear when Yang Chunpu purchased the Liji Lane site since many historical materials have been lost. In a domestic political struggle that happened in 1927, all properties of Yang Chunpu were confiscated. The confiscating list suggests that Yang Chunpu owned dozens of properties in Liji Lane. Though the list did not specify the exact amount and locations of his properties, it is reasonable to conclude that Yang Chunpu already owned properties — at least some properties — in Liji Lane in 1927. After the People’s Republic of China’s foundation, Yang Chunpu’s descendants submitted a report about the Liji Lane site’s ownership, stating that Yang Chunpu used 4,000 yuan to purchase the Liji Lane site. The most noticeable information about the report is that the amount and locations of Yang Chunpu’s Liji Lane properties are as the same as those on the confiscating list.¹¹³ Compared with the confiscating list and Yang Chunpu’s descendants’ words, it is clear that Yang Chunpu purchased the Liji Lane site before 1927.

Yang Chunpu did not start the development of the Liji Lane site until 1935 when the original buildings on the site were already broken and unsuitable for living.¹¹⁴ Multiple factors explained why Yang Chunpu did not develop the site until 1935; one possible reason might be a lack of funds. In order to solve the insufficient funding problem, Yang Chunpu started

¹¹² Liu and Yuan, “Yang Chunpu,” 81.

¹¹³ Ibid., 84-5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 85.

fundraising in the first stage of construction. After the first several buildings were completed, he was able to make profits from them so that he had enough budget for further construction.¹¹⁵

According to the words of the site construction contractor's descendants, the original plan was to have nine more buildings north of the current site.¹¹⁶ The construction process was interrupted by the Japanese invasion in 1937, which left the site with ten buildings as well as a not fully-paid final payment to the contractor. Yang Chunpu named the Liji Lane site "Puqing New Village," and thus, many residents believed that his real name was "Yang Puqing." In fact, Yang Chunpu named the site by picking a character ("pu") from his name and wishing this place could have good luck ("qing"); "Puqing" is not his real name.¹¹⁷

The "Puqing New Village" became a residential place after the early development. It was close to the Presidential Palace, only approximately ten minutes' walk. The Presidential Palace was first built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and served as an important office building for the Kuomintang Government from 1927 to 1937.¹¹⁸ It is reasonable to conclude that Yang Chunpu decided to develop the site after he realized the increasing needs for the land around the Presidential Palace and the site's convenient location. As a result, the ten buildings of "Puqing New Village" had different functions and clients: an L-shaped building for commercial and storage uses, an apartment-like building with affordable rental apartments, and eight townhouses that were more luxurious. The affordable apartment building at 2 Liji Lane is a rectangular two-

¹¹⁵ Liu and Yuan, "Yang Chunpu," 85.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. In fact, the contractor of the Liji Lane site was Yang Chunpu's nephew.

¹¹⁷ Liu and Yuan, "Yang Chunpu," 85.

¹¹⁸ "The Presidential Palace | China & Asia Cultural Travel," CHINA & ASIA CULTURAL TRAVEL, December 22, 2015, <https://www.asiaculturaltravel.co.uk/the-presidential-palace/>.

story building.¹¹⁹ Each floor has fourteen rooms, and the two floors are symmetrical. Though each unit only had 10 square meters (approximately 108 square feet), it was still an ideal and affordable rental place for the ordinary employees of the Presidential Palace.¹²⁰ The townhouses at 18 Liji Lane, primarily served higher-ranked officers, providing larger spaces for them in a location close to their working spaces. Accordingly, Yang Chunpu lived in one of the townhouses until he moved to Taiwan in 1949.¹²¹



Figure 3.3: Liji Lane Site Bird View

Nanjing Liji Lane Historic Comfort Station Site Birdview, n.d., Image, “Erzhan Shiqi Riben Qiangzheng ‘Wei’an Fu’ Zuixibg Caifang Jishi” [二战时期日本强征‘慰安妇’罪行采访纪实] Interview Documentary of “Comfort Women” System Survivors, n.d., accessed April 25, 2022.

¹¹⁹ Chengshan Zhu and Guangjian Liu, “‘Wei’an Suo Jiuzhi Baohu Liyong Yu Lishi Jiyi Dangdai Chonggou ---- Yi Nanjing Liji Xiang Wei’an Suo Jiuzhi de Baohu Yu Liyong Weili’ 慰安所旧址保护利用与历史记忆当代重构----以南京利济巷慰安所旧址的保护与利用为例 [Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites and Reconstructing History Memory in Contemporary ---- Using Historic Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Site’s Conservation as an Example],” *Studies on the Historical Materials of Chin’s Resistance War against Japan*, 2016, 32, <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.libproxy2.usc.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjIyEg9renNseWoyMDE2MDEwMDMaCGNwN2x4aTZ0>.

¹²⁰ Liu and Yuan, “Yang Chunpu,” 85. Some articles said the second floor has sixteen rooms.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Unlike the earlier traditional wood-structure Chinese residences on this site, all buildings of “Puqing New Village” were constructed in contemporary styles; they were built in masonry-timber structure.¹²² All buildings used Chinese blue bricks and cement grade 32.5 during construction.¹²³ Both of them are stable materials for housing construction, making it possible to preserve the properties during the war. The cement was also applied to buildings’ exteriors and was broom-finished to increase the texture of the exterior walls.¹²⁴

Since the “Puqing New Village” was newly-built buildings of good quality, after the Japanese military invaded Nanjing in 1937, they soon occupied and transformed the Liji Lane site into two comfort stations. Dongyun Comfort Station was opened in 2 Liji Lane and managed by a Korean brothel operator whose last name was Matsuda, and Guxiang Comfort Station was established in 18 Liji Lane.¹²⁵ The two comfort stations were different.

Dongyun Comfort Station mainly provided services to the ordinary Japanese soldiers; thus, the tiny but individual rooms of the apartment fitted this requirement. Matsuda added some simple but essential furniture to each room, including a desk, a chair, and a tatami, which also provided a nostalgic atmosphere to the soldiers.¹²⁶ The sanitizing facilities, which were supposed to be equipped in each room, were not available. Most “comfort women” in Dongyun Comfort Station were Korean; as a result, the local people gave it the nickname “Korean Hall.”¹²⁷ If all units hosted one “comfort woman,” Dongyun Comfort Station was able to maintain at least

¹²² Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci,” 2.

¹²³ Liu and Yuan, “Yang Chunpu,” 85.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Generally, broom-finished concrete surface was served for further ceramic tiles additions, it is unclear that whether buildings of “Puqing New Village” planned to use ceramic tiles.

¹²⁵ Japan once colonized the Korean Peninsula for decades; the colonial Japanese government required the Koreans to use Japanese names to stabilize their controls. Thus, though Matsuda was a Korean, he had a Japanese name. Matsuda also had comfort station business in Shanghai. And the operator of Guxiang Comfort Station is unclear. Dongyun means “cloud in the east,” and “guxiang” refers to “hometown.”

¹²⁶ Liu and Yuan, “Yang Chunpu,” 86.

¹²⁷ Zhu and Liu, “Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites,” 31.

twenty-eight “comfort women.” Considering the surprisingly high death and disease rates of “comfort women,” during the eight years of Japanese occupation, the total number of “comfort women” who had once confined in 2 Liji Lane should be an astronomical figure. As discussed in Chapter 2, Korean “comfort women” had a relatively lower status compared to Japanese women in the “comfort women” system and were supposed to serve ordinary soldiers; they were unlikely to be treated as humans. Dongyun Comfort Station had several additional rooms to imprison “comfort women” who did not meet the required discipline.¹²⁸ Dongyun Comfort Station also had an attic that was open only to higher-ranked officials. Once the comfort station abducted new “comfort women” who were virgins, they would be placed in the attic first. After they were forced to have their first sexual intercourse with higher-ranked officials, who believed having sex with virgins would bring good luck, these women would “officially” become “comfort women” to serve other ordinary soldiers.¹²⁹

Although Dongyun Comfort Station had a Korean supervisor, the real operator was the Japanese military; it was a military-run comfort station with a civil front. Dongyun Comfort Station was guarded by the Japanese military police with weapons to intimidate the ordinary people. If drunk soldiers did not behave properly, the managers would blow the whistle to get the gendarmeries’ help. The whistle is effective; once drunk soldiers heard the whistle, they would immediately leave to avoid having records on their profiles.¹³⁰ Since the military police was part

¹²⁸ Zhu and Liu, “Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites,” 31.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Guangjian Liu and Ling Zhu, “‘Rijun ‘Wei’an Fu’ Zhidu Zai Nanjing Shishi de Zai Kaocha’ 日军‘慰安妇’制度在南京实施的再考察 [Re-Examination of the Implementation of Japanese ‘Comfort Women’ System in Nanjing],” *Japanese Invasion of China History Research*, 2021, 111, <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.libproxy2.usc.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjIwMzIyEhByYnFoc3lqMjAyMTAxMDEwGgg2ZnhuNjFhcA%3D%3D>.

of the military, Dongyun Comfort Station received long-term and stable support from the military.

Compared with Dongyun Comfort Station, Guxiang Comfort Station is more mysterious and more scholarly attention has been drawn by Dongyun Comfort Station. The relationship between Guxiang Comfort Station and the military is unclear, but it is highly possible that Guxiang Comfort Station once had a close connection with the Japanese military. The Guxiang Comfort Station occupied the townhouses of “Puqing New Village,” which were constructed to host higher-ranked Kuomintang officers; the environment was better than that of Dongyun Comfort Station. As the name suggested, Guxiang Comfort Station aimed to create a sense of home for overseas Japanese; it only had Japanese “comfort women” onsite, suggesting that the Guxiang Comfort Station served ranked officers.¹³¹ As a comfort station for high-ranking officers, Guxiang Comfort Station would also receive protection from the gendarmeries.

The Japanese military once had a military camp close to the Liji Lane site; the Liji Lane site was the most convenient entertaining place for them.¹³² As a result, the two comfort stations were in operation until the Japanese surrendered in 1945. After that, the “Puqing New Village” was returned to Yang Chunpu’s descendants. In the 1950s, after the PRC’s foundation, they refurbished all buildings and transferred the right of use to the government. “Puqing New Village” functioned as multifamily residences and employee dormitories until 2003.¹³³

¹³¹ Zhu and Liu, “Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites,” 31.

¹³² Shenghong Jing, “‘Nanjing Liji Xiang Er Hao ---- Qinhuai Rijun Wei’an Suo Yizhi Kaozheng’ 南京利济巷 2 号 --- 侵华日军慰安所遗址考证 [2 Liji Lane, Nanjing -- Research on Japanese Military Comfort Station],” *Archives and Construction*, August 15, 2004, 38, https://oversea-cnki-net.libproxy2.usc.edu/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2004&filename=DAJS200408015&uniplatform=OVERSEAS_EN&v=yL3KipnozrU_RzHXLf1e5ojIR3UJo7wHVJPYCRtFX09Xu8EELBRLEuTxeF3qmQMW.

¹³³ Liu and Yuan, “Yang Chunpu,” 82.

Reshaping “Puqing New Village” into a Memorial Museum

As the public began to notice the history of “comfort women” in the 1990s, more questions came up during the process: who were “comfort women”? Where were comfort stations? Among all victims of the “comfort women” system who had ever talked about their sufferings in public, Park Young-Shim was one of the most famous “comfort women,” and her story was tightly connected with the fate of the Liji Lane site.

Park Young-Shim was born in Korea in 1921, when Korea was under Japanese control. In 1938, when she was seventeen years old, she was abducted by a Korean policeman, who told her she would be given a well-paid job opportunity in China. Though she tried to refuse the job opportunity, the police forced her onboard a train to Nanjing.¹³⁴ After arriving in Nanjing, she soon realized that her job was as a “comfort woman.” She was imprisoned in Nanjing as a “comfort woman” for over three years. In 1942, after Japan started the Pacific War with the United States, the Japanese military stationed in Myanmar asked the troops in Nanjing to support them with “comfort women.” Park Young-Shim was one of the selected “comfort women.” Along with other “comfort women,” she started her travel from Nanjing, then transferred to Shanghai and Singapore, arrived in Myanmar, and was finally imprisoned in a comfort station in Yunnan Province, China, which is adjacent to Myanmar.¹³⁵ Park Young-Shim served in Myanmar and Yunnan until the Pacific War ended. She was pregnant when she was in Yunnan and was captured in a world-famous “comfort women” picture there. Rumiko Yoshino, a Japanese “comfort women” issue scholar, found out accidentally that Park Young-Shim was the pregnant woman in the 1990s. Since Park Young-Shim lived in North Korea and kept this

¹³⁴ Joseph Joh, “The Seoul Times,” theseoultimes.com, accessed March 23, 2022, <https://theseoultimes.com/ST/?url=/ST/db/read.php%3Fidx=1846>.

¹³⁵ Jing, “2 Liji Lane,” 37.

experience a secret after the war, Rumiko Yoshino and other scholars did not find Park Young-Shim until 2000.¹³⁶



Figure 3.4: Four Korean "Comfort Women," Park Young-Shim is the pregnant one (right most).

Charles H. Hatfield, *Four Korean Comfort Women after They Were Liberated by US-China Allied Forces Outside Songshan, Yunnan Province, China*, September 7, 1944, Online Image, *Association for Asian Studies*, September 7, 1944, <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/teaching-about-the-comfort-women-during-world-war-ii-and-the-use-of-personal-stories-of-the-victims/>.

After Park Young-Shim's story was discovered, she hoped that she could visit where she was imprisoned in Nanjing and Yunnan again.¹³⁷ However, she was unfamiliar with Nanjing and only provided several fragmented clues about the location to scholars. After meticulous research, in 2003, scholars in Nanjing could almost confirm she was once imprisoned in either Dongyun Comfort Station or Guxiang Comfort Station. Park Young-Shim was invited to visit Nanjing in

¹³⁶ Jing, "2 Liji Lane," 37.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

November 2003, and she immediately recognized that she was once imprisoned in the two-story apartment-like building — Dongyun Comfort Station.¹³⁸ Thus, the Liji Lane site became the largest existing comfort station which was confirmed by a “comfort women” system victim.¹³⁹



Figure 3.5: Park Young-Shim Visited 2 Liji Lane, Room 19

Park Young-Shim Visited 2 Liji Lane, Room 19, Where She Was Stationed, November 2003, Online Image, November 2003, <https://m.krzzjn.com/show-403-48698.html>.

2003 was also a critical year for the Liji Lane site from another perspective: the Nanjing government made a plan to demolish this site and put it into other uses. In 2004, the government officially gave permission to demolish the Liji Lane site.¹⁴⁰ Though a great number of scholars and international organizations tried to block the government’s decision, and the government held a conference to discuss the Liji Lane site’s fates with a recommendation to keep the site,

¹³⁸ Jing, “2 Liji Lane,” 39.

¹³⁹ Zhu and Liu, “Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites,” 31-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

two townhouses were torn down.¹⁴¹ After strong opposition to Liji Lane site's demolition both from domestic and overseas sources, the Nanjing government finally stopped the demolition. However, the situation of the Liji Lane site was not improved; it was used as a landfill for years. In the Spring Festival of 2008, a fire resulting from fireworks burnt part of 2 Liji Lane's ceilings and windows, making the architectural conditions even worse. The Nanjing government did not take any action until 2012; the local district administration planned to modify the Liji Lane site into a memorial museum, but the plan was interrupted by other issues.¹⁴² In November 2013, ten years after Park Young-Shim's confirmation, several scholars submitted another statement to demand the Nanjing government conserve the Liji Lane site. In 2014, the Nanjing government finally approved Liji Lane Comfort Stations Historic Site as a municipal cultural relic protection unit. After detailed discussion with professionals and scholars, the Liji Lane site's conservation work started on May 1, 2015, and opened to the public as a memorial museum on December 1, 2015.¹⁴³

The twelve-year gap in the Liji Lane site's conservation work reflects a great number of problems that every difficult history site faces. The buildings on the Liji Lane site were once precarious and not recognized as a protection unit. In China, if a historical site is not acknowledged as a protection unit by the government, even if it has a great historical value, it can be removed with permission. Since the existing buildings of the Liji Lane site were not in

¹⁴¹ Zhu and Liu, "Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites," 33.; Hanyu Chen to Guangjian Liu, "Demolition of the Liji Lane Site," WeChat, April 8, 2022. There is a controversy around the number of the townhouses that were torn down. No newspaper article or academic paper mentioned the exact number. According to some descriptions written before or in 2004, the most common description is that the Liji Lane site had nine or ten buildings related to "comfort women" at that time. While most descriptions after 2004 only mentioned that the Liji Lane site has eight buildings. Thus, some assumed that one or two townhouse(s) of the Liji Lane site was/were torn down during the demolition. After consulting with Liu Guangjian, a researcher at Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum, before construction, the Liji Lane site had ten structures, and nine of them were related to "comfort women" history; two of the total ten were removed during demolition.

¹⁴² The supervision institutions of Liji Lane site had been changed several times during that period.

¹⁴³ Zhu and Liu, "Conserving Historic Comfort Station Sites," 33-4.

good condition, compared with conserving the site, demolishing the old buildings and constructing new ones would be a more economical choice for the local government. Not to mention that the Liji Lane site is in one of the busiest neighborhoods in Nanjing. For the government, selling the site to the real estate developers could make a huge amount of money rather than just simply conserving the site. Some scholars asserted that the government tried to divert people's attention from the difficult history by ignoring it.¹⁴⁴ Some people believe that removing the Liji Lane site could help relieve the tense relationship between China and Japan, signalling to the Japanese that Chinese people have forgiven them. This concept is shortsighted: the Right-Wing Japanese will not even acknowledge the "comfort women" history with Chinese people's forgiveness, and the difficult history will face more serious conservation problems in the future.



Figure 3.6: Historic Liji Lane Site Used as a Landfill

Historic Liji Lane Site Used as a Landfill, n.d., Image, "Erzhan Shiqi Riben Qiangzheng 'Wei'an Fu' Zuixibg Caifang Jishi" [二战时期日本强征“慰安妇”罪行采访纪实] Interview Documentary of "Comfort Women" System Survivors, n.d., accessed April 25, 2022.

¹⁴⁴ Huijun Wang, "'Hepingxue Shijiao Xia Liji Xiang Wei'an Suo Yizhi Quliu Wenti Zhi Zheng' 和平学视角下利济巷慰安所遗址去留问题之争 [Argument about the Liji Lane Historic Comfort Station's Conservation from Peace and Conflict Studies' Perspective]," *China Neoteric and Modern History*, October 20, 2011, 97, https://overseas-cnki-net.libproxy2.usc.edu/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2011&filename=XXBL201110078&uniplatform=OVERSEAS_EN&v=2mfjzmbTWcmNfav9ns-hZQ58fatDHspYJSYHFDbMtmieYFcSz_sRI2WVc4GHnCPp.

Though it is unclear what made the local government decide to conserve the Liji Lane site after putting it on hold for twelve years, the current Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum is a successful example of the memorial museums in China. The conservation process of Liji Lane site was discussed by professionals. Alterations made by later residents were removed, providing an immersive environment for visitors by restoring important and real historical details. Additionally, in general, there are two genres of heritage conservation in China: “conserve as old” and “conserve as new.” As their names suggest, the major difference between them is whether conserved buildings will look like new buildings or old ones. Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum applied “conserve as old;” the new materials applied to the building were intentionally made to look like the old original ones.¹⁴⁵ As a result, the historic atmosphere of Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum was restored as much as possible. For untrained visitors, the old-looking materials not only make the building closer to their understanding of heritage but also bring them back to that age once they step in.

The conservation work also considered the building purposes’ change. Since the Liji Lane site had been used as multifamily residences for decades, the circulation was complex and did not meet the requirements of a museum. As mentioned in earlier texts, the Liji Lane site once was divided into two sections by a vertical alley. Based on this division, the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum planned to conserve historic buildings on the west side and construct new facilities on the east side. Buildings on the east side include research spaces, a garage, and utility rooms, and the west side would be used as the main display space.¹⁴⁶ As a result, the circulation

¹⁴⁵ Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci,” 22.; Hanyu Chen to Guangjian Liu, “Demolition of the Liji Lane Site,” WeChat, April 8, 2022.; Hanyu Chen to Jimin Sha, “Question about Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum’s Conservation,” email, April 9, 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci,” 34.

of visitors and staff are separated, and the functions of each section are clearer as a memorial museum.¹⁴⁷

As a Memorial Museum

On December 1, 2015, Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum first opened to the public. As a memorial museum, the space and exhibition design were carefully considered and planned to attract visitors' sympathy and to provide accurate and unbiased history education to the public. The Museum also aims to expose the past dehumanized behavior, arousing visitors' sympathetic feelings for victims and Chinese patriotism.¹⁴⁸ Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum primarily used two approaches — architecture and exhibition — to achieve its missions.

Heritage hosts memories, providing essential spirit and atmosphere to the space. Memorial museums that are designed based on heritage should maximize the influence of architecture itself. Thus, it is necessary for designers and museum staff to develop a new storytelling frame based on the heritage space so that the museum can better serve for remembering difficult memories.¹⁴⁹ Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum restored the buildings' comfort station period appearance to provide visitors with an immersive environment. A comfort station ticket office was set up at the entrance of the Museum, with a board with names of "comfort

¹⁴⁷ So far, the east side construction is postponed.

¹⁴⁸ Hongfang Sun, "'Bowuguan Yujing Xia Chuangshang Jiyi Chonggou ---- Yi Nanjing Liji Xiang Wei'an Suo Jiuzhi Chenlieguan Weili' 博物馆语境下创伤记忆重构----以南京利济巷慰安所旧址陈列馆为例 [the Reconstruction of Traumatic Memory in the Case of Nanjing Museum of the Site of Lijixiang Comfort Stations from the View of Museum Context]," *Museum*, March 27, 2020, 124, https://oversea-cnki-net.libproxy2.usc.edu/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2020&filename=BOWY202001023&uniplatform=OVERSEAS_EN&v=Hqcd0FRVB9Ql-sdjcsOe0KLOunBfZ2Djw5-nY44wmyFGJ0RVI4UAfzJE2bbN0hrc.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.



Figure 3.7: Historical Photo of Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station

Historical Photo of Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station, Online Image, accessed December 11, 2021, <http://www.guoxue.com/?p=34758>.



Figure 3.8: Today's Liji Lane Comfort Station Site

Dongxu Fang, *Today's Nanjing Comfort Stations Liji Lane Site Museum*, December 1, 2015, Online Image, *Online Image*, December 1, 2015, http://www.cngongji.cn/2015-12/01/c_134873400_6.htm.

women” and a panel of comfort station regulations in Japanese.¹⁵⁰ The names of “comfort women” also can be found on the door of 2 Liji Lane’s every unit. In Room 19 of 2 Liji Lane, the unit where Park Young-Shim was imprisoned for over three years, the interior design is displayed according to Park Young-Shim’s description and other historical materials.¹⁵¹ The display provides visitors a more realistic picture of how “comfort women” lived here. Visitors’ circulation was designed to follow the same route as the Japanese soldiers’ had walked in the comfort station decades ago. This design helps the visitors understand how a comfort station operated. On the other hand, the circulation also demonstrates the miserable lives of “comfort women” by comparison: visitors are free to move around in the building as the Japanese soldiers once did, but “comfort women” were unable to leave their tiny room.

The landscape of Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum has also been carefully designed. A sunken memorial plaza is placed on the east section for large activities. The Museum is bounded by three roads; to create a relatively close space and quiet atmosphere for visitors to learn the history, two sides of the Museum are planted with approximately three feet tall bushes. Pedestrians are able to see activities happening and part of the historic buildings, but visitors on the sunken plaza are not distracted by curious pedestrians.¹⁵² Some walkways of the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum are decorated with

¹⁵⁰ Yan Zhu, ““Lun Wenhua Weidu Xia Chuangshang Bowuguan de Jiye Biaozheng Meixue ---- Yi Nanjing Lijixiang Wei’ansuo Jiuzhi Chenlieguan Weili’ 论文化维度下创伤博物馆的记忆表征美学----以南京利济巷慰安所旧址陈列馆为例 [Study about Memories Representation Aesthetic in Traumatic Museums from Cultural Perspective -- Using Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum as an Example],” *Aesthetics*, February 25, 2019, 45, https://oversea-cnki-net.libproxy2.usc.edu/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2019&filename=MYSD201902010&uniplatform=OVERSEAS_EN&v=dAGk1Psj9nueMPtzLC8-rUQs0dzbiSakoU6TCQZCbI2sStFEy7UJG_y5fz3xd_qh.

¹⁵¹ Sun, “the Reconstruction of Traumatic Memory,” 126.

¹⁵² Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci,” 40-1.

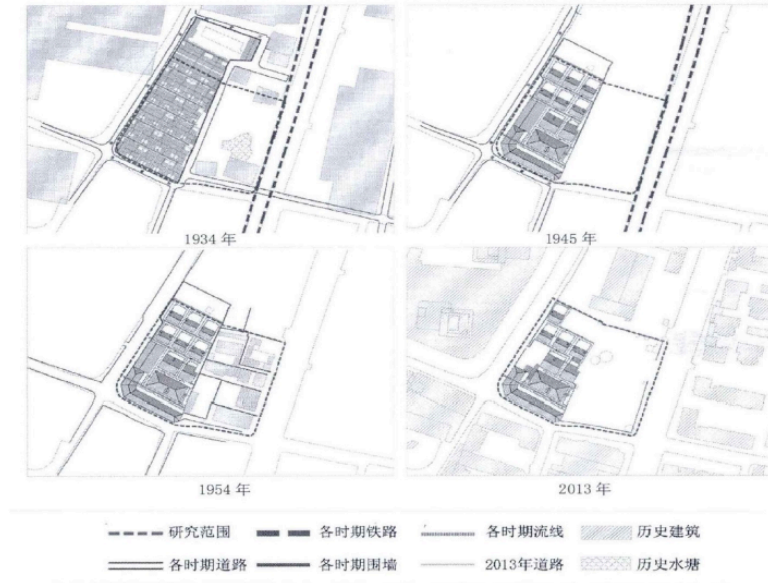


Figure 3.9: The Circulation of Liji Lane Site

Jimin Sha, *The Circulation Changes in Liji Lane Site*, 2016, Image, *Transformation of the Genius Loci -- the Study of the Public Space of the Modification from Chinese Modern City Small Residence and Its Street Blocks to the Memorial Place.*, 2016.



Figure 3.10: Black Stones of Liji Lane Site

Zhang Yu, *Black Stones of Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum*, 2017, Online Image, 2017, <https://dxxg.njust.edu.cn/t217/7b/76/c6432a162678/page.htm>.

irregular stones, referring to the skulls of “comfort women” system victims.¹⁵³ The stone metaphor can also be found in the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre near the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum.

Unlike traditional museums, items displayed in memorial museums usually do not have any connection with art history or archaeology.¹⁵⁴ The meanings of displays are given by humans and history. For example, the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum exhibits a tube of potassium permanganate solution donated by Lei Guiying, another “comfort women” system victim. “Comfort women” were supposed to use potassium permanganate solution to sanitize themselves in comfort stations. The physical formats of memorial museums’ displayed items have never been changed, but when people give them specific definitions and historical backgrounds, they have further meanings, just like the potassium permanganate solution means little without the given background.

Since visitors might be unable to learn information directly from some displays, the text becomes an essential and critical method to introduce displayed items in memorial museums. For art museums, texts are usually appeared in the format of wall labels, providing basic information about each item and leaving large spaces for visitors to appreciate artworks. However, in memorial museums, texts should be comprehensive. Texts in the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum are divided into three categories. Some texts introduce an unbiased historical background to visitors as basic knowledge. Thus, visitors can better immerse themselves into the atmosphere created by the architecture. Some texts are presented as wall labels and annotations.

¹⁵³ Sha, “Transformation of the Genius Loci,” 52.

¹⁵⁴ Zhu, “Memories Representation Aesthetic,” 43.

Similar to the first category, this classification of texts also has an explanatory function but is closer to the function of wall labels in art museums.¹⁵⁵

The Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum also widely applied images in exhibitions. The majority of images are historic. Since many comfort stations have been demolished, historic images prove the existence of comfort stations and help visitors learn the history. Visitors can study sites that no longer exist from old photos.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, unlike texts, appreciating images is more straightforward. A memorial museum faces visitors of all social status and ages; using images can help visitors to better understand the historical context. Another exhibition element that is designed for all visitors is video. Videos complement images and texts. As a major component of the documentation of public history, in some people's ideas, a video recording might be more powerful and close to the truth. Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum displays journalistic reports from China Central Television, the biggest governmental-controlled media institution, a documentary supervised by Professor Su Zhiliang, and other documentaries related to "comfort women."¹⁵⁷ Videos and images visualize the scenarios provided by texts so that people can establish a comprehensive acknowledgment of the history of comfort stations.

Texts, images, and videos are traditional approaches to displaying the history of the Liji Lane site. The Museum also uses up-to-date technologies to tell the difficult history: an AR (Augmented Reality) map mobile application is used in the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum. Since there are a considerable number of comfort stations in Nanjing that are not reshaped into memorial museums or have disappeared in urban development, the application also

¹⁵⁵ Zhu, "Memories Representation Aesthetic," 44.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 44-5.

includes these sites' histories.¹⁵⁸ With this GIS-based application, users can scan QR codes in any comfort station — not only limited to Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museums — to read about the difficult histories on their phones.¹⁵⁹ The application breaks the limitation of spaces to allow the public to learn the “comfort women” history even beyond the Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum. Additionally, an augmented reality (AR) map application also helps to solve two problems the “comfort women” studies are facing. First, the traditional historic material-based research method does not work for “comfort women” issues because many written documents and “comfort women” are lost. Second, for the public, the topic is too heavy and specific to find accurate information. The details are buried in academic research.¹⁶⁰ The AR technology has its born advantage to solve the two problems. People are naturally interested in new technologies; as a result, using an AR map application in the museum and in Nanjing can activate their motivations to learn history. An AR map provides an immersive feeling to its users so that people can have completely different experiences with the “comfort women” history.¹⁶¹

Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum also considers aesthetic expression to demonstrate the sufferings that “comfort women” once had. A statue of a “comfort women” stands at the outdoor entrance of the Museum. The statue is inspired by the famous picture of Park Young-Shim, capturing the helplessness and depression of a pregnant “comfort woman.”

¹⁵⁸ See the application's website: <https://armapper.cn/en/map>. The application has two branches. One is developed based on Park Young-Shim's experiences, tracing her life from Korea to China to Myanmar. The other is an interactive map in Nanjing; users can check the location of comfort stations in Nanjing.

¹⁵⁹ Yunzhu Peng et al., ““Wei'an Fu” Gonggong Chuangshang Jiye de Shuzihua Jiangou ---- Yi “Nanjing Diqu Qinhuai Rijun Wei'ansuo de AR Gushi Ditu” Weili' 慰安妇公共创伤记忆的数字化建构----以南京地区侵华日军慰安所的 AR 故事地图为例 [Digital Memory Construction of Public Trauma Arising from 'Comfort Women'—Taking the AR Map of Japanese-Built Comfort Stations in Nanjing as a Case Study],” *Library Tribune*, June 29, 2020, 72-3, https://oversea-cnki-net.libproxy2.usc.edu/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2020&filename=TSGL202011013&uniplatform=OVERSEAS_EN&v=4i6Uxm7jrONS954hUy89jkbDPGQHPGgNsvHvknB4iO8YjFRY3AT_I3as5O3lmZOR

¹⁶⁰ Peng et al., “Digital Memory Construction,” 70.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 75-7.

Also, the statue prompts the visitors' curiosity about the "comfort women" victims. The exhibition also displays the historical images and videos of Qiuzi, an opera related to "comfort women." Qiuzi was finished in 1941 and is based on a true story. Qiuzi and her husband were married three months. Her husband was conscripted due to the Second Sino-Japanese War, and Qiuzi was tricked into working as a "comfort woman." They unexpectedly meet each other in a comfort station in China and then committed suicide together.¹⁶² The statue and opera both apply art techniques to activate visitors' sympathy to "comfort women" to reach the Museum's educational mission.

Conclusion

All displays, as well as architectural designs in Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum, aim to create an immersive space for its visitors. Reshaping a difficult heritage in a memorial museum does not simply equal putting all relative items in the museum; the reshaping process requires professional knowledge in heritage conservation, and museum studies, as well as other related fields. It is also necessary to consider the historic design of architecture.

¹⁶² Zhu, "Memories Representation Aesthetic," 45.

Chapter 4

Two Forgotten Comfort Station Historic Sites in Zhuji, China

Introduction

Though Liji Lane Comfort Station Museum in Nanjing, China is a great example of comfort stations' conservation, in China, a great number of comfort stations have been forgotten by the public. The majority of them disappeared during city development; only a small number of historic comfort station sites remained. This chapter will explore two comfort station historic sites in Zhuji City, China, and analyze how conservation might work for relatively small-scale comfort stations.¹⁶³

Historic Backgrounds of Two Comfort Stations in the Garden Hill Neighborhood

Compared with the comfort stations lost to history, the two comfort station historic sites in Zhuji, Da Taimen (the Grand Taimen) and Hanazono Mineto (the Top of the Garden Hill), are relatively lucky: they were noticed by the government before demolition.¹⁶⁴ The two historic comfort station sites are both located in Xiangdian Alley, which was named after a religious goods store (“xiangdian” in Chinese), and Xiangdian Alley is located in Huayuan-ling, or the

¹⁶³ Before introducing the two historic comfort stations sites, it is better to give some brief introductions to Zhuji City. Zhuji is a prefecture-level city in Zhejiang Province, Eastern China, a one-hour drive from Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, and a three-hour driving from Shanghai. Zhuji is a part of Shaoxing City geologically. Zhuji is famous for its hosiery and pearl industries, as well as its long history.

¹⁶⁴ Taimen (台门 in Chinese) is a traditional residence style in Zhuji City and neighboring cities. The term Taimen originally referred to the privileged class' residences. Eventually, it became a style of residence; different branches of a large family clustered living in a Taimen. Taimen residents will not disturb each other unless there is an important event, like the Spring Festival or a family member's marriage. The Taimen Style is close to Siheyuan, the famous Chinese courtyard, but serves more residents with more privacy. “Grand Taimen” is a nickname for the comfort station; the real name is unclear. In the following texts, the two comfort stations will be called “the Grand Taimen” and “Hanazono Mineto” for convenience.

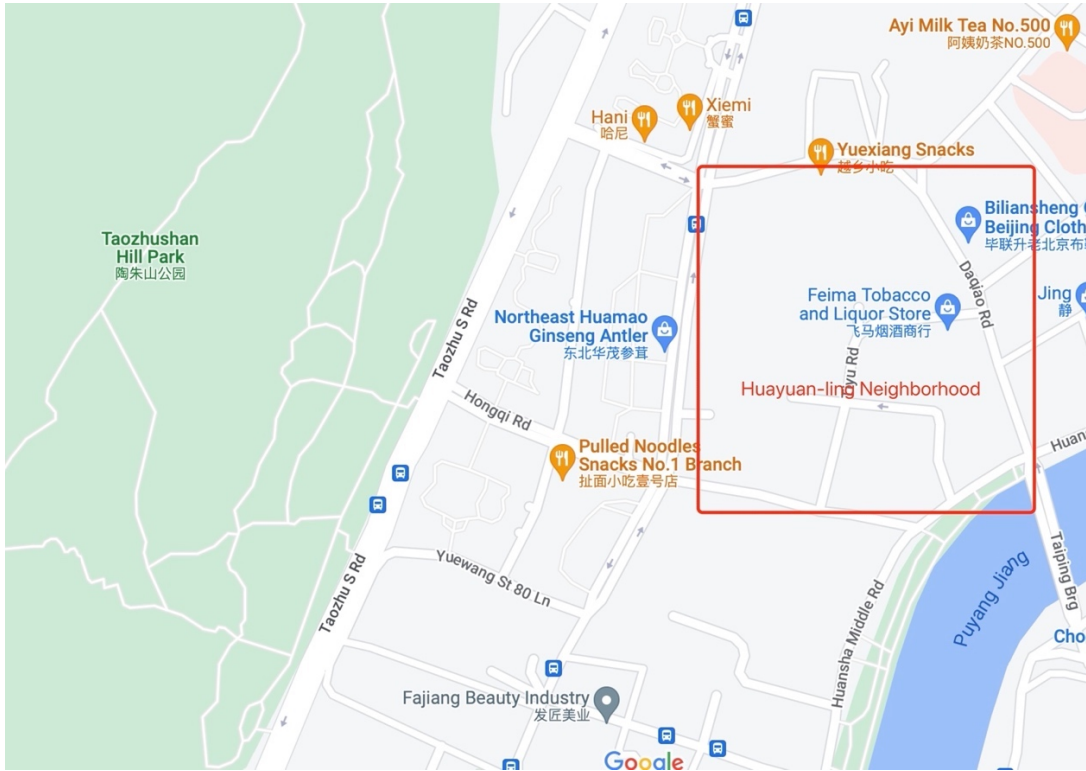


Figure 4.1: Location of Garden Hill / Huayuan-ling Neighborhood

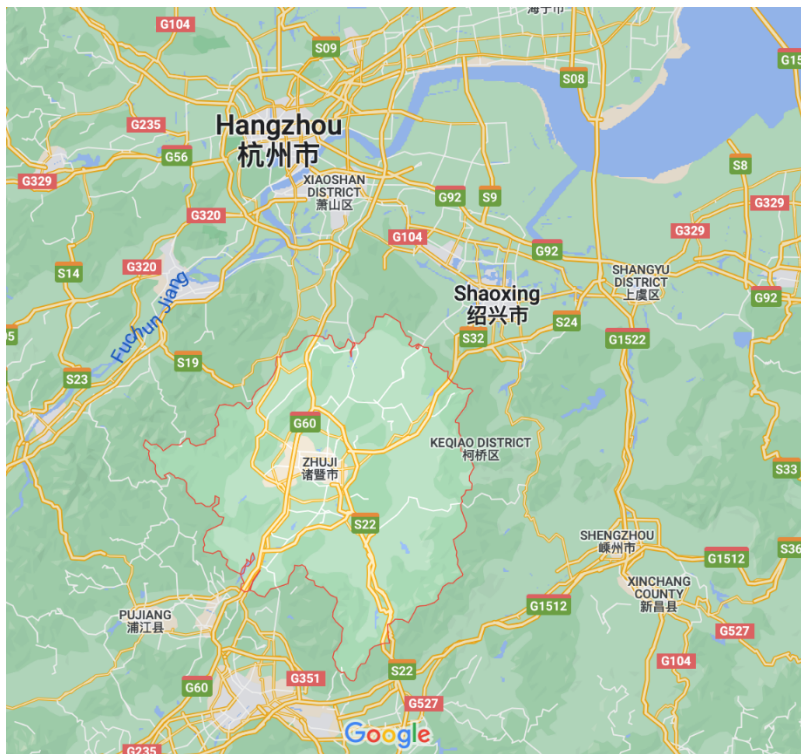


Figure 4.2: Location of Zhuji City, from Google Maps

Garden Hill Neighborhood.¹⁶⁵ Containing hundreds of residential buildings that were constructed during the late Qing Dynasty (1840 - 1912) and the Republic of China (1912 - 1949) period, people who once lived in Garden Hill Neighborhood were upper-middle class. The Garden Hill Neighborhood was once one of the busiest residential neighborhoods in Zhuji, and the former government building was only a short distance away from the Garden Hill Neighborhood. In fact, the surrounding district of the Garden Hill Neighborhood is the city center of Zhuji today. The Garden Hill Neighborhood includes a considerable number of Taimens, as well as some large-scale private residences. Most architecture in the Garden Hill Neighborhood includes multiple individual rooms, which is an essential element of comfort stations.

The Japanese military completely controlled Zhuji on May 17, 1942.¹⁶⁶ Since the majority of Garden Hill Neighborhood residents fled to the suburbs in a rush, furniture and other large items were left in the neighborhood. With the convenient location, the Garden Hill Neighborhood became the Japanese target soon after they conquered Zhuji; they kicked out the remaining residents and occupied the whole Garden Hill Neighborhood.¹⁶⁷ The Grand Taimen and Hanazono Mineto were established soon after.

The two comfort stations of the Garden Hill Neighborhood served different clientele. The Grand Taimen, as its name suggested, was located in a Qing Dynasty Taimen.¹⁶⁸ Local people

¹⁶⁵ Yin Zhu, “‘Xiangdian Longtang Wei’an Suo’ [香店弄堂慰安所] Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” in ‘Xue Yu Lei de Sushuo—Huiyi Qinhuo Rijun Zai Zhuji de Baoxing’ [血与泪的诉说 ---- 回忆侵华日军在诸暨的暴行] Tales of Blood and Tears—Recalling the Atrocities of the Invading Japanese Army in Zhuji, ed. Zhuji City CPC Committee Party History Research Office (Zhonggong Dangshi Chubanshe (Chinese Communist Party History Publisher), 2010), 39. Yin Zhu is a local historian. “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley” was written based on his interviews with people who once lived next to Xiangdian Alley’s comfort stations. Currently, it is the most comprehensive research on the two comfort stations of Xiangdian Alley. Other research is based on this source.

¹⁶⁶ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 39. Since 1941, the political situation in Zhuji City was stalemated between three parties: the Japanese military, the Communist Party, and the Kuomintang.¹⁶⁶ In the spring of 1942, China and the United States cooperated, and air attacked Tokyo. To avoid further cooperation from China and the U.S., the Japanese started the Zhejiang-Jiangxi Campaign to fight China and the U.S. joint forces.

¹⁶⁷ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 39-40.

¹⁶⁸ Some newspaper accounts said the Taimen belonged to the Jin Family.

called the Grand Taimen Comfort Station “Chinese Hall,” indicating that all “comfort women” of the Grand Taimen were local Chinese women. The Grand Taimen was a middle-to-large scale comfort station. There were around twenty-five to thirty Chinese women imprisoned in the Grand Taimen Comfort Station; they primarily served ordinary Japanese soldiers and ordinary Chinese men.¹⁶⁹ As a result, each of them was forced to serve at least five people every day, and sometimes the number could even reach over thirty.¹⁷⁰

Most “comfort women” in the Grand Taimen Comfort Station were from suburban areas of Zhuji; they were kidnapped directly by the Japanese troops.¹⁷¹ The Japanese military required not only living essentials but also a considerable number of “comfort women” from the local government.¹⁷² The youngest “comfort woman” of the Grand Taimen Comfort Station, who was only fourteen years old at that time, was caught by the Japanese military when she was doing farm work in the countryside. The Japanese soldiers did not treat her gently; in contrast, she was popular because of her age. She was so young that she screamed a lot when the Japanese soldiers forced her into sexual intercourse. The Japanese soldiers then beat her fiercely. She died after she was imprisoned in the Grand Taimen Comfort Station for three months.¹⁷³ Besides women drafted from the rural areas, some “comfort women” of the Grand Taimen Comfort Station were students, workers, and teachers before they were imprisoned. A junior high school girl was kidnapped by the Japanese on her way back home from school. Since she attended a boarding school and asked for an absence, her parents did not realize she was abducted until one week later.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 39-40.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

The Japanese military also used the offer of job opportunities to attract and trick local women. A newly married couple was separated because the husband was conscripted. One of their relatives noticed that a wealthy family was hiring maids in the city center with a satisfying salary, which s/he thought would be a great job opportunity for the wife. The wife went for the job, only to find that she and her relative were tricked by the Japanese military. The “job” was to be a “comfort woman” rather than a maid.¹⁷⁵

Since none of these “comfort women” were “voluntary,” the operator of Grand Taimen Comfort Station created strict rules to control them. The operator first confiscated their traditional Chinese style outerwear and forced them to wear Japanese clothes as well as hairstyles.¹⁷⁶ Considering that China and Japan were at war at the time, if a “comfort woman” succeeded in escaping, the local people might be unwilling to help her due to her apparel. More importantly, a woman in Japanese style apparel was noticeable and easy to be located. The Grand Taimen Comfort Station operator also invited Hanazono Mineto’s Korean “comfort women,” who were able to speak Japanese and were very familiar with Japanese cultures, to teach the Chinese “comfort women.”¹⁷⁷ These cultural influences were intended to “domesticate” Chinese “comfort women.” On the other hand, the operator also used this approach to improve the Grand Taimen Comfort Station’s customer experiences. In addition, Chinese “comfort women” were not allowed to use their own names in the Grand Taimen; they used either “floral names” or numbers as identifications.¹⁷⁸ The identities of Chinese “comfort women” — psychologically and socially — were blurred under the domestication process. They were no

¹⁷⁵ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 41-2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ “Floral names” are fake names used by prostitutes or geishas in ancient China but using “floral names” does not mean “comfort women” are prostitutes.

longer individuals but a number or a “floral name.” The harsh regulations also prevented “comfort women” from escaping since the Grand Taimen’s “comfort women” were locals.

The manager of the Grand Taimen Comfort Station was a Japanese woman. It was widely believed that she was a geisha in Japan before she came to China to “comfort” the Japanese military.¹⁷⁹ This was very common among the first groups of the “comfort women” brought to China from overseas. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Japanese military would loan “comfort women” some money. Once a “comfort woman” paid off her debts, she would be free. As a result, a great number of the first wave of “comfort women” chose to stay in China, using their connections in the military to start comfort station businesses.¹⁸⁰ They were the “comfort women” system’s victims and perpetrators, but also victims of the patriarchal society. Considering the relationship between the operator and the Japanese military, Grand Taimen Comfort Station was a civil-run comfort station with strong connections with the military. As a result, “comfort women” of the Grand Taimen Comfort Station were supposed to circulate around the neighboring suburbs to fulfill the desires of rural-based Japanese soldiers.¹⁸¹ Despite that, many Japanese units stationed in Zhuji’s suburbs also abducted and imprisoned local women. A group of Japanese soldiers was stationed in a village in Northwest Zhuji and required the chief to hand over one female as their “comfort woman.” A widow was chosen, and she also had to provide manual labor during her three-year imprisoned life.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 40. Her name is unknown.

¹⁸⁰ Zhen Zheng and Wei Song, “‘Changhen Dangbei Hangcheng Salei ---- Ji Rijun Qinhuo Qijian Chuxian Zai Hangzhou de Wei’an Fu’ [长恨当悲 杭城洒泪 ---- 记日军侵华期间出现在杭州的慰安妇] Remembering the Hate Tearing in Hangzhou ---- in Memory of ‘Comfort Women’ in Hangzhou during the Japanese Invasion Period,” *ZHEJIANG ARCHIVES*, July 25, 1997, 17.

¹⁸¹ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 40.

¹⁸² Qunxian Liu, “‘Xue de Jiyi’ [血的记忆] Memories in Blood,” in ‘Xue Yu Lei de Sushuo—Huiyi Qinhuo Rijun Zai Zhuji de Baoxing’ [血与泪的诉说 ---- 回忆侵华日军在诸暨的暴行] Tales of Blood and Tears—Recalling the Atrocities of the Invading Japanese Army in Zhuji, ed. Zhuji City CPC Committee Party History Research Office (Zhonggong Dangshi Chubanshe (Chinese Communist Party History Publisher), 2010), 69.

Similar to the Grand Taimen Comfort Station, Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station was also operated by a civilian. The operator was a young male named Kaneshiro Reikon, who was from Uiju, Korea.¹⁸³ Local people gave two nicknames to the Hanazono Mineto. One was “high steps” because the architecture had several steps for people to climb and enter. The other one was “the Japanese Hall,” although it did not have any Japanese “comfort women” at all.¹⁸⁴

In June 1942, one month after the Japanese controlled Zhuji, they transported six Korean “comfort women” and five Taiwanese “comfort women” from Hangzhou to Zhuji to serve the Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station.¹⁸⁵ Though there was no direct evidence that could clarify whether Kaneshiro Reikon was just a representative of the Japanese army or the real owner of Hanazono Mineto, it was confirmed that they had connections. According to a historical document revealed in recent years, there were seven Korean women who lived in Hanazono Mineto in 1944, and Professor Su Zhiliang believed that they were all “comfort women.”¹⁸⁶ Professor Su Zhiliang made a name list of Korean “comfort women” in Hanazono Mineto in 1944 from the historical document (Table 1). All places of origin on this list are on Korean Peninsula, which proves that these women were all from Korea.¹⁸⁷ But Kaneshiro Tamasaki was probably not a “comfort woman.” She shared the same family name as the operator of Hanazono Mineto, Kaneshiro Reikon, and both of them were from Uiju. Considering the traditional chastity

¹⁸³ Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, “A Valuable Document Revealing the Japanese Army’s ‘Comfort Stations’: Reading the Jinhua Gyerim Association Articles and Register,” *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094633.2019.1682398>. Today’s Uiju is a part of North Korea. Kaneshiro Reikon was born in 1920. When he started Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station in 1942, he was only twenty-two years old.

¹⁸⁴ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 39.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Hangzhou is the capital of Zhejiang Province, approximately fifty-five miles from Zhuji.

¹⁸⁶ The document is the registration of the Gyerim Association in Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province, during the Second Sino-Japanese War. People who were on this list were all from Gyerim, Korea. Some Korean men’s occupations on this list were comfort station owners. Some Korean women lived at the same address as these men, while their occupations were blank. As a result, Professor Su believes that these Korean women were “comfort women.” Hanazono Mineto is also listed on the registration.

¹⁸⁷ Su and Chen, “A Valuable Document,” 18.

philosophy of East Asian countries, it was almost impossible that a man was willing to see his family members become “comfort women.” As a result, she might be a relative or even the wife of Kaneshiro Reikon.¹⁸⁸

Table 1: Name List of “Comfort Women” at the Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station in Zhuji¹⁸⁹

No.	Name	Age (years)	Place of Origin	Current Residence
1	Sim Ruibun 沈瑞粉	22	Jinju	Hanazono Mineto
2	Jang Malsun 张末顺	30	Jungyeong	Same
3	Baek Woljeong 白月净	24	Hwangju	Same
4	Bak Aeji 朴爱基	30	Seoheung	Same
5	Geum Chunja 金春子	22	Haeju	Same
6	Geum Geumdo 金今道	23	Yeongil	Same
7	Kaneshiro Tamasaki 金城玉先	21	Uiju	Same

“Comfort women” of Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station were completely “Japanized” because they were trained to serve ranked Japanese officers and businessmen; they wore Japanese style clothes and hairstyles and only spoke Japanese.¹⁹⁰ Since these “comfort women” were unable to communicate with the local people and knew nothing about Zhuji, they were less

¹⁸⁸ Korea does not have the tradition to change their last names after marriages, but Japan does. Considering Korea was under Japan’s control during that period, it is possible if they were a couple.

¹⁸⁹ Su and Chen, “A Valuable Document,” 18.

¹⁹⁰ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 39.

likely to escape from the system. Even though they were supposed to do manual labor sometimes, Hanazono Mineto's "comfort women" had better treatment compared to the "comfort women" in the Grand Taimen Comfort Station. These Korean "comfort women" of Hanazono Mineto were even allowed to go outside freely.¹⁹¹

However, the freedom was superficial. The Hanazono Mineto had a set of strict regulations and systems to maintain its operation. As with many other comfort stations, the hours of Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station were also divided into different periods for different ranks of officers. The night hours were usually reserved only for higher-ranked officers, and they were allowed to stay overnight at the comfort stations. Jeong Giyeong was born in 1922 in the South Gyeongsang Province of today's South Korea. In 1944, when he was a student at Tokyo Imperial University (today's University of Tokyo), Jeong Giyeong was forced to join the Daegu Infantry 80th Regiment as a "special student volunteer soldier." His unit arrived in Zhuji in the July of 1945, one month before the Japanese surrender. One night, Jeong Giyeong went to the Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station as an officer cadet and met Kanasaku Sachiko, a "comfort woman" who was also from South Gyeongsang Province. They had a long talk because of nostalgia until a regiment captain came to the comfort station. The regiment captain visited Kanasaku Sachiko frequently, so he called Kanasaku Sachiko's name loudly even though he knew she already had a client. Jeong Giyeong would get in trouble if he was found — he was only an officer cadet and was prohibited from visiting comfort stations at night. Kanasaku Sachiko decided to hide Jeong Giyeong because they were from the same place and had a warm conversation, even if it might

¹⁹¹ Zhu, "Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley," 39.

cost her life. The regiment captain did not know what happened; Kanasaku Sachiko saved his life.¹⁹²

One year later, in 1946, Jeong Giyeong had already left the army and was planning to go back home. He accidentally met Kanasaku Sachiko and hundreds of other “comfort women” in Shanghai; they were abandoned by the Japanese military and tried to go back home.¹⁹³ Jeong Giyeong and other people who were sympathetic to “comfort women” decided to write a letter to Captain Taylor of the United States to seek help.¹⁹⁴ On March 6, 1946, two warships set out for Busan from Shanghai, and one of them was used to send these “comfort women” home. After the war, Jeong Giyeong became a professor at Jinju Agricultural College (today’s Gyeongsang National University) in South Korea.¹⁹⁵

The story happened between Jeong Giyeong and Kanasaku Sachiko reflected multiple layers of the “comfort women” system. Comfort stations had strict hour rules for different ranked officers, and the punishments were severe. Even an officer cadet from a top university needed to follow the strict rule; otherwise, he would be killed. Moreover, a considerable number of “comfort women” in China were recruited from Korea and abandoned by the Japanese at the end of the war. Also, Jeong Giyeong recalled that there were around thirty “comfort women” in the Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station in his story. According to Professor Su Zhiliang’s table, a

¹⁹² Kimi Kawana, ed., “Kanasaku Sachiko,” *Asahi Shimbun (Japan, Osaka)*, September 2, 1991, <http://database.asahi.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/library2e/main/top.php>.

¹⁹³ Kimi Kawana, ed., “Kanasaku Sachiko,” *Asahi Shimbun (Japan, Osaka)*, September 2, 1991, <http://database.asahi.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/library2e/main/top.php>.

¹⁹⁴ Some translated the captain’s name into Captain Terra. After further research, the United States military did not have a Captain Terra. The original text of this story is in Japanese, and the pronunciation of the captain’s name is closer to “Taylor.” Another letter from the Consul General at Shanghai to the Secretary of State in 1945 also mentions someone named “Captain Taylor.” (See: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d452>) The two Captain Taylor should be the same person. As a result, here used “Captain Taylor” instead of “Captain Terra.”

¹⁹⁵ Kimi Kawana, ed., “Kanasaku Sachiko,” *Asahi Shimbun (Japan, Osaka)*, September 2, 1991, <http://database.asahi.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/library2e/main/top.php>.

potential list of “comfort women” at Hanazono Mineto, there were only six or seven “comfort women” listed in 1944; not to mention that Kanasaku Sachiko’s name was not on the list.¹⁹⁶

Thus, the real number of “comfort women” in the Hanazono Mineto is unclear.

Kanasaku Sachiko was lucky to get back to her hometown. In fact, many “comfort women” were sold by the Japanese to ordinary Chinese men after the war at low prices.¹⁹⁷ Their voices were lost after that. As important witnesses of their sufferings, the two comfort stations in Xiangdian Alley, the Garden Hill Neighborhood, were modified into multifamily residences until the 2010s.

On the Way to Reformation

Starting in 2006, the Zhuji government started the “Historic City Center Reformation Plan.” As a part of the historic city center, the Garden Hill Neighborhood was also included in the plan in the late 2010s. By 2020, all Garden Hill Neighborhood residents moved out. In 2016, before the residents of the Garden Hill Neighborhood started moving out, scholars confirmed there were two historic comfort station sites in the neighborhood.¹⁹⁸ As a result, some residents worried about the fates of two comfort stations. Since the two buildings were still in good condition and had significant historical meanings, it is important to conserve the two comfort stations carefully. The local government noticed the controversy and decided to reshape the two former comfort stations into a memorial museum as well as an educational center. At the same

¹⁹⁶ Su and Chen, “A Valuable Document,” 24.

¹⁹⁷ Zhu, “Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley,” 46. A great number of “comfort women” were brought to Hangzhou for sale after the war. The Japanese troops would cover their face and numbered them, so the buyers – most were Chinese men -- could not pick them from their outlooks. Once buyers paid, they were allowed to pick a woman by number.

¹⁹⁸ Zhuhua He, “‘Zhuji Shouci Queren Yichu Rijun Wei’an Suo Jiuzhi’ [诸暨首次确认一处日军慰安所旧址] Zhuji Confirmed a Historic Japanese Comfort Station Site for First Time,” *Shaoxing Ribao (Shaoxing, Chia)*, January 20, 2016, http://epaper.sxnews.cn/sxrb/html/2016-01/20/content_6_2.htm.



Figure 4.3: Today's Hanazono Mineto

Xuemin Zhang, "Hanazono Mineto," *the Historic Comfort Station Site in Zhuji*, 2020, Online Image, 2020, <http://www.shaoxing.com.cn/xinwen/p/2813856.html>.



Figure 4.4: Potential Historic Grand Taimen Comfort Station Site

Photo by author in 2020.

time, the historical environment of the Garden Hill Neighborhood will be conserved as much as possible. Some news articles published in 2020 said that the Architectural Design and Research Institute of Zhejiang University would take responsibility for the Garden Hill Neighborhood's design.¹⁹⁹ According to an announcement for the result of the Garden Hill Neighborhood Planning Project published in January 2022, architect Guo Weihong and his team from the Architectural Design and Research Institute of South China University of Technology will oversee the neighborhood's reformation.²⁰⁰

Though the local government has made decisions, many concerns about the Garden Hill Neighborhood's future need to be clarified. The most critical one is the current condition of the two comfort stations. Since some architecture of the Garden Hill Neighborhood is in unstable condition, it is not possible to enter the neighborhood without permission. Thus, the current conditions of the two buildings are unclear. The two historic comfort station sites were both built between the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century with wood, mud, and bricks. The two sites were empty for over two years, and it is possible that they have had some damage. The design team should check the building conditions as soon as possible and make a comprehensive plan to conserve them. If the two historic comfort station sites have some parts damaged or fallen, they should be carefully collected and stored for further studies.

¹⁹⁹ “‘Huayuan-ling Yuan Rijun ‘Wei’an Suo’ Jiuzhi, Yi Naru ‘Laocheng Yinxiang’ Zhengti Baohu’ [花园岭原日军‘慰安所’旧址，已纳入‘老城印象’整体保护] the Historic Comfort Station Sites of the Garden Hill Neighborhood Have Been Included in the ‘Historical City Center Impression’ Conservation Plan,” www.zhuji.gov.cn, June 29, 2020, http://www.zhuji.gov.cn/art/2020/6/29/art_1659200_49311154.html.

²⁰⁰ “‘Zhujishi ‘Jiyang Yinji’ Lishi Wenhua Jiequ (Huayuan-ling Qukuai) Gaizao Gongcheng Sheji Zhaobiao’ [诸暨市‘暨阳印记’历史文化街区（花园岭区块）改造工程设计招标] the Tender Results of the Garden Hill Neighborhood Reformation Plan,” www.zhuji.gov.cn, January 20, 2022, http://www.zhuji.gov.cn/art/2022/1/20/art_1388404_59066827.html. According to some other governmental documents, the masterplans should be finished in seventy calendar days after signing the contract. The public announcement of tender results was released on January 20, 2022. Unfortunately, until April 20, 2022, no masterplan is released. I also wrote an email to the lead architect Guo Weihong, but have not received any responses yet.

Though they are empty now, the two buildings were both built as vernacular architecture and were primarily used as multifamily residential houses for decades. As a result, the circulations around the two buildings serve residents rather than visitors. In addition, unlike the Liji Lane site, the two historic comfort station sites of the Garden Hill Neighborhood are not neighbors; they are on the two ends of the Xiangdian Alley. It is critical for the designers to develop reasonable circulation for visitors — inside and between the two buildings. Moreover, the interior spaces of the two buildings might not be large enough to function as a museum. The designer could try to restore the architecture to the comfort station period; on the other hand, the interior space is limited and requires reasonable space planning. If new buildings are going to be built to extend the museum’s space, the design team should also consider the environmental harmony of the neighboring buildings.

The adjacent districts of the Garden Hill Neighborhood have already been reshaped into large commercial spaces. Though no master plan has been released, it is highly possible for the new Garden Hill Neighborhood to have some commercial spaces: the whole neighborhood has 23,700 square meters (approximately 5.86 acres).²⁰¹ The team should find a way to balance the relationship between the commercial and other formats of public spaces and the museum, creating a relatively closed space for visitors. By doing so, the museum will not only provide visitors with an immersive environment to learn the history but also maintain a serious atmosphere for the difficult history. Like the Exhibition Hall of Evidence of Crime Committed by Unit of 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army in Harbin, China, the other project finished by the

²⁰¹ “‘Zhujishi “Jiyang Yinji” Lishi Wenhua Jiequ (Huayuan-ling Qukuai) Gaizao Gongcheng Sheji Zhaobiao’ [诸暨市‘暨阳印记’历史文化街区（花园岭区块）改造工程设计招标] the Tender Results of the Garden Hill Neighborhood Reformation Plan,” www.zhuji.gov.cn, January 20, 2022, http://www.zhuji.gov.cn/art/2022/1/20/art_1388404_59066827.html.

Architectural Design and Research Institute of South China University of Technology, the design team should use elements like fences, sunken plazas, and even the location of architecture itself to achieve the privacy requirement of the museum.²⁰²

Most essentially, the members of the design team are unknown yet, so the public might have some concerns about the future of the Garden Hill Neighborhood. Guo Weihong is the only architect that is publicly announced. Though Guo Weihong is an experienced architect and planner with hundreds of finished projects, he had never participated in a historic neighborhood's transformation project. His past projects include some memorial museums and campus designs, which partly fit the Garden Hill Neighborhood reformation plan's situations.²⁰³ As a result, it is hard to imagine Guo Weihong and his team members' design styles and preferences. Some may worry about the Garden Hill Neighborhood's fate since, once the master plan is released to the public, it is hard to make any further changes. The government, as well as the design team, should try to make the design process more accessible for the public to resolve their concerns.

The exhibition of the museum also needs to be carefully designed. The biggest problem that the two historic comfort station sites are facing is the lack of historical materials, but the displayed historical items should be comprehensive, including but not limited to governmental documents, items that once belonged to "comfort women" or the Japanese troops, and images. Since Zhuji was a small town during the Second Sino-Japanese War, so far, no historical images related to the two comfort stations have been found. Some Chinese citizens who once worked for the Japanese burned many documents after the Japanese military surrendered to avoid

²⁰² "The Exhibition Hall of Crime Evidences in Harbin / Architectural Design & Research Institute of SCUT," ArchDaily, June 16, 2017, <https://www.archdaily.com/873464/the-exhibition-hall-of-crime-evidences-in-harbin-china-architectural-design-and-research-institute-of-south-china-university-of-technology>.

²⁰³ "Guo Weihong," www2.scut.edu.cn, accessed April 16, 2022, <http://www2.scut.edu.cn/sklsbs/2022/0107/c31650a457087/page.htm>.

punishment.²⁰⁴ The majority of the official documents from Zhuji's Japanese-controlled period are lost, including those related to comfort stations. In other words, the current authority might not have any physical text documents of the two comfort stations. They should ask for help from the public to gather historical relics and to enrich the museum's exhibitions.

Also, in the twentieth century, the administrative districts of Zhejiang Province changed several times. The Zhuji government could cooperate with neighboring cities' local governments to find more evidence for the two historic comfort station sites in the Garden Hill Neighborhood. It is hard to find other well-conserved historic comfort station sites in the whole Zhejiang Province, and Zhejiang Province does not have any "comfort women" memorial museum.²⁰⁵ As a result, instead of only focusing on Zhuji's "comfort women" history, the museum could function as a "comfort station" memorial museum for the whole Zhejiang Province, which will solve the problem of lacking historical evidence. If it is possible, the Zhuji government should also try to find the seven Korean women on the list and the Korean operator of the Hanazono Mineto or their offspring as they may have more information that the museum lacks so far. This can also provide a different angle for visitors to understand the history, creating an unbiased atmosphere for the exhibition.

Providing a high-quality and unbiased exhibition to its visitors is one of the most important standards for a memorial museum.²⁰⁶ The information, especially the texts, given by the museum should be well-organized and as actual as possible. Additionally, the memorial

²⁰⁴ Zhu, "Comfort Stations of Xiangdian Alley," 46.

²⁰⁵ Zhuhua He, "'Zhuji Shouci Queren Yichu Rijun Wei'an Suo Jiuzhi' [诸暨首次确认一处日军慰安所旧址] Zhuji Confirmed a Historic Japanese Comfort Station Site for First Time," *Shaoxing Ribao (Shaoxing, Chia)*, January 20, 2016, http://epaper.sxnews.cn/sxrb/html/2016-01/20/content_6_2.htm.

²⁰⁶ "International Memorial Museums Charter," IHRA, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/international-memorial-museums-charter>.

museum is open to all kinds of people. To better serve this purpose, the information delivery methods should be inclusive. It is also important for the museum operators to seek help from scholars in this field and from professional curators to design the exhibition. They can also learn from other “comfort women” memorial museums in China, like the Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum, to curate an exhibition for people with different backgrounds.

Since the museum will be developed on the historic comfort station sites, the location becomes its most unique character. By applying this character to the museum properly, it can help better achieve the museum’s educational and memorial missions. Visitors can have an immersive atmosphere by visiting a museum reshaped from former comfort stations. The museum can also restore space to restore the historical look of the two comfort stations, which is largely applied by other “comfort women” memorial museums. Thus, the visitors are able to better understand the history that happened inside the building.

However, this requires the Guo Weihong and his team to have the strong professional knowledge to practice. For the design team, due to the lack of historical materials, it is hard to leave a space for restoring the comfort station as it was during the wartime period. They should consult local people who know the history, historians in this field, and colleagues who designed other “comfort women” memorial museums in China to better understand the project. Moreover, the historic buildings built a century ago are far away from the architectural standards of a modern memorial museum. Take displayed items as an example, some historic paperwork needs specific temperature and humidity for better conservation. A modern memorial museum should also include facilities like air conditioners and restrooms for meeting the visitors’ basic needs. Thus, the design team is responsible for putting contemporary facilities in the memorial museum with minimized potential damage to the building. As for the curators, according to the

International Memorial Museums Charter, if a memorial museum is developed based on the historic site where the crime happened, the museum should focus more on universal principles, including being against war and respect all people.²⁰⁷ In other words, developing a memorial museum on the criminal site might evoke strong emotional reflections from the visitors, which will be in contrast to the unbiased standard. The planners should find a balance between the immersive atmosphere of the architecture and the exhibition itself. After all, the most essential elements of memorial museums are reflection and education.

Another important approach for achieving the museum's educational purpose is to use new technologies, like the AR map used in Nanjing Liji Lane Comfort Station Site Museum and the interactive oral history system in the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders. Currently, the majority of local Zhuji people know little about the two comfort station sites, especially the younger generations. A new technological system inside the museum might be attractive so that some of them are willing to visit the museum. The technology could not only focus on the two historic comfort station sites in the Garden Hill Neighborhood. There are other former comfort station sites in Zhuji. Though they no longer exist, with new technology's help, users are still able to learn the history of them from electronic devices. In addition, technology also helps to conserve the difficult history without worrying someone will burn the documents again.

²⁰⁷ "International Memorial Museums Charter," IHRA, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/international-memorial-museums-charter>.

Conclusion

It is rare to find well-conserved historic comfort station sites like the two in the Garden Hill Neighborhood in Zhuji. Histories of the Grand Taimen Comfort Station and the Hanazono Mineto Comfort Station explain the classification of comfort stations as well as the sources of “comfort women.” Though the master plan has not been announced by the design team, and there are many concerns related to the conservation process, it is fortunate that the two historic comfort station sites can be preserved to tell their stories, whereas many other former comfort station facilities have already been torn down during the city development.

Conclusion

The thesis hopes to make more people learn about the invisible history of “comfort women” and the importance of conserving difficult heritage. It is critical for us — females, males, and non-binary genders — to learn the long-invisible women's histories and their sufferings, especially under the recent Roe v. Wade controversies.²⁰⁸ The voice of women should not be ignored in history primarily written by men. More importantly, “our bodies are not their battlefields”; human beings should reflect themselves through the “comfort women” history and respect the fact that women are not “resources.”²⁰⁹

Every modern country has difficult history and numerous heritages related to the difficult history. The “difficult” is from multiple perspectives, including traditional social concepts and long-term ignorance. Luckily, the public has already started to realize the importance of difficult history, encouraging the government to take responsibility to conserve the difficult heritage. It is a challenge for the government to conserve difficult heritage since the difficult history might be highly sensitive for some groups of people. The government should be very careful in dealing with the conservation of difficult heritage. Among all strategies that are frequently practiced in difficult heritage conservation, establishing a memorial museum is an important and effective one. A historic site with difficult history can be reshaped into a memorial museum, which not only achieves the goal of heritage conservation but also helps to educate the public.

This thesis focuses on the difficult history of “comfort women,” which did not come into the public's sight until the 1990s. Though many people have seen the word on the news, few people understand the further histories behind it. The “comfort women” were not volunteers nor

²⁰⁸ In May 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade making abortion illegal in many states. More see: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/05/05/what-is-roe-v-wade>.

²⁰⁹ From the title of Christina Lamb's book, *Our Bodies, Their Battlefields: War Through the Lives of Women*.

“military prostitutes”; they were enslaved by the Japanese military and raped by the patriarchal society repeatedly. As witnesses to their sufferings, comfort stations are an important part of difficult heritage. Comfort stations have been categorized by their locations, their relationship to the Japanese military, and their motivations. China once had the largest number of “comfort women” and an incredibly large number of the “comfort” facilities were set up by the Japanese military in mainland China. However, many comfort stations have already been demolished during the urban development after the war. As a result, it is critical for the government to take action immediately to conserve them as difficult heritage.

Reshaping them into memorial museums is an effective strategy. However, a memorial museum built on the original historic site must be carefully designed by professionals. The Nanjing Museum of the Site of Liji Lane Comfort Stations is a great example of memorial museums on the topic of “comfort women.” It is established on the two historic comfort station sites in Liji Lane, Nanjing, China. The museum restores the architecture's comfort station period based on historical materials. Instead of using the site's residential and vernacular circulations, the circulation is re-designed to meet its function as a museum, as well as represented how the Japanese military men would have moved after entering the comfort station. On the one hand, visitors are able to know the real situation and operation of comfort stations. On the other hand, the two comfort stations in Liji Lane were private residences; the reformation could better meet its function as a public space.

Although the reformation of the Liji Lane site took over ten years to complete, it sets a great example for other cities' governments to deal with the difficult heritage related to “comfort women” history. The sites of two comfort stations, the Grand Taimen and Hanazono Mineto, in Zhuji, China, were confirmed by historians in recent years, before the government decided to

demolish its surrounding neighborhoods for city development. Though the local government has not published a detailed reformation plan for the neighborhood, according to the information that can be accessed by the public, the two historic comfort station sites will be conserved as a memorial museum. There are still more questions to be answered about this plan: how will these small comfort station sites be reorganized as a memorial museum? How will the government deal with the problem of lacking historical materials? Can the local government cooperate with nearby cities to enrich the contents of the exhibition by gathering more historical relics? These questions, unfortunately, cannot be answered in this thesis so far; the author believes that they will be answered in the near future.

When people talk about history, most people focus on important historic events and significant figures; the difficult history is often ignored by the public. The “difficulty” of conserving difficult heritage could be because of the architecture itself, for example, its rare materials and fragile structures; the reason should not be that the mainstream society hopes to remove the structure. The difficult history, as well as the difficult heritage, should not be left in the dark.

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