

Conversation of Empathy:  
Understanding Children's Lives During World War II in  
Korea and Japan through Oral History

by

Hyo Jeong (Tina) Jung  
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<sup>1</sup>Sali Choi, in conversation with the author, April 4, 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

### Forgetting the Unforgettable

unbestimmte Zahlwörter

Rudolf Otto Wiemer

alle haben gewußt  
viele haben gewußt  
manche haben gewußt  
einige haben gewußt  
ein paar haben gewußt  
wenige haben gewußt  
keiner hat gewußt<sup>2</sup>

indefinite numerals

Rudolf Otto Wiemer

everyone knew  
many knew  
some knew  
a few knew  
a couple knew  
just a few knew  
no one knew

Frau Iris Bork-Goldfield, a German language professor at Wesleyan University, introduced this poem to her German language class. “Do you know what this poem is about?” she asked. Silence. No one answered. I knew the answer, but I didn’t answer. I don’t know why, but the word just wouldn’t come out of my mouth. I bet everyone knew the answer, but no one said it. “It’s about the Holocaust,” said Frau Bork. She didn’t have to tell us. I am certain everyone already knew. “It’s something that everyone [in Germany] knows about, but no one wants to talk about. They pretend like they don’t know.” The classroom was still silent.

I know what the Holocaust is, how horrible it was, and how important it is in human history. After class, when I realized that I and a dozen other students didn’t speak the word probably because of discomfort, I began to perspire in fear. I feared

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<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Otto Wiemer, “unbestimmte Zahlwörter,” in *Anspiel*, ed. Dietrich Krusche, (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1984), 21. Translated by Iris Bork-Goldfield.

that the Holocaust would be forgotten; I feared that the atrocities in my own country's history would be forgotten; I feared that many human tragedies that must be remembered would be forgotten just because no one wants to remember them or speak about them.

This thesis is not about the Holocaust; it is about the tragedies that occurred during World War II in Korea and Japan. However, it aims to address an important historiographical issue that concerns all atrocities in human history: the memory and forgetfulness of historical events. Using oral interviews as primary sources, this thesis explores children's experiences during WWII in Korea and Japan. Synthesized with various secondary sources, the oral accounts of forty elders from Korea and Japan will allow this project to revisit the current historical narratives of Korea and Japan regarding the WWII period. Throughout this work, oral history and memory will be at the core of the historical narratives, demonstrating their importance in the path of seeking the historical truth.<sup>3</sup>

## **Historical Background – Japan**

World War II in Asia begins with Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931.<sup>4</sup> Since the invasion, the military gradually gained authority within the Japanese government, and pushed for territorial aggrandizement within Asia. Also, Japan's occupation of Manchuria invited international attention, especially from the Western

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<sup>3</sup> Historical truth is a concept that I first learned in one of the history courses that I took at Wesleyan University, *The Jewish Experience in China*. Finding the historical truth is be a goal that historians try to achieve by studying and creating historical narratives, but it the historical truth is not attainable since there is no absolute truth. I referred to Vera Schwarcz's, *Colors of Veracity* for further ideas on history and truth.

<sup>4</sup> Although Japan entered WWII as an Axis country in 1941, its military aggression in Asia that led to the participation began with its invasion of Manchuria in 1931.

countries, allowing Japan to take part in the discourse of the international powers at the time.

The military's control of the Japanese government led to another military incident in China: the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The Japanese military progressed swiftly through Beijing, Shandong, and Shanghai. When the Japanese military reached Nanjing in December, it ruthlessly killed tens of thousands of Chinese, and raped countless women of various ages.<sup>5</sup> When Japan encroached on the territories of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, Japan's relationship with the Western countries occupying the region began to complicate. When Japan attempted to occupy southern Indochina in 1940, the U.S., Great Britain, and the Dutch East Indies placed an economic embargo on Japan to stop its further territorial advancement.<sup>6</sup> The embargo severed Japan from obtaining oil, which was the most essential raw material for Japan's military and economy at the time.

After several conversations between Prince Konoe's cabinet of Japan and President Roosevelt's U.S. government, Japan decided to engage in the ongoing World War as an Axis country.<sup>7</sup> On December 7, 1941, by attacking Pearl Harbor, Japan declared war on the U.S. Although Japan was aware of the superior industrial and military power of the U.S., Japan naively believed that the U.S. would not fight until the end because of its lack of interest in fighting the battles abroad.<sup>8</sup> The military

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 204.

<sup>6</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 5th ed (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 314.

<sup>7</sup> The Axis countries fought against the Allied countries during WWII. The three main Axis countries were Germany, Italy, and Japan.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 209.

strength of the U.S. that the Japanese overlooked, however, soon placed Japan in the turmoil of violence.

After the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan advanced through Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific by occupying Singapore, the Philippines, and the Malay Peninsula. Times of victorious conquering, however, did not last long. Starting with the defeat at the Battle of Midway in Midway Island in June 1942, the war was no longer in Japan's favor. In June 1945, the Battle of Okinawa resulted in Japan's defeat with 12,500 American casualties and 250,000 Japanese deaths, including 150,000 civilians. Toward the end of war, Japan could no longer resist attacks from the Allied countries with its waning economy and military. The U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 8. In addition, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on August 8, and it also invaded Manchuria the day after.<sup>9</sup> Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, ending the long era of violence in the Asia-Pacific.

### **Historical Background – Korea**

In Korean history, WWII is usually considered as a part of the last phase of Korea's colonial history, and not as a significant historical period on its own. Furthermore, WWII is often seen as one of the historical events that led to Korea's independence from Japan's colonial rule. Korea had been under the heavy influence of the Japanese empire since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and became an official colony of the empire in 1910. The colonization lasted until Japan surrendered to the Allied

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 223.

countries in August 1945. During WWII, the Japanese government tightened its economic and ideological control over Korea using various colonial policies. The policies were drafted around the idea of *naisen ittai*, which promoted unity between Korea and Japan. Through the *naisen ittai* policies, the Japanese government could effectively mobilize both human and natural resources for the Japanese military.

Japan's colonization of Korea can be divided into three phases. The first decade, the 1910s, is known as the era of "subjugation." During this period, the Japanese military government used physical power to subjugate Koreans. The second phase is called the period of "cultural accommodation" in the 1920s, the era of relatively relaxed colonial policy. The revised policies increased educational opportunity and equality, enhanced economic policies, and loosened publication censorship. The final phase of the colonization, the era of "assimilation" from about 1931 to 1945, is the time period that this thesis focuses on.<sup>10</sup> During this phase, Japan embarked on its plan to build the Pan-Asiatic Empire. Japan also carried out multiple military aggressions abroad by invading Manchuria and China, and attacked Pearl Harbor. Therefore, the colonial policies of this period were established mainly to support the empire through the wars.

During this last phase of colonization, the Japanese government tightened its rule over Korea under the slogan of *naisen ittai* (Japan-Korea one body<sup>11</sup>). The policies that endorsed *naisen ittai* to speed up the assimilation process had been in effect since Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910. Though the transformation was

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<sup>10</sup> Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 141.

enforced on both the Korean and Japanese population, the Koreans underwent more radical changes because their goal was to Japanize the imperial subjects. The *naisen ittai* policies were especially essential during the war, as they unified Korea and Japan under the cause of common destiny and transforming the Koreans to loyal imperial subjects of the Japanese empire.<sup>12</sup> The total assimilation of the Koreans to the Japanese required elimination of the Korean culture and heritage. Under the *naisen ittai* policies, the Koreans were required to change their family names to Japanese (*sōshi kaimei*), and were ordered to use Japanese in any official settings including schools. Students were especially extensively exposed to the *naisen ittai* idea, as the education system was a prime route for the Japanese government to indoctrinate Koreans. Schools engrained respect and loyalty to the empire in children, and taught the same wartime curriculum that was being used in Japan. These assimilation policies became increasingly harsh during WWII as the war situation intensified.

The Japanese government also used the *naisen ittai* policies to mobilize wartime resources more efficiently and effectively from Korea by utilizing them to justify the government's appropriation of material and human resources as "contribution" or "donation" of the loyal imperial subjects. During WWII, many Koreans were drafted to do various military related labors including mining and working in sex camps in Japan. Many were drafted to work in Korea as well to build necessary military infrastructures such as train rails and bomb shelters. The confiscation of food and other living materials from the countryside in Korea worsened during the wartime, forcing many to destitution.

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<sup>12</sup> Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 356.

## Oral History and Memory

While I was growing up, my grandmother often told me about her childhood memories of Japan's colonization of Korea. She would tell me how she heard the loud footsteps of the scary Japanese policemen; how so many people in her town starved during the colonization; how she could only speak Japanese at school; how she played all kinds of games with her friends on the streets; how her drawing in art class was so good that it was hung on the classroom wall; and how everyone was so happy when Korea was finally liberated from the Japanese colonization. In her stories, the Japanese were the villains. The Japanese took food from the Koreans, forced them to all kinds of labor, and tried to erase the Korean identity. The news of constant political conflicts between Korea and Japan regarding various historical events during the colonization period only confirmed my perception that the Japanese were brutal aggressors. What was dangerous about this perception is that the "brutal Japanese aggressors" included not only just those who oppressed the Koreans, but also the general public of Japan.

In the spring semester of my junior year, Professor Yoshiko Samuel, a retired Japanese professor at Wesleyan University, came to one of my classes to speak about her experience during WWII in Japan. She spoke about the governmental censorship, worsening hunger, life-threatening bombings, and the lonely months of evacuation. It was my first time hearing the Japanese civilian experience during the war. Previously, I deemed the Japanese only as the aggressors in the Asia-Pacific in early twentieth century, not as victims. In my perception, the Japanese at the time were supposed to be the villains, all of them living in prosperity with the materials they took from

Korea. However, Professor Samuel's stories completely changed my thoughts about the Japanese civilians at that time.

As I compared the childhood experiences of my grandmother and of Professor Samuel, I learned that the hardships of the Japanese civilians during WWII were absent in the Korean history education on the war. Although Japan plays a significant role in the Korean colonial history as an aggressor, the history does not give enough background on Japan. Oddly, this lack of information on Japan in Korean colonial history has been rarely questioned, and I began to wonder why. As I further explored, I learned that the situation was similar in the Japanese history as well; in Japan's national historical narratives regarding WWII, Korea is rarely mentioned. The lack of attention to the critical absences of the necessary Japanese historical background in the Korean history (and vice versa) made me wonder why. In order to answer this intellectual enquiry, I wanted to explore the Korean and Japanese histories of the WWII period using a historiographical method other than written history. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the Korean and Japanese experiences during WWII, I hoped that this project would lay the ground of conversation that would eventually lead to reconciliation and understanding. Ultimately, I decided to use oral history as a primary measure for this experiment, as I encountered this enquiry through personal oral accounts of my grandmother and Professor Samuel.

To pursue this project, I flew to South Korea and Japan last summer and interviewed forty senior citizens about their childhood during WWII. The interviewees were selected by snowball sampling, which means that I got the interviewees through personal connections of the interviewees (friends, families, etc.).

Although there were several interviewees who were from the same or nearby region because the interviewees were gathered using the snowball sampling, the information from the interviews were rich and diverse, as no two people had the same experiences and memories.

The ages of the interviewees range from seventy-six to ninety-four (at the time of the interview). The Japanese interviewees were from eight different cities, mostly from Tokyo and Kobe. Because the interviews in Japan were pre-arranged, they were more organized and lengthy. During the interviews conducted in Japanese, I struggled with making personal communication with the interviewees due to my lack of understanding of the Japanese language. Despite the English translations of the interpreter, I still missed opportunities to truly grasp the smaller details of the interviewees' stories, especially their emotions.

Some of the interviews with the Korean elders were pre-arranged and were conducted at their residences, but many of the interviews were not pre-arranged. The interviews conducted without prior notice were shorter and the information was rather scattered. The backgrounds of the Korean interviewees are relatively diverse, as they are from nineteen different cities. I conducted the interviews in Korea myself, because I speak Korean. In Korea, it was sometimes difficult to make sure that the interviewees talk about their experiences under the Japanese colonization. Many Korean interviewees wanted to talk more about the Korean War or confused their experience during the colonization with those during the war, as "the war" in Korea usually means the Korean War.

## *Oral History*

A benefit of learning history from personal narratives is that the personal accounts enable readers and listeners to understand history on an intimate and personal level. When listening to wartime stories of my grandmother when I was younger, I could imagine myself in her shoes, imagining what could have happened to me if I lived at that time. My grandparents' stories were significantly more personable than the factual sentences in textbooks describing civilian lives in colonial Korea. Such a level of empathy existed throughout all the interviews for this project. I could empathize with the narrators mainly because I interacted with them as humans. I was drawn into their stories by their fluctuating voices, changing facial expressions, and constant eye contacts. This experience betrays a powerful aspect of oral history as an efficient conveyor of the past.<sup>13</sup>

The interpersonal interaction was essential during the interviews, as creating an oral historical source is a collaborative process between the interviewer and the narrator. Oral history is composed of the questions, narratives, and emotions of the two or more participants. During the interview, the narrator does not simply give their stories to the interviewer, but rather shares their experiences and memories. Therefore, both the listener and the speaker are affected during the course of the narration. The interviewer's questions incite memories within the narrator, and then

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<sup>13</sup> Regarding the question of creating an oral archive and conducting oral interviews I referred to the works of the following scholars: Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History*; Barbara Frank, "Nansa Doumbia: Matriarch, Artist, and Guardian of Tradition"; Neal Norrick, "Talking about Remembering and Forgetfulness in Oral History Interviews"; Rebecca Jones, "Blended Voices: Crafting a Narrative from Oral History Interviews"; Kenda Mutongi, *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya*; Barbara Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenges of African History" in *Writing African History*; Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella*, Haruko Cook and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*.

the narrator forms a story to tell. The narrator is also affected by the course of storytelling because it allows one to revisit the memories of the past and reformulate the memory.<sup>14</sup> For instance, when I asked Yang Geun-Su, a Korean interviewee from a town near Gwangju, whether he had any exposure to the issue of “comfort women”<sup>15</sup> during his childhood, he first said no, but later he remembered seeing a crying woman being pulled away from her family by a Japanese policeman.<sup>16</sup> He already had the memory, but the question led him to revisit the memory and associate it with a specific historical event. The listener, by engaging in this journey through the memories of the past, is not only given an opportunity to collect the provided historical information, but also has a role in shaping the oral accounts of the narrator. Therefore, interviewing is a process in which all participants engage, share, and develop.

As constructing an oral history is a collaborative effort for both the interviewee and the interviewer, it is essential to understand that the interviewer’s communication capability and identity can also influence the formulation of an oral historical narrative. An oral interview is more than a one-way transmission of information; during the interview, both the narrator and the interviewer share their own perspectives and emotions. For instance, my language ability was a significant factor in communicating with the interviewees. Since Korean is my mother tongue, I could easily form personal relationships with the Korean elders by immersing myself into their stories and emotions. Coming from the same national community, I was in a

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that during the interviews, the participants do not go back to the past. They are reformulating the past through the narrator’s memories in the present setting.

<sup>15</sup> The term “comfort women” is in quotation marks throughout this thesis because it is a euphemism for sexual slavery.

<sup>16</sup> Geun-Su Yang, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

position where I could better understand their joy and pains as a compatriot. In contrast, I had more difficulty in creating closer personal bonds with the Japanese interviewees due to my lack of understanding of the Japanese language. Only two of the Japanese interviewees, Ito Yuji and Yoshiko Samuel, could conduct their interviews in English, which gave me a better opportunity to empathize with them. During the interviews in Japan where I required an interpreter, it was harder for me to understand the stories and the emotions within because the interpretation was not simultaneous. I could only carefully listen to the altering tones of voice and changing facial expressions of the speakers during the interviews, and sync them later with the translated transcription.

Additionally, my identity could have affected the interviewees' stories. When I introduced myself as a "South Korean student conducting interviews for my history thesis in an American college," the words that struck the Korean interviewees the most were the "American college." Some of them refused to speak at first because they thought they don't have anything to contribute to my "American college" research. The fact that I study in a college in America made me seem like a prestigious scholar because America to many Korean elders is a country that saved their country during the Korean War, where many things are superior. They said their stories were so typical, and had nothing special to contribute. Many of them agreed to interview in the end, but it was hard to get answers from many of them, especially the females, because they were not confident about the significance of their stories. They were unaware of the fact that their personal narratives could lead to new discoveries and understandings in history. My identity could have affected the Japanese

interviewees in different ways. History has always been a sensitive topic between the Koreans and the Japanese, and this political aspect could have hindered them from relating their stories more extensively or comprehensively to a Korean interviewer.

Overall, the open-minded attitudes and kind advice of the interviewees reassured me of the positive potential of my project and reminded me of my role as an interviewer and historian. All of the interviewees were relatively open to talking about their personal memories to a girl they just met. I believe that this kindness is what motivated me to write this thesis. When I explained my thesis to the interviewees, I emphasized how this project juxtaposes the Korean and Japanese children's experiences during WWII not just to study the histories of Korea and Japan comparatively, but more for the purpose of making peace and finding a common ground of understanding between Korea and Japan. As survivors of the terrifying era of violence, many of them approved of my objective and welcomed my initiative. Many of them wholeheartedly told me their childhood stories, from their traumas to happiest moments, with a certain trust in my cause. After I turned off my recorder, one of the interviewees told me how important it is for the current generation to understand the past in order to create amiable and constructive relations between nations, especially between Korea and Japan. Some even thanked me for pursuing this project. These comments and advice reminded me that as an interviewer and as a historian, I am responsible for securely transmitting the interviewees' invaluable memories and messages to the present and future generations.

## *History and Memory*

As I analyze the memories of the interviewees throughout the thesis, it is important that I clarify certain terms that I use repeatedly. I defined the term “memory” in this project through the origins of the Chinese characters that compose the word : 記憶.<sup>17</sup> The combined two Chinese character means “memory.” The first letter, 記, means to record, and the second letter, 憶, means to remember. When considering the meanings of these two characters, memory is defined as the “record of what one remembers.” Throughout life, one not only records the moments of historical events that one experienced, but also records the communal and personal emotions of the moments. The emotions render a personal memory a valuable historical source because the emotions within the personal memory are reflection of the impact that history had on the people of the contemporary society. Based on this definition of memory, three more recurring memory-related terms can be defined: personal memory indicates the memory of an individual, communal memory means the memory of a community, and official memory represents the memory of a historical event that is shaped by the government, often acting as the national historical narrative as well.

The process of reviewing official memories through personal memories made apparent the discrepancies between the two memories. Certain historical events that were repetitively emphasized in several personal interviews were not highlighted (or even invisible) in the official memories of Korea and Japan regarding the WWII period. Most of these historical events uncovered the ugly faces of a nation’s past,

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<sup>17</sup> These two Chinese characters together mean memory in the Korean and Japanese languages as well.

thus damaging the government's interest in promoting an image favorable to its country. The discrepancies demonstrate that the government exerts great influence in shaping the national historical narratives today.<sup>18</sup>

In this project, I expose Korea and Japan's uncomfortable past during WWII through the memories of children. Because personal memories often do not fit neatly into the historical framework of official memories, the memories that I have collected here challenged what I have known, and reshaped my conception on this historical period. The children's memories also have given me insights, motivations, and strengths to search for historical truth. Through the memories of those who lived the past, I wish to see beyond what I have seen.

## Overview

Through the forty personal accounts of children during WWII in Korea and Japan, this thesis illuminates aspects of the Korean and Japanese histories during the WWII period that had been blanketed by manipulation and negligence. As minors of the communities, children in Korea and Japan were susceptible to the changes of the Japanese empire. Children were also keen observers; they witnessed poverty, violence, joy, and death in the daily lives of the home front.

In the following chapters, the children's experiences are discussed in three spatial themes. The first chapter, *Space of Discipline*, explores children's experiences of the Japanese wartime education. In order to maximize wartime support from its

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<sup>18</sup> Thoughts on memory and history in this project were largely inspired works of the following scholars: Yoshikuni Igarishi, *Bodies of Memories*; Edward Casey, *Remembering: a Phenomenological Study*; Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games*; Vera Schwarcz *Bridge Across Broken Time*; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*.

subjects, the Japanese empire utilized educational institutions to mobilize students both ideologically and physically. The curriculum and school activities were mostly directed toward nurturing loyal Japanese subjects. In Korea, the *naisen ittai* policies were enforced at school. Under the policies, students were required to recite the Oath of Imperial Subjects, visit Shinto shrines, be called by their Japanese names, and speak in Japanese only. Additionally, using regular academic curriculum, the Japanese Empire indoctrinated both Korean and Japanese students with militarism and anti-Allied countries sentiments, and trained students physically to become better soldiers and workers.

In the second chapter, *Space of Despair*, I analyze the daily lives of the children outside of school based on children's experiences on the streets, at home, and so on. In both Korea and Japan, living conditions worsened as the war progressed. The Japanese military took so much food and so many materials that there were not enough left for the civilians. The street scenes radically changed especially in Japan, as the U.S. began air raids on major Japanese cities starting the spring of 1944. As the air raids continued, the children of elementary school age were evacuated to the countryside, where they were safer. On the streets of Korea, the children witnessed people being drafted to the military for various kinds of works, from mining to sexual slavery. Although in both Korea and Japan certain parts of the populations were less affected by the war because of geographical location and socio-economic status, the war affected most of the population in Korea and Japan.

Chapter three, *Space of Decompression*, examines the memories and emotions at the end of the war. Children's memories demonstrate that people shared a common

emotion of relief within this non-physical space created by the defeat of Japan. Although there were some Koreans in Japan and Japanese in Korea for whom the struggles continued as foreigners, most of the former imperial subjects of the Japanese empire embraced and welcomed the return of peace.

By listening to the personal narratives of the interviewees throughout the project, I was given an opportunity to encounter both the pains and the joys of children in their daily lives in colonial Korea and Japan at war. This experimental integration of personal memories and historical narratives demonstrates how personal memories challenge official memories, and how certain aspects of history are illuminated by the challenges. Moreover, it also urges one to reconsider the role of memory in both creating and studying a historical narrative. Most importantly, it warns the present generation about the danger of forgetting the past, which may lead to a distorted historical narrative that blinds the society from seeing the historical truth. As a part of a young historian's journey of seeking the historical truth, this project will contribute not only to the study of the Korean and Japanese histories, but also to the reconciliation and understanding between Korea and Japan.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Space of Discipline: Wartime Education of the Japanese Empire**

During WWII, schools in Korea and Japan not only served as an educational institution, but also as a place to indoctrinate wartime ideologies and mobilize wartime labor. Hoping that the ethnic integration at school would be advantageous to a unification between Korea and Japan, the Japanese government established some Korean-Japanese integrated schools in the bigger cities. However, most of the schools in Korea and Japan were designated to only one of the ethnicities. The Japanese government's application of the *naisen ittai* policies at schools in Korea was their step towards achieving the complete unity of Korea and Japan, eliminating Korean heritage and instilling loyalty to the Japanese empire into the Korean students.

Through the general curriculum and daily activities, schools in Korea and Japan promoted militarism in order to garner support for the ongoing war and to produce future soldiers and workers. Schools also obliged students not to use English terminologies, and taught anti-Allied countries ideologies in order to preserve and promote a purely Japanese identity. Additionally, children participated in the ongoing war, as the schools mobilized students to wartime labors and collecting resources for the military.

## **Becoming the Japanese: *Naisen Ittai* in Korean Schools**

As the Korean children stepped into the schools, they were required to change their identities to loyal subjects of the Japanese empire. At school, children were obliged to recite the Oath of Imperial Subjects, took trips to Shinto ceremonies, were called by their Japanese names, and were only allowed to speak in Japanese. These requirements were also applied to the adults in Korea, but the application was not effective because the adults were more resistant to eliminating their Korean identity, and did not encounter many occasions to speak Japanese. Children, however, were more receptive to these policies largely because they were not aware of the rules' significance. Although getting used to a new name, being forced to speak a foreign language, and repeating the pledge to the emperor were uncomfortable and cumbersome at first, these soon became part of the children's daily routine. However, regardless of how natural the *naisen ittai* policies became in children's lives, the Korean children still maintained their Korean identity.

### ***The Oath of Imperial Subjects***

As the war in the Pacific progressed, the Japanese government strived to firmly establish the sense of loyalty to the Japanese empire within its Korean colonial subjects. In order to do so, in 1937, the Governor General Minami Jiro established the policy of reciting the Oath at all public gatherings and school.<sup>19</sup> The recitation of the Oath was one of the ways in which the Japanese government applied the *naisen ittai* idea for its wartime mobilization. By pledging their loyalty to the Japanese empire,

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<sup>19</sup> Ruth Barraclough and Elyssa Faison, *Gender and Labour in Korea and Japan: Sexing Class* (Routledge, 2009), 31.

the Koreans were “graciously granted” the permission to participate in the war on the side of the Japanese. There were two versions of the Oath: one for children, which was simpler, and one for adults. Adults recited the Oath about twice a month, but children recited it daily.<sup>20</sup> The Oath that the children recited was:

1. We are the subjects of the Great Japanese Empire.
2. We, with all our heart, are loyal to the emperor.
3. We will cultivate our strength, and become strong and disciplined subjects.<sup>21</sup>

By requiring children to repeat the Oath every day, the government attempted to indoctrinate Korean children as loyal subjects of the Japanese emperor.

Despite the government’s effort, the Korean interviewees’ memories regarding the recitation of the Oath of Imperial Subjects show that the enforcement of the assimilation policy was incomplete. Lee In-Ho, who attended elementary school in Chungcheongbuk-do Province, pledged loyalty to the Japanese empire every morning at school. Although she recalled that what she recited was about glorifying the Japanese empire every morning, only after few interview questions did she realize that the pledge was the Oath of Imperial Subjects.<sup>22</sup> To her, reciting the Oath did not carry more meaning than any other school activities that required memorization – or even less meaning than multiplication tables, which she recited perfectly in Japanese during the interview.

Lee’s attitude demonstrates that indoctrination through the daily pledging was mostly ineffective in engraining loyalty in the Korean children. Granted, children had

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<sup>20</sup> Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Wikipedia contributors, “[황국신민서사](http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/황국신민서사),” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/황국신민서사>. (accessed November 21, 2014). Translated by the author.

<sup>22</sup> In-Ho Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014, transcript.

to remember the Oath word by word, and this unconscious remembering could be significant. However, most of them did not fully cherish the meaning of the Oath by heart. To children, reciting the Oath was merely one of the daily rituals that they had to perform at school. As children, they were more afraid of the immediate corporal punishment they would face when they did not or could not recite the Oath than the unknown consequence of being disloyal to the distant emperor of Japan.

### *Visiting Shinto Shrines*

Psychological indoctrinations of loyalty extended beyond the recitation of the Oath in the classrooms, as students were required to worship at Shinto shrines as a school activity. For the Korean students, visiting Shinto shrines became mandatory in 1935, when Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige established a policy that required all government officials and students to attend Shinto ceremonies. Lee Man-Jae, who attended an elementary school in Seoul, recounted that she bowed at Namsan Shinto shrine when her teacher took the class to attend the Shinto ceremony.<sup>23</sup> Although she claimed that visiting the Shinto shrine was a regular activity, she did not know the meaning behind the day-trips and the bows; she simply did what her teacher told students to do.

Shintoism is an ancient, indigenous religion of Japan that justified the uninterrupted lineage of imperial lineage, positioning the emperor as the top of Japanese society. Therefore, it was utilized during wartime Japan to justify the war. The Japanese government required that the Koreans, the imperial subjects, should

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<sup>23</sup> Man-Jae Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 22, 2014, transcript.

visit the Shinto shrines to demonstrate their respect for the emperor's decision and the divine spirits of Shinto. However, the Koreans who were forced to be at the shrines, including the students, often did not wholeheartedly pay respect through the act of worshipping. Rather, many Koreans simply "performed" their loyalty to Japan under the Japanese supervision.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Changing Family Names***

Most of the Korean children during this period had two names: one in Korean that they used at home, and one in Japanese that they used at school. This is due to a *naisen ittai* assimilation policy enforced by the Governor-General Minami in 1940. This widely implemented policy is called *sōshi kaimei*, which literally means "to create family name and change first name." *Sōshi kaimei* not only attempted to impose the Japanese identity on the Korean population, but also tried to change the Korean society fundamentally to a structure that is more favorable to the Japanese government. According to Takashi Fujitani in *Race for Empire*, the name-changing policy aimed to mobilize the Korean population more easily to the war effort by altering the Korean family structure. Usually, a Korean woman keeps her last name after she gets married because Korean last names are based on lineage. Under *sōshi kaimei*, however, a wife also took her husband's last name. Therefore, the colonial government could more effectively manage the Korean population by administering the population by the household with unified last name, not by individuals. The

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<sup>24</sup> Todd A. Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, Asia Pacific Modern 12 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 197.

Japanese government assumed that a more effective management of population under this system would make the mobilization of wartime effort easier.<sup>25</sup>

According to the Korean interviewees, the Korean families adopted the *sōshi kaimei* policy to various extents. Some of them had completely different names in Japanese than their Korean names, such as Han Eun-Seo to Agaki Takeo.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the most common case was changing the last name to a Japanese last name while continuing to use the Korean first name, but also pronouncing the Chinese characters of the first name in Japanese. The Japanese names sounded similar to the Korean names then. For example, Lee In-Jae became Hiromora Injai,<sup>27</sup> and Lee In-Ho became Fujiyama Jinko.<sup>28</sup> Some families did not even change their family names, but just pronounced their Korean names in Japanese.<sup>29</sup>

At school, the Korean students used their Japanese names only, and they did become accustomed to using their Japanese names. When asked what his or her Japanese name was, all of the interviewees answered it without hesitation. However, the identity attached to the Japanese names quickly disappeared as the children left their schools. After classes, the children were not simply going home, but they were going back to their original identities attached to their Korean names. Bae Geun-Hyang, who was born in 1931 in Kyungsangnam-do Province, accounted when her father only allowed using her Korean name at home. She said:

아버지가 할 수 없이 일본 밑에서 공무원 생활을 했지만 애국자시라서 집에선 절대 일본말을 못쓰게 하시고, 창씨도 우리가 제일 늦게 했어.

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<sup>25</sup> Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During World War II*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 336.

<sup>26</sup> Eun-Seo Han, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 22, 2014, transcript.

<sup>27</sup> In-Jae Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014, transcript.

<sup>28</sup> In-Ho Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 20, 2014, transcript.

<sup>29</sup> Young-Bum Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014.

성을 츠키야마라고 했는데, 친구들이 집에 놀러오면서 “츠키야마상” 하고 부르면 “학교에서만 츠키야마지 집에서 츠키야마냐” 라고 혼내셔서 쫓겨나고 달아나고 그랬어.

Although he worked as a government employee under the Japanese government, he was a patriot. So he never allowed us to use Japanese at home, and we were the last one [in town] to change our last name. Our last name was called “Tsukiyama.” When my friends came to my house and called “Tsukiyama-san” to look for me, my father scolded, “It’s Tsukiyama only at school, not at home.” So many of my friends were yelled at, and ran away.<sup>30</sup>

In Korea, a name, especially family name, is closely related to one’s identity because the family name reflects one’s ethnicity and lineage. Therefore, changing the Korean family name to the Japanese family name symbolized the erasure of one’s Korean ancestral heritage and ethnic identity. The Korean communities at the time mostly maintained the Korean culture and language even under the assimilation policies; therefore, the children’s Korean identities were never shadowed by the newly created Japanese identities. This shows that *sōshi kaimēi* was only partially successful. Although the policy might have made war mobilization easier, it did not succeed in changing the Korean identities to those of the Japanese.

### ***Language Restriction***

The Japanese government enforced the language restriction policy in the Korean schools to replace children’s Korean identity with that of a Japanese one, and also to cultivate wartime human resources with the ability to speak Japanese. Like with names, speaking the Korean language was essential to the Korean children’s maintenance of their Korean identity. Since many Korean adults could not speak Japanese at the time, the Korean language was essential to the communication

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<sup>30</sup> Geun-Hyang Bae, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

between the children and parents' generations, and thus to the bequeathing of Korean ethnic and cultural heritage. Also, the Korean language contains historical and social characteristics that are unique to the Korean culture. Therefore, the elimination of the Korean language would have eradicated the history and culture of Korea.

The restriction policy on the use of the Korean language at the Korean schools escalated throughout the war. In the 1930s, although the classes were taught mostly in Japanese, there were Korean language classes at school. However, in 1934, the Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige introduced a new Rescript on Education, which emphasized nationalistic indoctrination of students. Under the Rescript, the schools increased the hours of instruction in Japanese language, history, and ethics.<sup>31</sup> As the Sino-Japanese War began in 1937, the Governor-General Minami Jiro, Ugaki's successor, brought the language restriction to another level in order to accelerate the preparation process for the total war by making Japanese as the official language at all of the schools in Japan's colony.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, in 1938, the Korean language classes became elective, and eventually were not offered by 1943.<sup>33</sup> At this point the language restriction was essential to the Japanese wartime government as it produced Japanese-speaking Korean males who could participate in the volunteer military corps.<sup>34</sup>

Narratives of the Korean interviewees verify the changing trend of the language restriction policy as the war progressed. Park Young-Ju, who was born in

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<sup>31</sup> Eckert and Yi, *Korea, Old and New*, 315.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Edson Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 153.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

1923 in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do Province, attended elementary school starting in the early 1930s. She remembers that although students could only speak Japanese at school, there was a Korean language teacher until he graduated elementary school. According to Park, Korean language class was the last class of the day.<sup>35</sup> Though much younger than Park, Bae Geun-Hyang, born in 1931 in Kyeongsangnam-do Province, also attested that the Korean language was a part of her elementary school curriculum until first and second grade, but the class disappeared toward the end of the colonization.<sup>36</sup> By removing the Korean language classes, the Japanese government completely banned the expression of a Korean identity at school, attempting to replace it with a Japanese identity. Additionally, since school was an institution through which the government attempted to produce more human resources with the Japanese identity, not offering the Korean language class toward the end of the war was as a natural trajectory of the Japanese government.

Many of the Korean interviewees also shared their experiences of learning and being forced to use the Japanese language at school. Most of them recalled that during the first and second year of elementary school, the language restriction was not harshly enforced on the students because they were considered to be in the process of learning the language.<sup>37</sup> However, as they got older, the school more strictly enforced the use of the Japanese language.

Teachers used various measures, including creating their own rules and giving corporal punishments, to enforce the language restriction policy. Ahn Byung-Chuk, who went to an elementary school in Cheonan in Chungcheongnam-do Province,

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<sup>35</sup> Young-Ju Park, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 27, 2014, transcript.

<sup>36</sup> Geun-Hyang Bae, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

<sup>37</sup> Man-Jae Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 22, 2014, transcript.

remembers that the school gave Korean children ten small slips of paper, and teachers took away a paper slip every time a student did not speak Japanese. If a student did not have any paper slips left, then the teacher deducted points.<sup>38</sup> There were even some corporal punishments given to those that did not abide to the language rule. Yang Geun-Su, who was born in 1937 and attended elementary school near Gwangju, said that every time a student spoke Korean, they had to raise their arms for the rest of the class, and some students were even beaten or slapped.<sup>39</sup> Park Sun-Nyun, who was born in 1926 in Busan, has a particularly traumatic memory regarding the language restriction that still remains vivid. Park remembers:

학교에서는 한글은 안배우고 전부 일본글만 배웠어. 그리고 학교에서는 한국말 못했지. 한국말 하면 벌 서고 그랬어. 한국말 하면 얼굴에 빨간 줄 긋고 그랬어.

At school, we didn't learn Korean, and learned Japanese only. We couldn't speak Korean at school. We were punished if we spoke Korean. If we spoke Korean, they [teachers] drew red strokes on our faces.<sup>40</sup>

As these stories show, the teachers at the Korean schools, both the Japanese and Korean teachers, utilized all kinds of measures to make the Korean children learn and speak Japanese. Many times, the severe executions of the language restriction developed into children's negative perceptions about the Japanese.

Although the government strictly implemented the language restriction policy, it could not eliminate the Korean identity from the children. Since there were not enough Japanese teachers to teach in Korea, there were some Korean teachers at schools, especially in the countryside. Some of the Korean teachers undermined the effectiveness of the language restriction policy by reminding the students of their

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<sup>38</sup> Byung-Chuk Ahn, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

<sup>39</sup> Geun-Su Yang, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

<sup>40</sup> Sun-Nyun Park, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 12, 2014, transcript.

Korean identity in various ways. Shin Yong-Sook, who was born in 1933 in Hwanghae-do Province, went to a school where there were both Japanese and Korean teachers. She said that although all of the teachers taught classes in Japanese, some of the Korean teachers secretly taught Korean songs.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, Kim Young-Bum, who was born near Pyongyang in 1931, recalled that the Korean teachers at his school taught a sense of resistance toward the Japanese government by denouncing its colonization and militarism.<sup>42</sup> These instructions and efforts of the Korean teachers at school contributed to the Korean children's awareness of their own ethnic and national identity.

Additionally, like the Japanese names, the use of the Japanese language ceased as soon as the Korean children left the schools, which undermined the purpose of the language restriction policy. All of the Korean interviewees attested that they used Korean to communicate with their families, friends, and neighbors after school. Moreover, some parents taught the Korean language to their children themselves. Bae Geun-Hyang, who grew up in Gyeongsangnam-do Province, remembers that her father brought Korean language textbooks to teach his children Korean. She had to turn in her homework to her father every week.<sup>43</sup> These accounts testify that despite the strict control over the Korean heritage and culture, the Korean community still strived to maintain their ethnic identity. By instructing the Korean language and the sense of resistance toward the contemporary government, the Korean adults strived to preserve the ethnic identity of the Koreans that had been bequeathed for the past five thousand years, even under unfavorable circumstances.

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<sup>41</sup> Yong-Sook Shin, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014, transcript.

<sup>42</sup> Young-Bum Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014, transcript.

<sup>43</sup> Geun-Hyang Bae, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

The Korean interviewees expressed various responses to the topic of the language restriction policy. Though difficult at first, learning and speaking Japanese naturally became part of their daily childhood routine. Today, some of them angrily recalled how the teachers punished them when the students were caught speaking Korean. Some view the ability to speak Japanese as one of their valuable assets. However, none of them claimed that they considered themselves Japanese at the time. This shows that the *naisen ittai* policy of language restriction was mostly unsuccessful.

### **Wartime Mobilization of School Children**

The *naisen ittai* policies were only applied to the Korean students because they were not born as the Japanese subjects. Through the policies, the Japanese government assumed that the Korean and Japanese children would be on the same page in terms of their loyalty and respect for the Japanese empire. With the *naisen ittai* policies being enforced, both the Korean and Japanese children at school pledged loyalty to the empire, spoke Japanese, and responded to Japanese names.

Both the Korean and Japanese schools taught academic subjects with restrictions and modifications favorable to the Japanese military government. Through the curriculum, the schools mobilized students both ideologically and physically. In terms of ideological mobilization, schools inculcated the Japanese nationalism and militarism, and rejected anything related to the Allied countries, especially the U.S. Additionally, children were mobilized for school-directed wartime labors. In Korea, the Japanese government used schools to collect necessary materials

for the military by assigning children to bring hays, fur, and various other resources. The Korean students were also subjected to wartime labors such as building bomb shelters. In Japan, students also participated in wartime labors including working at war material factories and helping neighboring farms without male workers due to military conscription. Some older male students were even drafted. Until the air raids on the Japanese cities toward the end of the war forced younger Japanese children to evacuate to the countryside, the Korean and Japanese students shared various common experiences at schools during the war.

### ***Ideological Mobilization***

Indoctrinating students ideologically was essential to Japan's wartime school curriculum because it later became the foundation of the labor mobilization that intensified towards the end of WWII. Schools instilled militarism in class by teaching students Japan's military strength and the importance of the war. The brainwashing was especially apparent in the military academies, where they cultivated *kamikaze* soldiers. Outside of classes, schools promoted militarism through physical education, preparing students to become valiant and strong soldiers and workers. Moreover, through anti-Allied countries curriculum, the Japanese government taught students to detest the Allied countries by vilifying them and banning their cultures.

### ***Teaching Militarism***

The primary purpose of indoctrinating militarism to the Korean and Japanese students was to raise them as loyal, pro-war soldiers and workers. By promoting

militarism, the wartime education glorified the war and encouraged student participation as a loyal and patriotic cause. Although some interviewees stated that they were brainwashed at school, they accepted the wartime ideologies as young innocent children. Kawasaki Shigeko, who was born in 1934 and attended elementary school in the 1940s, said that the Japanese schools brainwashed students by teaching students that Japan is strong and undefeatable.<sup>44</sup> Even while teaching regular subjects, teachers lectured about patriotism. Takeo Goto, who attended elementary school in Kobe in the 1940s, said that his history teacher was a patriot, so he repeatedly praised the empire and the war in class.<sup>45</sup> Only in retrospect did they understand that they were being brainwashed.

The indoctrination of militarism was crucial in military schools in Japan, where they trained *kamikaze* soldiers. Ota Toshio, who was born in Himeji, Kobe in 1927, went to a naval high school in Kure, Hiroshima. At school, he received intense ideological training as a soldier. Ota remembers that his teachers told students about the legend of *kamikaze* to ingrain militarism in the students. Ota recalled:

それはね、日本はね、絶対に強いという、神風っていうのがあったでしょ。中国が攻め込んできたときに、日本が迎え撃つんやけど、そのときに神風がふいてあれてね、向こうの船が全部しずんでね、日本が勝って、撃退したという話があるわな。これが語り草で日本は強い神風が吹くというのを植え付ける神風を終戦までずっと信じるわけ。原子爆弾がおちるし、目の前で戦死した人がいる、船が沈む。広島で焼けた人がでてくる。それでも日本が神風が吹く、ということの子供の時から9植えつけられる。だからめちやくちやにやられても。それだけ教育というものはこわい。信じてしまう。潜水艦でつつこんでいこうとしていたけれども、必ず勝つだろうとおもって、突っ込んでいく。それだけ教育というものはこわい。

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<sup>44</sup> Shigeko Kawasaki, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 10, 2014, transcript.

<sup>45</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

You know, Japan had this thing called *kamikaze* that said that Japan was invincible. That's the legend that said that when China attacked Japan, Japan faced them to fight back, but at that moment, *kamikaze* blew, sank all the Chinese ships, and that led to Japan's victory. This story had been passed down from generation to generation, until the end of the war, and people continued to believe that for Japan there would always *kamikaze* blowing to defend [the country], until the end of the war. Atomic bombs were dropped, people were dying before your eyes, people were burnt and dead turned up all over Hiroshima. Still, we were made to believe that kamikaze would blow. That's why even when we were getting beaten, we still believed that Japan would win. Education can have a terrifying effect, you know. You can't help but to believe what you are taught to believe. I was in a submarine, about to plunge into an enemy's ship. We did so believing that we would surely win. That's what the education did to us. That's how scary education can be.<sup>46</sup>

Ota's account demonstrates the intensity of ideological mobilization in Japan during WWII. The repeated education on militarism influenced students to not only wish for Japan's victory, but also to sacrifice their lives for the victory. The fact that countless young Japanese soldiers died during WWII while carrying out *kamikaze* missions demonstrates how that the wartime propaganda and indoctrination were incredibly effective.

Additionally, the Japanese government tried to raise the children to become healthy workers and soldiers through physical education at school. The physical education at this time focused on both regular physical training and military arts (*budo*). Shimizu Shogo, who was a young teenager during the war, described his physical education class. He said that the school system taught boys to fight for their country by teaching martial arts and how to use guns with real bullets. Through these activities, he and his friends became excited about the war. His school also invited a high-ranking military officer to give a speech on the great cause of the wars that

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<sup>46</sup> Toshiro Ota, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 11, 2014, transcript.

Japan had been engaged in.<sup>47</sup> Through the physical education, Shimizu and his peers not only trained their physical strength, but also acquired military skills. In addition to the indoctrination of militarism, the physical trainings further inspired children to become loyal and capable soldiers.

Moreover, the physical education curriculum in Korea reflects the new role of the Korean population as a military resource. The volunteer military system for the Koreans was fairly new as it was only established in the late 1930s. Before then, the Koreans were generally not trusted as combatants because of their lack of loyalty.<sup>48</sup> However, as more Koreans worked at the Japanese factories, and as more Korean males were drafted to make up for the decreasing Japanese male population, the Japanese military required the Koreans to become more physically capable to be trained as soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Kim Eung-Man, who was born in 1928 and spent his childhood in Ansan, Gyeonggi-do-Province, said that his school taught Kendo (the Japanese fencing) to prepare students for entering the Japanese army.<sup>50</sup> By providing the Korean students with similar physical training to the Japanese students, the Japanese government established another route to garner human military resources in the future.

### *Teaching Anti-Allied Countries Sentiments*

In addition to developing nationalism and militarism, the Japanese government also educated both the Korean and Japanese children on anti-Allied nations sentiments and promoted the purification of the Japanese culture. Of all the

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<sup>47</sup> Shogo Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 16, 2014, transcript.

<sup>48</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 145.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-54.

<sup>50</sup> Eung-Man Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 27, 2014, transcript.

Allied countries, the most targeted country was the U.S. Having a specific enemy not only helped the Japanese subjects develop stronger resentment toward it, but also generated a more focused support for the war.

At this time, children in both Korea and Japan engaged in various school activities that developed the anti-Allied countries sentiments. Lee In-Ho, who attended a Korean elementary school in the 1940s, spoke about her participation in a school-wide anti-U.S. activity. She remembers that when students were weeding the school's athletic field to plant crops, the teacher told students that "every time you pull out grass, think of it as Americans."<sup>51</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, who grew up in Nagoya and also attended elementary school in the 1940s, remembers learning a song that targeted the Allied countries. The lyrics of the song are as follows:

ルーズベルトのベルトが切れて  
チャーチル散る散る国が散る国が散る。  
*Ruuzuberuto no beruto ga kirete*  
*Chaachiru chiru chiru kuni ga chiru kuni ga chiru*  
Roosevelt's belt has broken  
And Churchill falls and falls, his country falls and scatters.<sup>52</sup>

The song reflects the Japanese government's goal of defeating the Allied countries in WWII. Though children might not have known the context or meaning of the activities and the song, it ingrained in the students the idea that the U.S. and Britain were their enemies. Through these songs and activities, the Japanese government hoped that children would naturally developed negative images and resentment toward the Allied countries.

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<sup>51</sup> In-Ho Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 20, 2014, transcript.

<sup>52</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

The Japanese government also utilized regulatory measures at schools to expel the Anglo-American influences. Schools in both Korea and Japan placed restriction on teaching English, the language of the enemy, and using English terms. This restriction was carried out to purify the Japanese language, which by that time had already incorporated many terminologies from English and other Western languages.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the languages, the government censored music, film, and other cultural commodities of the Allied nations.<sup>54</sup> Yoshiko Samuel recalled that the Japanese government banned using English words at school to the extent that they even changed some terms used in daily life and activities. Samuel said:

During the war the use of foreign words, especially enemy words, was banned. So I couldn't call my parents "mama" and "papa" as I used to, and instead we had to use Japanese words. And we also had to change all of the baseball terminologies to Japanese terms. We were saying things like *sutoraiki* (strike), and *a-u-to* (out), you know, that's all gone. We had to say 悪い球 *ii-tama* (strike), 悪い球 *warui-tama* (out).<sup>55</sup>

Samuel's account demonstrates how severe the governmental control was in the later years of the war. During the war, the Japanese empire desired to have a total control over thoughts and beliefs of its subjects, even over the usage of daily words. Through the censorship, Japan's wartime propaganda reached every corner of children's daily life.

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<sup>53</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 217.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>55</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

### ***Physical Mobilization***

Since school was an institution where children were gathered and indoctrinated with the wartime sentiments, the government utilized schools to conveniently mobilize a large number of human resources for wartime labor. In both Korean and Japanese schools, children were instructed to bring material resources from home to schools, where teachers collected the materials to send to the military. In terms of physical labor mobilization, in 1941, the Governor General of Korea reduced the number of hours spent in class, and used the time to mobilize students for war-related activities such as military send-off ceremonies, military construction, and crop field labors.<sup>56</sup> This policy was also visible in Japan. The Japanese students were mobilized to build ammunitions and plant crops in the school fields, and to work at materiel manufacturing factories. During the last few years of WWII, the children of the Japanese empire were no longer students; the war had transformed them to war industry laborers.<sup>57</sup>

During WWII, schools in Korea and Japan required students to collect material resources on their own and bring them to school. The children brought hays and metals from home, and also gathered branches from mountains and cotton from the fields. Kim Young-Bum went to an elementary school in Pyongyang Province, where he participated in various wartime labors. He brought collected pinecones to school, from which the Japanese military extracted oil.<sup>58</sup> Kim Dong-Hee, who was born in 1928 and grew up in Yeosu, Gyeonggi-do Province, remembers how students

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<sup>56</sup> Eckert and Yi, *Korea, Old and New*, 321.

<sup>57</sup> The Japanese students were also mobilized to various wartime labors outside of school under government order. This topic will be further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>58</sup> Young-Bum Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 26, 2014, transcript.

were threatened with corporal punishment if they didn't bring hay for horses to school. She was sent back home when she forgot to bring some.<sup>59</sup> Yoshiko Samuel recalled how she gathered acorns and grew silk worms for school assignments:

[We were told to] go into the mountains and gather acorns. We would put them in a measuring cup and each week we would take it to our teacher. And we told her how many measuring cups of acorn we had gathered, and she would keep record of that, send them to the government, and squeeze them to make oil to run the airplanes. That's what we were told. ... Also, we were all made to raise silk worms. We each brought ten silkworms home, and grow them until they were cocoons, and take them to our teachers. And she would send them all to the government in Tokyo, and the government would make parachute strings with them. And as good patriotic kids, we had to say that we love raising silkworms, and I don't know how many pictures of silkworms we were made to draw.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Japanese government had collected and confiscated most of the materials from the civilians directly from their homes by the end of the war, the schools continued to assign students to bring more materials to class. Therefore, towards the end of the war, students went to school primarily to participate in manual labors and to provide necessary supplies for the military.

In school, the students in Korea and Japan participated in wartime labor to replace the lost manpower due to the military conscriptions. Kim Jeong-Sook, who spent his childhood in Gongju, Chungcheongnam-do Province, took part in the wartime manual labor at school. She recalled how she had fun singing military songs while sewing military uniforms with her friends at school.<sup>61</sup> Student labor was especially valuable in agriculture. Kawasaki Shigeko, who attended elementary school in Kobe during the war, said that her school's athletic field changed into a

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<sup>59</sup> Dong-Hee Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 27, 2014, transcript.

<sup>60</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

<sup>61</sup> Jeong-Sook Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

planting field, where students planted sweet potatoes. She added that such a transformation of a school area was fairly common.<sup>62</sup> Kim Eung-Man from Ansan, Gyeonggi-do Province also testified to a similar experience. In his school's track field, students planted beans, sorghum, and other grains. He also commented that the students had to work for a few hours everyday at neighbors' rice paddies because the town lost many male laborers to conscription.<sup>63</sup>

In Japan, these forms of labor mobilization continued even after the children's evacuation from the Japanese cities due to air raids in 1944-45. Yoshiko Samuel remembers that at the school she attended in the countryside during the evacuation, the students went to their neighbor's farms to help with minor tasks such as weeding and stepping on wheat to make them grow stronger.<sup>64</sup> The testimonies of the interviewees demonstrate that during the total war, even the children were not exempt from participating at war. In fact, children's labor was especially crucial towards the end of the war, when manpower in Japan was generally lacking.

## Conclusion

During WWII in Korea and Japan, the schools were the institutions through which the government directly exerted influence on the ideology and behaviors of the future workers and soldiers of the Japanese empire. Therefore, the government carried out extensive indoctrinations of the Japanese nationalism through the school curriculum. To nurture the Korean students as loyal imperial subjects, the Japanese

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<sup>62</sup> Shigeiko Kawasaki, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 10, 2014, transcript.

<sup>63</sup> Eung-Man Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 27, 2014, transcript.

<sup>64</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

government applied the *naisen ittai* policies to schools in Korea to substitute the Korean identities of the Korean children with the Japanese identities. The *naisen ittai* policies in general had only limited impact, as many of the children ultimately maintained their Korean identity. Both in Korea and Japan, the Japanese government conducted ideological mobilization to educate militarism and anti-Allied nations sentiments, and used physical mobilization to substantially benefit from the student labors.

The changes in school activities throughout the war reflected in the interviewees' stories, from educational to more wartime labor-oriented ones, demonstrate that the schools were no longer educational institutions by the end of the war. Near the mid-1940s, the educational venues had been transformed into food-providing fields, and students were working in the fields and mountains instead of learning in class. Due to the Japanese military's poor performance during the war, the once educational institutions succumbed to the desperate demand of the military and became just an instrument of the government to mobilize child labor.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Space of Despair: Wartime Experiences in Domestic and Public Spheres**

The situation on the home front clearly reflected Japan's military and economic status during the war. From the beginning of the war in 1931 until 1942, the Japanese public was elated with the news of victory and the improving economy. During those years, Japan successfully took over Manchuria (1931), invaded China (1937), attacked Pearl Harbor (1941), and occupied countries in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific (1940-42). Amidst the celebration, however, the government's restriction on daily activities and the economy became increasingly stringent, affecting both the domestic and public spheres of the Japanese empire's home front. The sharply deteriorating prospects for victory after Japan's loss in the Battle of Midway (1942) only worsened life on the home front.

In 1938, the Japanese government began exerting authority over the daily lives of its imperial subjects in both Korea and Japan through the National Mobilization Law. The Law provided the Japanese government with the full control and management of all the manpower and resources within the Japanese empire for national defense.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, under the Law, all imperial subjects received state-distributed rations of food and materials, and were obligated to aid in the war effort through labor or serve in the military under governmental order.

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<sup>65</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 5th ed (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), [http://www.wesleyan.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P\\_896697\\_0](http://www.wesleyan.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P_896697_0), 301.

Additionally, the Japanese government established the National Service Draft Ordinance in 1939 to control human labor resources. The government began to conscript men from ages sixteen to forty, and unmarried women from ages sixteen to twenty-five for military labor in order to replace male draftees. A total of around two million men and women were conscripted for wartime labor.<sup>66</sup> As more men were drafted into the military, women and Koreans replaced men in terms of the home front laborers. These Koreans came as a result of work quotas required of the Japanese Governor General in Korea to send Koreans to work in Japan. Additionally, beginning in 1944, even Japanese middle school students were drafted to work in war industries. By the end of the war, almost three million male students worked in the wartime factories.<sup>67</sup>

In Japan, in addition to the material and labor mobilization, the Japanese government also used political propaganda to incite pro-war sentiments from the Japanese people. The government strictly censored outgoing information to the public; newspapers and magazines upheld nationalistic rhetoric, war efforts, and guidelines on wartime livelihood.<sup>68</sup> The government also dismissed modernity and Western cultures, including jazz and baseball.<sup>69</sup> These sentiments enabled the Japanese government to mobilize loyal soldiers and stimulate popular support for the war from the public majority.

Despite the growing number of casualties and less frequent mentions of wartime victories, the Japanese public continued to support the emperor's cause

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<sup>66</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 214.

<sup>67</sup> James L. McClain, *Japan, a Modern History*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2002), 489.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen Mansfield, *Tokyo: A Cultural History*, Cityscapes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 184.

<sup>69</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 219-20.

throughout the war. Toward the end of the war, however, signs of collapse shadowed the empire. Especially during the last few years of the war, the economy of the Japanese empire worsened as the quantity of raw materials diminished and production slowed down due to the continuous drafting of male workers.<sup>70</sup> Growing wartime adversities on the home front – including censorship, poverty, and hunger – created an adverse public opinion towards the war. Additionally, in 1944-45, the multiple air raids and the two atomic bombs rendered the lives of many Japanese civilians unbearable by devastating streets, homes, and families in many cities.

Koreans suffered throughout the war as colonial subjects of the Japanese empire. In 1931, the Japanese government revised its policies in Korea to more effectively mobilize Korea's human and material resources. For example, Ugaki Kazushige, the Governor General of Korea at the time, demanded farmers to grow cotton and sheep to provide necessary raw materials for Japanese industry, not for the local Korean population. In Korean villages, especially those in the countryside, Japanese police officers confiscated various kinds of raw materials, food, and other miscellaneous living materials that would be useful for the military. The Korean population lived in wartime poverty not out of patriotism like the Japanese did, but because of the force and threats imposed by the Japanese government. The general sentiments of the Korean interviewees during this time demonstrate that poverty and subsequent hardships only intensified Koreans' resentment and frustration toward the Japanese colonial government. In addition to materials, the Japanese military also drafted human resources from Korea. The Japanese military drafted Korean women to

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<sup>70</sup> Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 352.

send them to the “comfort stations” for the Japanese military. These “comfort women” lived as sex slaves in Japanese military camps.

The interviews demonstrate that children’s experiences during the war varied depending on the geographic location of the child’s hometown, and the socio-economic status of the child’s family. In the domestic sphere in Korea, children in the countryside generally suffered more than the children who lived in the cities because the Japanese government more brutally confiscated food and materials from the countryside population. In contrast, in Japan, people living in the countryside suffered less because they had access to food and materials other than those rationed. They were also safe from the air raids of 1944-45 that targeted the major cities towards the end of the war.

This chapter discusses children’s memories formed in the spaces of domestic and public spheres besides schools: at home, in factories, on the street, etc. Interviews used in this chapter demonstrate how children fit into the picture of wartime experiences on the Korean and Japanese home fronts discussed above. Since Japan was directly engaged in WWII, and Korea was not, many children in Japan experienced a greater degree of violence, such as bombing. However, both the Korean and Japanese children at the time had to live through starvation and cold winters, were forced into wartime labor, and witnessed others’ pains. The interviewees’ childhood memories of experiencing the war as silent observers and vulnerable victims provide valuable perspectives on life during the war.

## **Domestic Sphere**

Living conditions at home gradually worsened in both Korea and Japan starting with the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. During this period, the military was the number-one priority, receiving all available resources. With the Japanese military taking everything that they possibly could to supply the military, many families lacked essential living materials such as clothes and food. Making the situation worse, the government required its imperial subjects to contribute to the war effort by donating materials to the military.

The Japanese government utilized different strategies to the people in Japan and to its colonized subjects to collect more contribution. In Japan, the government used patriotism to maximize extraction and minimize supply of goods. This strategy was effective because those who opposed the patriotic contribution could easily be defamed as traitors. In contrast, patriotism did not work as an effective means of collecting materials in Korea, thus the government used physical force and threat. Therefore, the wartime voluntary contributions from the Koreans were actually the confiscation of the Japanese government.

### ***Japan***

During the war, the Japanese government had control over the rationing of food and materials, and even over everyday activities at home. To gain control, the government used central propaganda to emphasize the virtue of frugality and to encourage self-sacrifice for the war. The government rationed all kinds of necessary food and materials, putting aside various resources such as rice and metal for the

military. People were also given instruction on their lifestyles, which demonstrates the significant influence of the Japanese government on its people's daily lives. In addition, there was a geographical disparity in food and material shortage. Some interviewees' experience suggests that the shortage was more acute in the cities, arguably because people in the countryside had more land for agriculture and had access to extra goods other than those rationed. Moreover, the lack of food not only caused hunger, but also produced long-term consequences by stunting children's growth.

Under the National Mobilization Law, the Japanese government used a rationing system to directly control people's daily diet. Throughout the empire, the rations differed depending on the region, but the overall amount of rationing continued to decrease throughout the war. Takeo Goto, who was born in Kobe in 1930, remembers that when he was on a train heading home with rationed food for his family, someone stole the food while he was searching his pockets for his ticket. Goto said:

僕がねえ、中学3年生のときやからねえ。動員の先でね、米だけじゃなくて、とうもろこしとかね、大豆とかもくれよってね、それを持って帰りよったんですよ。それをおいてね、切符を買おうおもて、定期を買おうおもてこう書きよったんですよ。ぼくら、おばあちゃんはあれは堪えたーてゆうてたね。

This was when I was 15. Where we were mobilized to work, they gave us not just rice, but also things like corns and soybeans, and we took them home with us. I put down the bag containing them because I was trying to buy a train ticket, or a pass. I had to do so to fill a form to buy the ticket. Then (the bag just got stolen). And I remember my mother saying that she was devastated by it.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

Takeo's account shows the desperate poverty of the wartime Japan in the cities. The stolen ration and Takeo's devastated mother demonstrate that the amount of the rationed food was far from enough. Also, his story reveals that the government rationed rice, corns, and soybeans, which were essential to the Japanese people's daily diet. The government's control over goods as fundamental as staple ingredients signifies the considerable extent of its influence over Japanese civilians' daily life.

Food rationing became more restrictive as the war continued in the 1940s. In 1940, sugar, matches, firewood, and milk were rationed, and in the following year, various foods including sake, beer, rice, wheat, flour and eggs were also being rationed. To feed the military, the civilians' supply of rice was reduced over time, later hardly reaching the daily ration of rice (about 322 grams).<sup>72</sup> To alleviate the situation, various political efforts sprung to maximize the use of the rationed food. By 1944, the public campaign distributed information instructing how to use fish bones to brew soy sauce and how to utilize eggshells.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, on the brink of defeat, the press released ways to consume necessary nutrients from non-conventional sources such as peanut shells, leaves of roses, grasshoppers, rats, and blood of livestock under the title "Eat This Way – Endless Supplies of Materials by Ingenuity."<sup>74</sup> The state-publicized instructions on diet show that the Japanese government was well aware of the nation's wartime prospects toward the end of the war.

The Japanese interviewees also testified to the devastating shortage of food. Aoyama Hiroshi, who lived in Tokyo during this time, recounted how painful the

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<sup>72</sup> Katarzyna Joanna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 129.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>74</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co./New Press, 1999), 91.

hunger was by stating that people ate snakes and mice because they would die if they did not eat.<sup>75</sup> The rationed food was not only insufficient in quantity, but was also of poor quality. Maeda Sumie, who spent her childhood in Fujieda, a city in the countryside, remembers how her school's students were mobilized during the day to produce dry vegetables to be rationed in the cities. Students would boil and dry the vegetables at Oigawa River. The vegetables that they used, however, were throwaway vegetables.<sup>76</sup> The traumatic starvation at the time was vivid in many interviewees' memories. Living in such conditions, Japanese people gradually learned that Japan could not continue the war any longer.

Japanese civilians also lived in shortage of various living essentials besides food. Since the military used cotton to make military uniforms, and metal goods to produce ammunition, the civilians were left with synthetic fibers instead of cotton, and used wooden utensils instead of metal ones. Takeo Goto recalls that he would get scolded if he wore cotton clothes, as cotton was for soldiers. Without cotton, people at the home front had to wear clothes made of synthetic fiber all year long. Goto explained how painful the winters were with the synthetic fiber, and how it got shorter when it got wet from rain. He said even trees were scarce because people used them for cooking and heating.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, the severe material deficiency caused the value of essential goods to exceed that of jewelry. Through slogans such as 「欲しがりません勝つま

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<sup>75</sup> Hiroshi Aoyama, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 10, 2014, transcript.

<sup>76</sup> Sumie Maeda, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 14, 2014, transcript.

<sup>77</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

では。」 “we will not want to have anything until we win”<sup>78</sup> and 「贅沢は敵だ。」 “luxury is an enemy of our country,”<sup>79</sup> people were discouraged to own, and were encouraged to sacrifice. However, the reality was that luxury was not only discouraged as non-patriotic, but also unfeasible. To survive hunger, many people offered valuable artwork and kimonos in exchange for food. Kawasaki Shigeko, who was born in Kobe in 1934, recounted how happy she was when her mother brought her chocolate by giving up kimonos and artwork.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to nutrition and living materials, the government also regulated daily activities and lifestyle. A common example mentioned by many interviewees is the government’s control over the use of electricity. All households were told to turn their lights off when they heard a bomb siren at night, fearing that the U.S. airplanes would find them if the lights were on. Also, people were instructed to use sharp bamboo sticks to poke at the U.S. airplanes to take them down. If a house did not have the bamboo sticks, the family would be chastised.<sup>81</sup> People blindly followed these government orders. Even if they thought otherwise, their opinions would have rendered them traitors of the empire.

In Japan, the shortages of food and materials were more acute in big cities than in the countryside. Residents of big cities such as Tokyo lacked immediate living resources due to modernization. In contrast, people living in smaller cities in the suburbs and the countryside had access to more food and natural resources because there were enough land for agriculture and nature. Katayama Sho, who was born in

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<sup>78</sup> Masako Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 16, 2014, transcript.

<sup>79</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

<sup>80</sup> Shigeko Kwasaki, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 10, 2014, transcript.

<sup>81</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

the countryside city of Sumoto, Hyogo Prefecture, said that the rural Japanese had enough to eat because their families owned farms and crop fields.<sup>82</sup>

If hunger and the cold were direct consequences of deficient supplies, the long-term effect was the stunted growth of children. On average, elementary school students in 1946 were smaller than elementary school students in 1937. Moreover, city children, who were bigger than countryside children before the war, were affected more harshly by the lack of nutrition during the war.<sup>83</sup> Yoshiko Samuel said that the Japanese children during the war might have been both physically and mentally stunted due to lack of nutrition, including herself. She further speculated that although the Japanese were outraged when General Douglas McArthur claimed that Japan was like a “twelve-year old boy,” his comparison could have been apt – the Japanese indeed spent “too much time doing stupid thing like poking at the sky with bamboo spears to bring down their enemy planes” just because they were told to do so.<sup>84</sup> Her comments reveal the extent of hunger, control, and fear that the Japanese had lived in during the years of the Pacific War. Behind the façade of victorious battles, the inescapable reality of war shadowed the lives of many Japanese.

### ***Korea***

Similar to the children in Japan, children in Korea witnessed and experienced wartime food and material shortages as well. Korean interviewees’ accounts not only include the memories of hunger and poverty, but also demonstrate the Japanese government’s brutality toward the colonized. Food and materials were rationed to

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<sup>82</sup> Katayama Sho, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

<sup>83</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 92.

<sup>84</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

civilians in Korea as well, but both the amount and quality of the rationed food made it impossible for many families to survive. Moreover, majority of the Korean civilians were constant victims of food and material confiscation, as the Japanese government viewed the whole peninsula as a storehouse for Japan. Regarding the confiscation, many interviewees mentioned their experience of seeing *sunsa*, the Japanese policeman, at home. The interviewees witnessed how the Japanese policemen took the food and brazen kitchen services for the Japanese military. Since such appropriation was common in many towns, children became aware of the general poverty of the households in their communities. Moreover, the socio-economic status of children's family and the geographic differences of children's residence led to varying experiences during the war. Though the majority of the Korean population during this time lived in destitution, relatively well-off Korean families led comfortable lives, even during the colonial period. Additionally, people in the Korean countryside particularly suffered, as the countryside became a target of major expropriation for agricultural products and natural resources.

As in Japan, Korean rations for food goods continued to decrease throughout the war, reaching the lowest point toward the end of the war. In addition to the lessening quantity, the inferior quality of the rations further worsened the livelihood of many Koreans. Park Sun-Nyun, who was born in Pusan in 1926, recalled that the government labeled the rationed food into three categories, *갑(gab)*, *을(eul)*, *병(byung)*<sup>85</sup> according to the food quality in descending order. She said that the

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<sup>85</sup> *Gab, eul, byung* are equivalent to grade A, B, and C in terms of determining quality or condition of a product.

Japanese residents in Korea received the *gab* ration, which had the best quality, and *eul* and *byung* rations were distributed among Koreans.<sup>86</sup>

Besides insufficient rations, the Japanese government further aggravated living conditions in Korea with its escalating demand for human and natural resources. In 1940, the Japanese government established 350,000 Neighborhood Patriotic Associations in Korea in order to more effectively collect the civilian contributions. Each ten-house unit participated in collecting both monetary and material donations, including metals, food, clothes, etc. The “donation” was hard to avoid because the materials would be taken from houses by force.<sup>87</sup> The worsening wartime material shortage of the Japanese military led to more confiscation from the colonial subjects.

The Korean interviewees provided several accounts on the Japanese policemen’s appropriation of household items and food. Often, *sunsas*, the Japanese Policemen, inspected towns and households of the Korean neighbors, and confiscated food and other materials. The interviewees described the behaviors of the *sunsas* as merciless and inhumane. The most common description was that *sunsas* would visit houses and poke around any piles or covered places with swords to make sure that people did not hide food or materials that they were supposed to “donate.” When the policeman found out about the hidden food or materials that were supposed to be “donated,” the owners would be physically punished and the goods would be taken. Song Gok-Soon, who grew up in Seoul during the war, remembers how her family survived hunger by hiding food when *sunsas* came:

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<sup>86</sup> Sun-Nyun Park, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 12, 2014, transcript.

<sup>87</sup> Carter J. Eckert and Ki-Baek Yi, eds., *Korea, Old and New: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Published for the Korea Institute, Harvard University by Ilchokak, 1990), 321.

순사가 일주일에 한번씩 검사하러 나오는데, 이 집이 뭘 먹고 사나, 저 집이 뭘 먹고 사나 보고 가. 그러면 그때 우리는 밥은 먹고 살았는데 풀잎을 뜯어서 언제 어느 날 순사들이 나와서 검사한다는걸 알잖아. 그러니까 밥을 해서 그릇에 밥을 담고, 그 위에다 풀을 막 덮어놔. 그래야 쌀밥 안먹는줄 알고 가. 그렇지 않으면 우리 다 죽어. 농사지으면 다 뺏어갔어.

Once a week, a *sunsa* would come to inspect how this and that house lives. At the time we knew when he would come, so we would cook rice and cover it with pieces of grass and weed. Only then they would leave knowing that we don't eat rice. Otherwise we would have all died. They [*sunsas*] took everything we harvest.<sup>88</sup>

Song, as well as many other interviewees, related this account regarding the Japanese policeman with much anger and resentment. Since the *sunsas* rarely came to the neighbor with good news, the mere recalling of the Japanese policemen engendered hostile emotions. The Korean interviewees further noted that to substitute for the confiscated rice, the Koreans used other grains such as barley to cook meals. Those who could not even afford the grain replacement lived on inedible plants. To escape the hunger, people hid food in mountains, under ground, or anywhere they could in order to survive.

The policemen mainly collected food, but they also demanded other materials such as meal goods, fur, and clothes. Brazen kitchen services were most commonly taken to produce ammunitions. At the time, metal goods were very costly and valuable because they were usually used for important family events such as memorial ceremonies for ancestors. The Korean interviewees mentioned various other materials that the Japanese government collected: pine resins were used to produce oil, cotton was used in making military uniforms, and dog skins were collected to produce winter military goods. Usually, *sunsas* gathered the materials

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<sup>88</sup> Gok-Soon Song, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

from the town or students brought them to schools. Because these materials were not commonly available to Koreans after they “donated” them to the government, they lived with substitutes. Many Koreans wore synthetic fiber clothes instead of cotton, and used bamboo sticks instead of metal chopsticks.

The especially brutal attitude of *sunsas* toward the end of the war reflected the critical state of the Japanese empire. Jung Young-Sook, who was born in 1935 in Chungcheongbuk-do Province, recalled:

해방 될 무렵에 어른들이 일본 사람들이 막 난리를 친다고 재네가 왜 난리를 치지 막 그랬었어. 근데 알고보니까 그 때 폭격하고 막 그랬던거야. 그 무렵에 아주 잔인하게 있는데로 짹다 다 끊어갔어. Towards the liberation (Japan’s defeat), adults said that the Japanese were panicking, and were wondering why. Later, we figured out that there were air raids and other attacks. At the time the Japanese didn’t even leave a penny and took everything away.<sup>89</sup>

Material confiscation and *sunsa* existed not only at the end of the war period, but also throughout Korean colonial history. However, as the military and economic situations of Japan became desperate, the Japanese government required greater contributions from its colony. When the Japanese government made harsher demands to extract more resources from its Korean imperial subjects, the Koreans began to notice that something was going on outside of their peninsula.

Furthermore, the Koreans underwent dissimilar wartime experiences in the domestic sphere depending on their hometowns’ geography. In contrast to the situation in Japan, the Korean people who lived in the countryside suffered more colonial brutality and confiscation than those who lived in big cities. Aware of rural Koreans’ access to non-rationed goods from their agricultural fields and surrounding

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<sup>89</sup> Young-Sook Jung, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 29, 2014, transcript.

mountains, the Japanese military exploited this relative surplus of goods by taking a greater proportion of food and supplies. Big cities in Korea such as Seoul were modernized, so a greater portion of the Japanese population in Korea and upper class Koreans resided in them. Some children, who were from wealthier families and lived in Seoul, lived relatively comfortable lives. They were also rarely exposed to the Japanese government's brutality toward the Korean civilians. For example, Lee Man-Jae, the daughter of a landowner, remembers how her family could afford to shop for dresses and shoes at the Hwashin Department Store.<sup>90</sup> Lee also said that she learned about the Korean people's suffering during the colonial period only after it ended. Still, not everyone in the cities could afford this comfortable life style during the colonization. The general public living in the cities received less restriction from the Japanese government, but many people still suffered from material confiscation and poverty in the cities.

The interviews demonstrate that poverty in Korea during WWII was extreme and traumatizing. Except for some wealthy families, the majority of civilians were left with nothing to live with. For children, scenes and voices at home significantly affected how their memories of their homes and opinions toward the Japanese were shaped. When the parents and other adults at home spoke of the Japanese military as merciless and brutal, children absorbed those ideas. What the Japanese policemen did to their families only confirmed those beliefs. Therefore, in the children's memories, the cruel Japanese policemen became the predominant image of Japan during Japan's colonization of Korea.

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<sup>90</sup> Man-Jae Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 22, 2014, transcript.

## Public Sphere

Scenes of Korea and Japan in the public sphere gradually diverged as the war came to an end. In Japan, many people on the home front were already suffering from the lack of supplies. By the last few years before the end of the war, children above elementary school age no longer went to schools. Rather, under the National Mobilization Law, they worked in factories as wartime laborers to replace drafted men. Scenes of the streets became increasingly violent and life-threatening as the U.S. launched air raids on Japanese cities. Due to intensifying air raids, the government ordered the Outline for Encouraging the Evacuation for Schoolchildren, which enforced the evacuation of children under sixth grade to the countryside.<sup>91</sup> Accounts of the Japanese interviewees who evacuated due to the air raids demonstrate that despite the evacuation, many children died, witnessed death, and had to endure loneliness without parents or sometimes even without any family members. Moreover, the memory of the children who stayed in the cities influenced them to reconsider the meaning of war, as they witnessed the dropping of the bombs and its aftermath.

Unlike Japan, Korea did not experience the wartime bombings. Instead, Korean children, especially those living in the countryside, witnessed the harsh reality of a destitute colonized country, vulnerable to merciless demands of the Japanese policemen and officials. Throughout the war, food and material shortage became more severe due to increasing demand of confiscation, and many older male children were drafted to wartime labors along with the adults. Some children saw the forceful draft of their neighbors to the Japanese military, including the draft of “comfort

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<sup>91</sup> Thomas R. H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1978), 162.

women.” Though many children still filled the streets with laughter and created warm childhood memories during playtime, their memories of Japan’s colonial brutality remain vivid and unforgettable.

### *Japan*

Although there were short periods of happiness and peace while Japan’s military was successfully advancing in war until the beginning of the 1940s, many of the interviewees’ memories regarding the public sphere during WWII are dominated by the experiences during air raids and evacuation. Children’s experiences during the air raids reflect their various hardships as both war victims and refugees. Younger children (below sixth grade) were evacuated to the countryside under governmental order, but they still faced hardships of hunger, adjustment to new communities, and loneliness. Older children who remained in the cities to work at war factories became direct victims of the air massacres. Children’s experience in the public sphere during this time also reflects the widening gap of living conditions between the cities and the countryside. People in the countryside lived in better condition than their urban counterparts because they had direct access to food and were safe from the air bombings. Besides the air raids, the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki also left a strong impression in children’s memories, resulting in the formation of strong anti-war sentiments.

Although in the 1930s most supplies were seized by the military, the news of their soldiers advancing with victories ignited a sense of patriotic pride in the Japanese people: families took pictures of their conscripted sons in front of the

Imperial Palace, military bands marched through the streets, and the streets were full of flags.<sup>92</sup> With their cheerful and hopeful shouts of “*bansai*”(hooray), people sent soldiers to Manchuria, China, and to many other locations. When Japan successfully attacked Pearl Harbor, people decorated streets in red lights and pink paper flowers, and also cheered “*bansai!*”<sup>93</sup> People also went to *shinsha* (Shinto shrine) to pray for their loved ones’ safety, and attended Shinto ceremonies and festivals. Later, when Japan occupied the countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific West, people celebrated Victory Days and other festivals for Japan’s military success. Additionally, the territorial expansion allowed people at the home front to obtain goods and raw materials from those countries such as rubber and oil; people wore rubber shoes made of imported rubbers from the newly gained colonies.<sup>94</sup> Japan’s military advancement was visible even on the poverty-stricken streets of Korea: some children even had chances to play with rubber balls.<sup>95</sup> However, the joyous times of the thirties did not outlast the devastating defeat of Japan at the Battle of Midway in 1942 and the subsequent economic and military downfall.

Air raids in Japan in 1944-45 by the U.S. Air Force devastated the Japanese economy and civilian livelihood. Intended to achieve total surrender from Japan by marring the capital and shattering the public moral, the bombings destroyed most of the industrial facilities and war materiel producing factories in Japanese cities. The bombings also left many homeless, injured, or dead in many major and small cities including Tokyo, Kawasaki, Osaka, Kobe, and Nagoya. Full-scale air raids on the

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<sup>92</sup> Mansfield, *Tokyo*, 187.

<sup>93</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

<sup>94</sup> Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 336.

<sup>95</sup> Geun-Su Yang, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

Japanese territory began on March 9, 1944 on Tokyo under the order of General Curtis LeMay. LeMay ordered the nighttime bombing by B-29s to be executed at a lower altitude than usual, below 10,000 feet.<sup>96</sup> With the help of dry wind, the dropped incendiary bombs colored the silent night of Tokyo with red flames by igniting factories and wooden houses.

The result of the air raids was devastating. The total number of deaths released by the Japanese government after the fire was 78,650, five-hundred times bigger than the death toll of the Hiroshima bombing.<sup>97</sup> In Tokyo, where bombings were exceptionally severe, the population was reduced from 7.3 million in February to 3.5 million in November 1945 due to deaths and evacuation. The bombing in Tokyo left a quarter of a million residents dead, three-quarter million houses flattened in fire, and left three million homeless.<sup>98</sup> Residential areas and war production factories were often so interspersed that the bombing was inevitably going to yield collateral damage of civilian casualties. However, the total war has developed to the extent that even those civilian war industry workers became legitimate targets for their contributions to Japan's war effort.<sup>99</sup> After major air raids in March 1944, the strategic bombing continued until the end of the war, successfully achieving the objective of sabotaging the Japanese empire.

As the air raids intensified, the government declared the Outline for Encouraging the Evacuation of Schoolchildren on June 30, 1944 in order to evacuate

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<sup>96</sup> Daniel T. Schwabe, *Burning Japan: Air Force Bombing Strategy Change in the Pacific* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 120.

<sup>97</sup> David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York: Morrow, 1971), 1038.

<sup>98</sup> Mansfield, *Tokyo*, 197.

<sup>99</sup> Schwabe, *Burning Japan*, 170.

children, mainly to preserve them as potential war resources.<sup>100</sup> Children evacuated under this order were categorized as mass evacuees, as opposed to voluntary evacuees who had already evacuated before the order. Abruptly parted from their parents, this mass evacuation entailed 350,000 third to sixth grade students evacuating to any available dwelling area in nearby prefectures. After the evacuation of another 100,000 first- and second grade children in March 1945, the number of relocated students to rural areas exceeded 450,000, and the number of total evacuated students further increased when the 300,000 voluntarily evacuated students were added. This mass migration cost the government about 241,000 yen to pay for the hosting locations.<sup>101</sup> Many of the voluntary evacuees moved to their relatives' houses, but the mass evacuees were evacuated as a group or class under teachers' guidance and care.

The sudden flood of people from the cities disrupted previous lifestyles in rural areas. Though in the countryside there was enough food to eat beside the rationed amount, the abrupt increase in the demand for food rendered the living situation difficult to adjust to. Additionally, lack of manpower for the crop fields due to conscription of male workers led to decreased food production. The increased need of labor in both fields and wartime manufacturing in the countryside was often substituted by the labors of evacuated students. Yoshiko Samuel, a voluntary evacuee who evacuated to her grandmother's house in Shizuoka Prefecture, reminisced on her evacuation. Her account portrays general daily life of evacuated children:

Fortunately we had our grandmother living up in the mountains so that's where we went. But people who didn't have any relatives in the country had to go with their teachers into little temples and stayed, studied, and lived together. Can you imagine a teacher dedicated that much? To be separated

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<sup>100</sup> Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, 162.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

from their family and to spend all their time with children in the temple? Kids were homesick, and some kids would wet their beds at night and teachers had to take care of them. We went to our grandmother's, and all my cousins came from other cities too – so the whole house was full of kids. Of course there were no men left [at the house] by then. So my female cousins all took care of us. There was *never* enough food to eat. So they went out – I figured much later that they were in their twenties –everyday to forage for food. They went to farmers, taking all their kimonos in exchange of handful of potatoes or something. And yet the black market was completely banned. So if they were caught by the police on their way back, they would lose all their food. They also talked about they spotted a policeman ahead and hid behind a telephone pole, holding onto a bag of potatoes for us. ... Also, our grandmother and aunts sent us to mountains to find nuts and edible plants, and to river to find fish. ... One of my sisters was at a place where they raised tangerine. And she said “three times a day, we ate nothing but tangerines.” We [her and other children at Shizuoka] were eating nothing but boiled potatoes. Maybe twice a day, not quite three times a day. And the man who married one of my sisters said that he was in a place where they raised Matsutake mushrooms. Matsutake mushrooms are now very expensive. But he said, “we had nothing but Matsutake mushrooms to eat.” And everybody said, “wow, and you are complaining?”<sup>102</sup>

Samuel's accounts demonstrate the harsh living conditions of the countryside during the evacuation. The evacuated children, especially the younger ones, needed the adults' constant supervision and care. However, despite this care, the children were not well fed; the increased demand for food and materials due to the evacuation had led to scarcity of food in the countryside.

As newcomers, children from the cities were looked at differently. Though the local children and the evacuated children attended schools together and encountered each other daily on the streets, there were tensions between the two groups of children with different backgrounds. Children from the cities felt superior as they dressed better and came from more developed places. However, the countryside children often picked on the city children for having a city accent or not being able to

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<sup>102</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

play like the locals.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, city kids had to learn ways to assimilate to the new community. When Ito Yuji, born and raised in Tokyo, evacuated to Yamanashi Prefecture with her three-year-old sister, local children hazed and looked down upon children from Tokyo for being “spoiled.” He said he was not happy at his new school there, but it was tolerable only because there was food and no bombing.<sup>104</sup> Yoshiko Samuel also recalled being bullied by local children because the city kids “were not as tough as the children from the countryside were, spoke with a funny city accent, and didn’t know the basic things about jumping into water or catching a fish by hand.”<sup>105</sup> Children evacuated from the cities had to adjust their lifestyles and attitudes to fit in to the local children’s community.

This sudden transition and separation from their family members mentally distressed many evacuated children, often leading to homesickness. Ito Yuji remembers how he already experienced homesickness several times when he was in fourth grade. After about half-a-year in Yamanashi Prefecture with his uncle, he experienced extreme loneliness. He recalled, “I was afraid that my family would be all killed and I would be left alone. I became very pessimistic.”<sup>106</sup> Though the children from the cities escaped the severe bombing massacres in the cities, children’s fear and discomfort of losing their families escalated as the news of air raids reached them. The evacuated children were all under thirteen, a relatively young age to be away from their caring parents and to imagine the deaths of their loved ones.

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<sup>103</sup> Bruce Makoto Arnold, “Materiel Matters: The Japanese State’s Evacuation of Elementary Schoolchildren During The Second World War,” *Anistoriton Journal* 13 (2013): Viewpoints, No. 2.

<sup>104</sup> Yuji Ito, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 15, 2014, transcript.

<sup>105</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

<sup>106</sup> Yuji Ito, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 15, 2014, transcript.

The older children were not included in the evacuation order because they were considered old enough to serve the country through wartime labors. Children who remained in the cities were sent to various wartime factories, ranging from leather manufacture to bomb production. Throughout the air raids, Shimizu Masako worked at a balloon-bomb manufacturing factory,<sup>107</sup> and Shimizu Shogo plucked hair out of the raw leather sent from the U.S. to produce military shoes.<sup>108</sup> However, severe bombings destroyed many of the factories, leaving the children without further governmental direction. At the time, some children, like Yoshiko Samuel's sister, miraculously rejoined her family in the countryside.<sup>109</sup> Those who could not leave the city, like Takeo Goto, helped rebuild the towns and factories.<sup>110</sup> The main occupation of these children who remained in the cities was not a student, but rather an industry worker. As loyal subjects of the Japanese emperor, they provided the best possible services by working for war industries.

For the children who experienced air raids in the cities, the greatest difficulty was facing the horror of destruction and death. Many lost their friends and families, and saw their schools and houses burn down. They lived in constant fear of bombing. Takeo Goto, who was in Kobe during the air raids, recalled the vivid memory of his near-death moment when a B-29 flew over his head:

学校から帰る途中に、どぶにむりやりほりこまれた。突き落とされ1945年の春。恐ろしかった。町のおじいさんたちに。というのは、艦上戦闘機が打ってきて、危ないから。かんじょうせんとうきは音がしない。B-29が音がするけど、かんじょうせんとうきはそばでは音がしない。近づいてきて、急に音がする。だからおじいさんに放り込

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<sup>107</sup> Masako Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 16, 2014, transcript.

<sup>108</sup> Shogo Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, Jun 16, 2014, transcript.

<sup>109</sup> Yoshiko Samuel, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, July 4, 2014, transcript.

<sup>110</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

まれた。おそろしかったそれはめっちゃびっくりした。戦争は、民間人を犠牲にしてはいけないというのがルールやけど、民間人を狙ってくるわけ。戦闘機からしたら、民間人かそうじゃないかわからへんからね。

On my way home from school, someone pushed me into a gutter. It was in the spring of 1945. It was scary for us on the street. A carrier-based aircraft was shooting at us, and a fighter aircraft of this sort doesn't make sound. It gets very close to us, and only then we can hear them coming. B-29 is really loud, but this carrier-based aircraft makes a sound only when it's close. That's why an old man pushed me into a gutter. I was so scared and upset. The rule is that at war, civilians are not to be targeted, but they [the U.S.] came at us [civilians]. From the aircrafts, they [the pilots] couldn't see if we were civilians or not.<sup>111</sup>

Deaths on the streets during the air raids were painfully common. Though the children who remained in the cities were older than the younger children who evacuated, none of them were old enough to witness the deaths of others.

When the Japanese government publicly ignored the Allied countries' request of unconditional surrender proposed by the Potsdam Declaration in July 1945, the atomic bombing of Japan became a distinct possibility for the Allies. Consequently, the United States ended the war by dropping two atomic bombs: one on Hiroshima on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, and the other one on Nagasaki just three days after.<sup>112</sup> Ota Toshiro was at his school in Kure, Hiroshima Prefecture when the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. He vividly remembers the moment of bombing and the shocking scenes of Hiroshima after the bombing. Ota recalled:

えたじまにおりましてね、朝8時ごろやったかな、晴天でしたよ。そんときね B-29 がぼーーーんと飛んどったんですよ、そのひもね我々は晴天の日も精神訓練(?)があつてね、精神訓練(?)を受け取ったわけですよ。私は北側のまどですわっててね、窓があいとるわけ。そしたら B-29 が2機ぶーーーんととんで、そつから真っ白い光がぶかーーーーんと飛んできてだーーーーんと、う

<sup>111</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

<sup>112</sup> David Rees, *The Defeat of Japan* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997), 145-161.

わーーーーとぼくらに爆風が来てね、そして b2 9 が逃げて行って、そっから雲がうわーーーーと巻き上がるわけ。その江田島にね、火薬庫があったわけよ、そこへ爆弾おとしやがったわけ、それが爆発してね、うわーーーーとなった。そして講堂から飛び出して、裏っかわの山に這い上がってね、広島もやられて、広島の町も真っ暗になりましたね。

そのあと一週間したら、故郷に帰れと。そのうちアメリカが上陸してくるから、その前に江田島から帰れといわれた。そして荷物を集めて、せおって広島へいった。またね、そのとき広島の原子爆弾とは思わんから、広島には大型爆弾が落とされたんやとおもって。広島のみなとまで渡って、そっから広島市内まであるいていくわけよ、そのとき見た光景はすごかったは。もうそのへんに皆死んで並んどるわけよね。焼けただれてね、ぼろぼろになってる人がみんな寝とるわけね。ほんで歩いていく途中の電車ね、市電のなかにね、まだ人がぶら下がったままね、死んどるわけよ。真っ黒なつて焼けてるわけ、そのなかもうわああと思いながら広島へ到着したわけ。

広島の町もそういうかっことで、人が死んで並べられておるんよね、皮がむけてしもつて、電車は電車で中に死んだ人がぶらさがって。これが戦争かと自分らはおもってね、それから広島から、姫路に帰った。ずっと瓦礫の山です。これが戦争というものか、と思つたね。駅は駅でぼろぼろやしね、惨めな世界になった。戦争というものがいかにひどいものかがよくわかつた。戦争はしちやいかん、つちゅう感じやな。

I was in Etajima [naval base], and it was probably around 8 in the morning, a sunny day. Then, a B-29 was flying above us, making the “booooo” noise. Even on that sunny day, we were having mental training in the auditorium. I was by a window on the north side, and the window was open. Two B-29s came flying over, then a pure white light came up. We were blown away by a strong blast. The B-29 flew away in hurray, and a huge cloud came shooting up. Etajima [naval base] had an ammunition warehouse, so they dropped the bomb there. And the bomb exploded and we had a huge mess. I ran out of the auditorium and crawled up the mountain behind it. Hiroshima had been attacked, and the town had become completely dark [he was looking at Hiroshima from the mountain].

A week after the bombing, we were told to go home. “Americans will be landing in a week. Leave before that,” they told us. So we gathered our stuff and headed for Hiroshima. Also, at that time we didn’t know that what was dropped was an atomic bomb, we just thought it was a large bomb. We went over to the port of Hiroshima, and then walked into the middle of the city. What we saw on the way was terrible. Dead bodies were lined up all over the place, they were burnt and all broken up. And in the streetcar that went by, dead people were still hanging from the straps. They were all burnt black. We got to Hiroshima feeling completely devastated and upset.

In the city of Hiroshima too, dead bodies were lined up on the ground, their skins were all gone. Streetcars were filled with dead people hanging from

above. And I thought this is what a war does to us. And then I went back to Himeji from Hiroshima. All the way along, there were heaps of rubbles. This is what war means, I thought. Train stations were also destroyed. It had become a miserable sight. I came to understand how horrible war was, and thought ‘never again, war.’<sup>113</sup>

Ota’s description of the atomic bombing and the street scenes of Hiroshima after the bombing are vivid and terrifying. When the atomic bomb dropped, the whole world changed in the blink of an eye; both living and non-living creatures burned, melted down, and disappeared. The experience left a profound impression on him; he was one of the interviewees who most adamantly spoke against war and violence.

The two atomic bombings resulted in about 140,000 lives.<sup>114</sup> In addition to the Japanese, “6,500 and 10,000 Koreans conscripted into labor in Hiroshima; 1,000 second-generation Japanese Americans trapped in the city since the attack on Pearly Harbor in 1941; several hundred Chinese, and small numbers of Southeast Asian students, British and Dutch POWs, and European priests” also died in the midst of the atomic bombings.<sup>115</sup> With annihilating effects, the atomic bombs broke the last straw of the barely surviving Japanese empire.

### ***Korea***

Because Korea was not subjected to the air raids, warfare was a distant concept to children in Korea. Many of the younger children were unaware that there was a war going on in Japan. Children of middle school age or older were mobilized to the wartime labor, and had a better sense of the wartime circumstances in Japan.

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<sup>113</sup> Toshiro Ota, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 11, 2014, transcript.

<sup>114</sup> Bergamini, *Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy*, 55.

<sup>115</sup> Michael D. Gordin, *Five Days in August: How World War II Became a Nuclear War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 107.

However, the realities of bombing and death were still not familiar to them.

Additionally, because the labors were mostly organized under school authority, most of the children in Korea were set free after their studies or labors at school.

Unfortunately, the peaceful memories in the public sphere were only minor parts of the interviewees' memories. Although some children from the upper class families who lived next to many Japanese neighbors had close relationships with the Japanese, most of the interviewees highlighted their memories of unpleasant interactions with the Japanese during the colonization. The occasional appearance of the Japanese policemen patrolling the town and confiscating materials intimidated many children and adults. Additionally, children were witnesses of the military drafts on the streets. The Japanese government drafted men and women to Japan for various kinds of labors. However, the hardships and atrocities that the draftees had faced occurred mainly in Japan after they were sent there, not on the streets of Korea. What children observed on the streets were the movements and emotions during the moments of drafting. Some children were not only observers, but were also indirect victims of the drafts; for example, many teenage girls were hastily married to any unmarried men because their parents were afraid that their daughters would be taken by the virgin-seeking "comfort women" drafters.

Children from upper class families had relatively frequent interactions with the Japanese residents because the Japanese did not sabotage the upper class to garner support for themselves. Yoo Tae-Young was born into a wealthy family in Seoul and attended Korean-Japanese integrated school, where he remembers how his Japanese classmates teased him with the smell of kimchi by saying "kimchi *kusai* (stinks)."

Yoo recalled how the Korean and Japanese children would brawl at school, but they eventually became friends, visiting each other every year even after many years.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, children from the wealthier family had frequent exposures to the Japanese neighbors because a lot of upper class population lived in Seoul, where there were many Japanese residents. Korean children usually played with other Korean children because they were neighbors, but they did not dismiss the Japanese children when they wanted to join the circle – they were welcomed as additional players in their dodge ball games. Younger children were unaware of ethnic differences, thus they did not discriminate. Upper class children, though their families were not necessarily affiliated with the Japanese government, lived behind the façade of modernized Korea by its Japanese colonizers.

On the streets of middle to lower class villages, especially in the countryside, the façade rarely existed. Children observed adults' actions and sensed the changing atmosphere of their communities every time *sunsas*, the Japanese police officers, came and went. From what they saw and heard from the adults, they knew that the Japanese policeman in their towns rarely carried good news. *Sunsas* constantly supervised the Koreans and collected food and materials for the Japanese military. Though usually there were only few of them in one town and were stationed further away from the Korean neighborhood, their regular presence on streets confirmed their authority over the colonial subjects. For children, *sunsas* were the most frightening figure because they witnessed what *sunsas* did to their families and their neighbors.

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<sup>116</sup> Tae-Young Yoo, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 25, 2014, transcript.

Lee In-Ho from Chungcheongbuk-do Province remembers the sound of *sunsa* walking around her house. Lee recalled that:

순사들이 옆에다 기다란 칼을 차고 걸음을 저벅저벅 걸으면 철커덕 철커덕 소리가 나. 그러면 어린애들이 아무리 죄가 없어서도 겁이 나서 벌벌 떨었어. 그렇게 무서워보였어.  
When *sunsas* crunched across the street with their swords on their sides, the swords went *clank-clank*. Then children, even though they were not guilty, shivered in fear. It was that scary.<sup>117</sup>

Even when the Japanese policemen were just patrolling and not carrying out any violence, their mere presence aroused fear and angst from the Korean children and adults. As mentioned earlier, the Japanese policemen already had a notorious reputation in the domestic sphere of Korea, as they visited houses only to confiscate more goods. Lee's account shows that the Japanese policemen carried the same reputation in the public spheres as well, dismissing the giggles and smiles of children just by stepping onto the streets.

The Japanese government's seizure of human resources, especially of young girls as sex slaves, is the most infamous and controversial legacy of Japan's colonization of Korea. About 100,000 to 200,000 women were drafted from Korea, China, and the Philippines to the Japanese military, but most of them were from Korea, especially from the countryside.<sup>118</sup> The Japanese recruited females by lying that they would be offered good job and compensations as waitresses, domestic servants or even as nurses. Other times, girls were captured simply at gunpoint.<sup>119</sup> Once they were sent to the Japanese military, the "comfort women" were raped by

<sup>117</sup> In-Ho Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 20, 2014, transcript.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Edson Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>119</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 224.

about a few dozen to a hundred military men per day, and also had to tolerate severe beating and other physical violence. Many women died, were left abandoned in a foreign land after the war, were physically disfigured, and had to live in shame even if they returned alive.<sup>120</sup>

When children witnessed the “comfort women” drafts on the streets, they were unaware of the horrifying future that the drafted girls would soon face. Yang Geun-Su, born in 1937 near the countryside of Gwangju, spoke that he witnessed a *sunsa* taking a young woman from the street. When the interview was almost over, he abruptly began to speak again, saying that he thought that he has a memory regarding comfort women. Below is our conversation:

Yang: 그 때 순사가 마을에 여자를 데려가려고 왔고, 끌려가는 것 까지 본 것 같아. 그때가 8 살 정도뎀데, 스무살 전의 여자를 끌고 갔어.  
At the time, a *sunsa* came to our village to take a woman, and I think I saw a woman being dragged away. I was about 8 years old, and the woman he drafted was under twenty.<sup>121</sup>

Author: 억지로요? Forcefully?

Yang: 폭력은 아니지만 위압적이었어. 자발적인 것은 아니고 위압적인 분위기 속에서 끌고가는걸 내가 봤어.

It did not involve violence, but it was coercive. It was not voluntary; I saw them dragging her away in a coercive manner.

Author: 우는 사람도 있었어요? Did anyone cry?

Yang: 당연히 울지. 못가게 하려고 하고, 끌려가는 아가씨도 울고. (침묵) 그게 내가 지금 생각해보니까 위안부야. 나보다 어린애들은 기억 못하지. 나도 어릴 땐 몰랐다가 나이가 들고 나서 위안부 얘기를 들으니까 ‘아 그때 그게 위안부였구나’ 하고 안거지.

Of course they cried. People tried not to let her go, and the young woman being dragged also cried. (Silence) Now that I think of it, it was a draft for “comfort women.” Children younger than me won’t be able to remember. I didn’t know it when I was a child. Only later when I grew older and heard about the comfort women did I understand that ‘oh, that was a draft for comfort women.’

<sup>120</sup> Michael Edson Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>121</sup> Yang was probably 6 or 7. 8 is his Korean age, which is usually one or two years older than the actual age.

Author: 한 명만 데려갔어요?

Did they [the Japanese policemen] take only one woman?

Yang: 대개 마을에서 하나나 둘 데려갔어. 그런데 내가 본 건 한사람이야.

They usually took one or two per village. But I saw only one.

Author: 혹시 안 돌아왔나요? Did she every come back?

Yang: (침묵) 못봤어. 내가 그 사람 돌아온건 못봤어.

(Silence) No. I did not see her coming back.<sup>122</sup>

Before the interview, Yang's memory of witnessing the "comfort women" draft was dormant with his other childhood memories. As a child, he did not know that what he witnessed was the "comfort women" draft. These memories, however, were brought back by the interview questions, and he was able to create a connection between his unlabeled memory and a historical event. In the process of recalling, he placed his childhood memory in the context of the historical narrative of colonial Korea.

The interviewees argued that many teenage girls were affected by the "comfort women" drafts even if they were not drafted. The conversations with female Korean interviewees confirmed that the fear of being drafted as "comfort women" to the Japanese military permeated through the Korean Peninsula at the time. Since the Japanese military wanted to take virgins, parents married off their daughters to any unmarried male in their village. Song Gok-Soon, born in 1924 in Seoul, was a teenager in the 1940s. Since of the rumor was that the Japanese military only wanted to recruit virgins, she married a random man in her village under pressure from her parents. Song claimed:

정신대 안갈려고 친정 아버지 어머니가 오는대로 돈보따리를 줬는데도 한번은 되고 두번째는 안된데. 그러니까 팔 병신, 다리 병신한테로 시집을 갔지. 나이 몇살 먹지도 않아서. 나이 열 여섯, 열 일곱에. 정신대 간 여자들이 무슨 간호원이야, 하루 저녁에 백명씩 당한다는데. 어떤 엄마가 그런테를 보내요? 자식을 죽이면 죽였지 못보내.

<sup>122</sup> Geun-Su Yang, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

To not send me away as a “comfort woman,” my parents bribed them [the Japanese policemen] with money. But they took it once, but not twice. So I married off to a man with crippled arm and leg. I wasn’t even that old. I was sixteen or seventeen. The “comfort women,” no way they are [being trained as] nurses; people say about hundred of them (comfort women) were getting raped. What mother sends her child to that kind of place? The mother would rather kill the child than to send her there.

There were several other female Korean interviewees who shared similar accounts as Song. Though girls married at a young age at the time, the circumstances and motivations of these women’s matrimonies were different from typical contemporary marriage. They married hurriedly in fear of being sent as “comfort women,” not necessarily with blessings or for happiness. But none objected, as arranged marriage was better than sexual slavery and death. Additionally, though younger boys and girls were not subject to the draft, their memories of witnessing the drafts created personal connections to the issue of “comfort women,” as well as to the various other atrocities during Japan’s colonization of Korea under political dispute today.

## **Conclusion**

As Japan carried on with its grand scheme of building its empire in the Pacific, the home front of its homeland and of its Korean colony gradually tainted with poverty, violence, and deaths. In Japan, the living situation in many parts of the country became unbearable by the end of the war, as there were less and less available food and goods. In addition to inescapable poverty and forced labor, by 1944, the air raids exponentially aggravated the situation of the Japanese home front, taking away the colors and excitements of previous years. The last few years of the war were especially hard for children in Japan. As the government wanted to preserve

the younger children for a labor force in the future, it issued a nation-wide evacuation of elementary school children to the countryside. The separation from their families at an early age became a traumatizing experience for many evacuees. The older children who were left in the burning cities could not avoid becoming the eyewitnesses of death and destruction.

Many children in Korea also experienced poverty due to especially harsh food and material confiscation toward the end of the war. Even in the shelter of their homes, children were hungry and cold. However, they were not subjected to bombing like the children in Japan were. They played games outside after school, and helped their parents forage for food. Also, children in Korea were silent but keen observers on the streets. They watched and heard the footsteps of the Japanese policemen, and watched men and women being drafted to unknown places. At the time, most children did not know the significance of those events. Only after the closing of the era, did they learn the sorrowful history of their country's colonization.

Children's memories formed in in the domestic and public spheres reflect the reality of the war in the home front. The reality of the war – poverty, violence, and deaths – reflected in the interviewees' accounts brings to surface certain aspects of WWII in Korea and Japan that some present day historical narratives often neglect or wish not to include. Two significant historical events should be addressed in this light: the air raids on Japan, and the issue of “comfort women.”

Despite their frightening scale and consequences, the air raids over major Japanese cities in 1944-45 are often understated in many of the U.S.'s WWII historical narratives. The two atomic bombs dropped in August 1945 indeed ended

the war in the Pacific by pushing the emperor Hirohito to the limit. However, this strong emphasis on the atomic bombs for their role in ending the Pacific War could potentially skew the historical narrative. Moreover, the Japanese interviewees' memories reveal that the memories of the air raids could be more generally shared wartime memories than those of the atomic bombs, mainly due to the air raids' sheer scale and commonality. Granted, this analysis could be biased because most of my interviewees spent their childhood in Tokyo and Kobe areas, where the populations were direct victims of the air raids. However, the Japanese children at the time were evacuated to the countryside all over Japan. Though many people may not have experienced the air bombings because they lived outside the targeted regions, the news of the burning cities reached every corner of the collapsing empire, even to the countryside where evacuated children temporarily resided.

This demonstrates that the history of air raids also deserves as much academic attention as the dropping of the atomic bombs. Though the air raids did not end the war, they severely weathered Japan economically and spiritually, pushing the nation to the edge of defeat. Therefore, in terms of grasping the popular atmosphere, the air raids on Japan should not be overlooked in the discussion of the end of the war. Furthermore, highlighting the air raids of 1944-45 as a factor that pushed Japan to the verge of surrender would certainly affect the historical discourse, not only of Japan's surrender in 1945, but also of the necessity of the use of atomic bombs.

The aspect of WWII that certain historical narratives wish not to include is the issue of "comfort women." Political disputes between the South Korean and Japanese governments regarding the existence of the "comfort women" during WWII in Japan

have remained unresolved for decades. However, the personal accounts of the “comfort women” who survived the horrible years in the Japanese military prove that the existence of sexual slavery during WWII in Japan is an undeniable truth.<sup>123</sup> The several interviews included in this chapter regarding the “comfort women” strengthen this argument. The communal memory of the interviewees and the survivors supports the validity of the existence of sexual slavery during WWII in Japan by comprehensively consolidating the personal accounts regarding the subject of “comfort women.”

A nation’s historical narrative is tightly wound with its past and present politics, economy, and history, and is often in favor of the nation’s interest. Therefore, appropriately facing and addressing the ugly realities of the past cannot be accomplished in a short time, as it is difficult to change the dynamics of historical narratives of different societies. Such change requires time and knowledge, but most importantly, the willingness to embrace pain and shame. The personal memories presented here question some of the historical narratives of Korea, Japan, and even the U.S. These challenges are valuable in the search for historical truth as they demonstrate that the present historical narratives are not absolute, and thus must be critically viewed and used with caution.

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<sup>123</sup> The personal accounts and testimonies of the former “comfort women” are officially recorded and transcribed. They can be found in: <http://www.hermuseum.go.kr/english/>.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Space of Decompression: Defeat of Japan and Liberation of Korea**

However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable. Having been able to save and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, we are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.

- Imperial Rescript on Surrender, 1945<sup>124</sup>

August 15, 1945 is a day of monumental significance in both Korea and Japan as the histories of these two countries took a sharp turn. The last few days of the war were chaotic and disheartening times for the Japanese imperial government. By that time, Japan could no longer continue fighting due to its lack of military and economic resources. In addition, Russia had declared war on Japan on August 9<sup>th</sup>. Despite a few strong voices of resistance until the end, the Japanese government finally surrendered to the Allied nations by accepting their demand of disarmament and democratization of Japan.<sup>125</sup> At noon on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Emperor's radio broadcast of the Imperial Rescript publicly announced the dismissal of his empire, both in Korea and Japan.

Through the Imperial Rescript, Hirohito tried to protect the sacred cause of the war that broke his empire. He stated the benign purpose of starting the war, which was Japan's "sincere desire to ensure Japan's preservation and the stabilization of

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<sup>124</sup> David John Lu, *Sources of Japanese History* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 176-77.

<sup>125</sup> David Rees, *The Defeat of Japan* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997), 166-68.

East Asia,” not to “infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.” The emperor acknowledged the sacrifices and pains of his subjects, both soldiers and civilians. When explaining the end of the war, Hirohito neither mentioned surrender nor defeat; he claimed that it ended simply because “the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.” He further stated that the violence had to be stopped for the sake of maintaining human civilization and establishing world peace, as the Allied nations developed a terrible bomb that threatened peace and humanity. If Japan had not stopped, it would not only have destroyed Japan, “ but also it would lead to the of total extinction of human civilization.” The emperor ended his speech by directing people’s attention and energy toward the development of Japan’s future.<sup>126</sup>

Even in the speech that announced Japan’s surrender, the emperor was still portrayed as a strong and imperturbable leader. And not once did he use “defeat” or “surrender” to describe the state of Japan. It was simply “the end of the war.” The texts of the speech released him from the responsibility as a leader of a nation that carried out brutal and vigorous military actions during the past decade. This logic of vindication was also applied to the government leaders and the Japanese public, who had been loyal and faithful followers of the emperor Hirohito. This logic also placed all the blame on the military leaders who supposedly forced the emperor to carry out violent military actions during the war.<sup>127</sup> The interviewees’ comments on the war support this argument, as many of the interviewees held the military government

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<sup>126</sup> Lu, *Sources of Japanese History*, 176.

<sup>127</sup> Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), 26-27.

responsible. They further claimed how the military should never gain control of a government because it will lead a nation to a disaster like WWII.<sup>128</sup> Not one, however, blamed the emperor or the Japanese people.

As Hirohito's speech was broadcasted, the news of the shattered empire engendered a multitude of sentiments throughout Asia. In Japan, there was anger and tears of defeat, as well as silence of disbelief. The brave men who were cheered off to battles returned depressed or never came home. Also, victims of atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered with both short and long term injuries due to radiation. However, for many of the Japanese in the countryside, where they only heard of the horror stories of air raids and atomic bombings, the end of the war did not bring any significant changes in life. As the aggressor's defeat equaled the liberation of the oppressed, the nations of Southeast Asia and the Pacific that were under the authority of the Japanese Empire finally tasted the joy of liberation after many years of violence and subjugation.<sup>129</sup>

In Korea, while the Koreans indulged in the joy of liberation, the Japanese residents and the Koreans who assisted the Japanese government during the war faced an immediate danger of vengeful violence. There were about 720,100 Japanese in the Korean Peninsula at the end of the war.<sup>130</sup> This population arranged to go back to Japan on boats from Busan to areas around Hakata, the route through which the boats transported both Korean and Japanese back and forth to their destinations.<sup>131</sup> The

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<sup>128</sup> Tatsuo Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 16, 2014, transcript.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas R. H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1978), 202.

<sup>130</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 25.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

major migration of the Japanese population from Korea to Japan happened not only because of Japan's defeat, but also because of the hostility of the Koreans toward their former colonizers. According to the accounts of the Korean interviewees, many Japanese were beaten, and their possessions were taken away. To avoid being the targets of the vindictive measures, the Japanese residents in Korea tried to return to Japan as soon as they could.

Additionally, for the Koreans in Japan, the emperor's announcement did not put an end to their experience of colonialism or war. The Korean population had been migrating to the Japanese archipelago even before the official colonization period began in 1910. For various reasons, including military and labor drafts, the number of Koreans in Japan continued to increase. By the end of the war, there were about 2 million to 2.4 million in Japan.<sup>132</sup> After the war, Koreans in Japan were left stateless without means to go back to their homeland. The U.S. occupation of Japan further hindered some Koreans from moving back because under SCAP (Supreme Commander for Allied Powers), repatriates were only allowed to take small amount of money and belongings. Also, political polarization between northern and southern Korea, poor economic condition, and the locals' cold attitude toward the repatriates made returning to their homeland even less appealing.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, neither the Japanese nor the Korean government were willing to compensate the Koreans who were drafted to the Japanese military.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>134</sup> Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 233.

This chapter discusses children's experiences and memories on and after the historic day of August 15, 1945. Until the establishment of the new governments, people in Korea and Japan immersed themselves in the mixed sentiments brought about by the seemingly abrupt end of a long era. As members of these societies, children soon realized the changed fate of their nations. In both Korea and Japan, many children did not have a chance to hear the emperor's speech on radio because it was not a common household item. But even many of those who did hear the announcement could not fully comprehend the situation by themselves because of the poor sound quality and the convoluted text. Therefore, children usually became aware of the coming of the new era by observing and listening to the adults. Through this process, the adults' thoughts and sentiments about the end of the war often influenced those of children.

Furthermore, analyzing interviews regarding the space of defeat and liberation reveals interesting connections between individual memories and present historical narratives of Korea and Japan. Comparing how the Korean and Japanese interviewees remember the emperor's announcement of the Imperial Rescript, and how each group shapes their stories about the end of the war show what each society wishes to highlight in its national historical narrative about the period. Additionally, although the situations and public emotions in Korea and Japan during the war were dissimilar, the long-awaited peace joined the two communities with shared public sentiment of relief and feeling of liberation. These sentiments not only represent the end of an era of violence, but also confirm the actuality of many wartime tragedies during WWII. Additionally, studying the interviews based on the common sentiments reveals how

the contemporary official and communal memories in Korea and Japan affected the interviewees' memories and opinions about the end of the war.

### **Defeat of Japan**

Despite the severe indoctrination carried out by the Japanese government, the majority of the Japanese population felt relieved and liberated by the end of the war. Mainly, the harsh governmental control and unbearable bombings during the war caused many Japanese to welcome the conclusion of the war. The end of the war in the official memory of Japan barely includes emotions by shunning the use of vocabulary insinuating defeat or surrender. However the Japanese interviewees' testimonies demonstrate that in personal memories, the end of the war was a gravely sentimental event to many Japanese.

The broadcast of the Imperial Rescript brought about great confusion to the Japanese society. Indeed, some people mourned in front of the Imperial Palace and some of the higher-ranked Japanese officials did commit suicide out of shame or guilt of not living up to the emperor's wishes. However, many government officials also destroyed all the documents and military supplies that proved their association with the government, in fear of being accused of war crimes.<sup>135</sup> For those who were systematically indoctrinated by the military, the reality of defeat was hard to believe. Ota Toshiro, who was at a naval high school near Hiroshima, recalled how the students misheard the radio due to its low quality and thought that the emperor's speech was about encouraging soldiers to fight until the end. He said that some

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<sup>135</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*. 38-9.

students from his school prepared submarines to attack because they could not believe that the war ended. Fortunately, no one carried out the attack because their superiors jailed everyone who attempted to attack.<sup>136</sup>

Apart from grief, shock, and disappointment, the end of the war also brought the joy and relief of the cessation of violence and return of peace. Though many continued to suffer due to destroyed homes, lack of living essentials, and exposure to radiation, the emperor's speech put an end to the nightmares of bombing that seemed never-ending. Relief was the most common emotion expressed by the Japanese interviewees on the end of the war. The biggest reason why children were relieved was because the bombings ceased to occur; children were grateful that they would have a peaceful tomorrow. Takeo Goto, who was about 15 years old when the war ended, remembers what he saw when he listened to the radio at an electronics shop:

こんなこと言って申し訳ないけど、「戦争終わったー」ゆうてみんな騒いでたもんね。そこで思ったのがね、もう300人400人おったけど誰も泣いてる人はおらんかったもんね。「あーっ」としたもんね。あのね球場の前で泣いてる人はね、あれ格好だけやね、あれ間違いないね。こんなことゆうたらあかんねんで。でもほんまはホットしたとおもうね。

I know I shouldn't be saying this, but everyone was shouting, "the war is over." There were 300 to 400 people there, but no one was crying. So I thought 'okay, I understand.' I saw some people were gathering in front of a baseball dome and crying, but I knew that they were just pretending. I was sure of it. I know I shouldn't say this, but I think we were all relieved that the war was over.<sup>137</sup>

Goto's quote not only shows the common reaction of relief, but also implies that the Japanese society deemed expressing sadness and disappointment as an inappropriate reaction regarding the end of the war. He repeatedly said that he should not say that

<sup>136</sup> Toshio Ota, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 11, 2014, transcript.

<sup>137</sup> Takeo Goto, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

others and himself felt relieved. This attitude conveys that publically the end of the war was supposed to arouse grief and disappointment, but personally many Japanese felt otherwise.

Children also felt liberated when they heard the news of the end of the war. Shimizu Shogo was working at a factory in Kanagawa prefecture, producing canon bullets to shoot down airplanes. When students and teachers gathered to listen to the emperor, he could not really understand the words because of the poor sound quality, but somehow knew that the speech was about the loss of war. He also recounted how he felt liberated when he heard the news:

ホッとしたっていうことでね全部防空壕とかね、暗くしてたでしょ、電気も消してたでしょ、でもそれを全部はがしましたでしょ。それが解放されましたね。

Why were we relieved? In the bomb shelter, we had to keep it all dark, we had to keep the lights off. But now we could tear the bomb shelter down, and that was liberating.<sup>138</sup>

Shimizu's account reflects the military government's strict control over civilian lives during the war, and the frustration that the Japanese imperial subject felt under the tight authority. Shimizu claimed that during the war, he didn't know the word "freedom." He could be exaggerating, but the statement puts many children's experiences during wartime Japan in a nutshell.

Even today, the public historical narrative of Japan regarding the end of the war points to where the Imperial Rescript was directed in 1945; it does not include the sentiments of "defeat" or "surrender," like the Imperial Rescript. However, in personal memories, the end of the war has many colors and strong emotions. When asked about their memories about the end of the war, all of the Japanese interviewees

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<sup>138</sup> Shogo Shimizu, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 16, 2014, transcript.

used words such as “loss,” “defeat,” and “surrender,” without any hesitation. This demonstrates that although the end of the war is narrated in the present public history without the synonyms of surrender, everyone knew and knows that the war ended with Japan’s defeat.

### **Liberation of Korea**

The great majority of the population in the Korean Peninsula at the end of the war felt relief, extreme joy, and excitement from a long-anticipated liberation. The year 1945 marked the thirty-sixth year of Japanese colonialism in Korea, but the actual Japanese domination over Korea had lasted almost a half-century. Lee In-ho, who welcomed the day of liberation in Chungcheongbuk-do Province, recalled a quote that she heard on the streets: “이젠 전봇대로 이를 쭈셔도 내 자유요! Now, it is at my freedom to even pick my teeth with a telephone pole!”<sup>139</sup> The arrival of the long yearned independence brought out different emotions. On the one hand, there was the joy of triumph and liberation, as the Koreans had made multiple attempts of resistance against the government throughout the colonial period. On the other hand, there existed rage and vengeance toward the Japanese. These sentiments were taken out in various forms of physical violence towards the Japanese residents in Korea and the Koreans who were loyal to the Japanese government.

The jubilation of Korea’s regained freedom was most visible on the streets. Every street was filled with people shouting “대한 독립 만세! Hail to the independence of Korea!” and were colored white with waves of Korean flags. During

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<sup>139</sup> In-Ho Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 20, 2014, transcript.

the colonization, only *hinomaru*, the Japanese flags, were allowed to appear in public. But on August 15, 1945, the streets were filled with people waving *taegukgi*, the Korean flag, celebrating independence. Many children saw the Korean flag for the first time on that day. Bae Geun-Hyang, who was fourteen when the war ended, remembers how her father showed her the Korean flag for the first time on the day of liberation. She remembers:

집에 라디오가 있었는데 아버지가 라디오에서 일본이 항복했다는 소리를 들으시고 마루에 책상을 갖다놓고 태극기를 그리셨어. 그냥 독립 만세를 부르지 말고 태극기를 들고 부르라고 하셨어. 그 때는 태극기를 아는 사람이 얼마 없었어. 젊은 사람들은 [태극기가] 있는지 없는지도 모르고 어떻게 생긴지도 몰랐어.

We had a radio at home, and my father heard that the Japan surrendered. Then he brought a table to the living room and drew *taegukgi*. He told me that I shouldn't just cheer for our independence, but should do so with the flag. Younger people at the time did not even know whether the flag existed, and did not even know how it looked.<sup>140</sup>

Bae's story shows how children only had a vague idea of what was happening between Korea and Japan during the colonial period. Since those who were children at this time were born into the era of colonization, many of them were oblivious to the unusualness of oppression and were unaware of the existence of a country called Korea. Therefore, what they saw and heard on August 15 enlightened them about what had happened to their country during the past thirty-six years. On that day, children enjoyed freedom for the first time in their lives.

Some of the Korean interviewees have rather dramatic memories about the end of the war. Bae Geun-Hyang remembers that the emperor cried when he read the Imperial Rescript,<sup>141</sup> and Kim Eung-Man recalled how the emperor begged America

<sup>140</sup> Geun-Hyang Bae, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

<sup>141</sup> Geun-Hyang Bae, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 28, 2014, transcript.

for forgiveness in his speech.<sup>142</sup> Their memories could have been influenced by the social and political trends of post-colonial South Korean historical narrative. In this narrative, August 15, 1945 is the day that Korea welcomed the regaining of the long-lost freedom with overwhelming joy after a long, dark period of Japanese oppression. In this national historical context, Korea was not only liberated on that day, but also finally regained sovereignty from the Japanese empire; it is a narrative of nationalistic empowerment as well as freedom.

Besides the glee of liberation, other sentiments that exploded on August 15 after years of oppression were those of anger and vengeance. The Japanese residents in Korea, especially those who were closely affiliated with the government or were hostile to the Koreans, were subject to physical violence and seizure of their properties after Japan's defeat. Lee Man-Jae remembers how she had an agreeable relationship with the Japanese principal of her elementary school, and how she wanted to help him at the time. Lee recalled:

그 때 일본 교장이 나를 굉장히 예뻐했어. 시도 써주면 잘 썼다고 머리 쓰다듬고, [내가] 또 써서 보여주고 그랬어. 우리집엔 쌀이 많았거든, 그래서 쌀을 지고 교장 집에 가서 줬더니, 일본 교장이랑 부인이 그 어린아이한테 고맙다고 절을 하더라고. 거기 앉아있는데 그 사람들 유리창으로 돌멩이가 확 날아왔어.

At the time, the Japanese principal was very fond of me. When I showed him my poem at school, he would pat on my head as a compliment, and I would write and show him another one. [At that time] we had a lot of rice at my house, so I carried some rice on my back and brought it to his house. Then the Japanese principal and his wife bowed down on the little girl's [Lee's] feet. When I was sitting there in their house, and suddenly a rock was thrown through their glass window.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Eung-Man Kim, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 27, 2014, transcript.

<sup>143</sup> Man-Jae Lee, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 22, 2014, transcript.

Since the Japanese residents were equivalent to the Japanese government in the eyes of the Koreans, the Korean people expressed their anger toward their Japanese neighbors. The Koreans who were loyal to the Japanese government and harshly treated the other Koreans were also subject to the violence because they were considered traitors. The interviewees said that not all of the Japanese government related personnel in Korea were subject to violence; those who were especially obnoxious to the Koreans usually became the targets. But those who were under attack could barely defend themselves, as there was no longer a government to look after them. Many children saw how their Japanese neighbors left the town in haste. Many of the escaping Japanese headed to Busan, where they could get on a boat to go back to Japan. Since often there were only minimum interactions between Korean and Japanese neighbors, some interviewees related how their Japanese neighbors “suddenly disappeared.”<sup>144</sup>

The violence that the Japanese in Korea faced after the fall of their empire is often absent in the South Korean narrative of the day of liberation because the fact that the Koreans retaliated against the Japanese undermines South Korea’s position as an innocent victim in its historical narrative. However, children’s memories collected during the interviews revealed that the revenge of the Koreans and the hurried escape of the Japanese from Korea were rather apparent at the time. These stories are just veiled by the ecstasy of liberation and the effort to create a nationalistic trend in the Korean national history.

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<sup>144</sup> Park, Ong-Nyeo, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, May 23, 2014, transcript.

## Conclusion

August 15, 1945 is an unforgettable day to the Koreans and Japanese, for on that day WWII finally came to an end after severe struggles and the violent deaths of many. In Japan, children in the cities were relieved by the news that there would be no more bombings, and the evacuated children were happy that they could finally be reunited with their loved ones. Though some of the population, especially those who lived in the countryside, remained unaffected by the war, the end of the war brought the sense of relief to the entire Japanese archipelago. In Korea, the whole peninsula filled up with exhilaration for freedom when the emperor's announcement released the Koreans from persecution of the Japanese colonization. For the Korean children who were born into the era of colonization, August 15, 1945 was the first time that they witnessed freedom. However, the Japanese residents in Korea and the Koreans who had collaborated with the Japanese government could not escape the resentful retaliation of the Korean civilians. Also, the repatriates of both Japan and Korea had to suffer another period of chaos in surviving and migrating.

Comparing how the Japanese and Korean interviewees described the end of the war reveals the vulnerability of memory to a present social conception of the historical period. When asked about the end of the war, the Japanese and Korean interviewees focused on different aspects of the event. The Japanese interviewees tended to linger on war's significance for Japan. Many emphasized how horrible their wartime lives were, and how there should no longer be any war. They also mentioned how pitiful and wasteful it was to lose so many young, smart Japanese in the war,<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Kawasaki Shigeko, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 10, 2014, transcript.

<sup>146</sup> and how nonsensical it was to go to war against the U.S., who was obviously more powerful.<sup>147</sup> Also, the Japanese interviewees were almost uniformly receptive to the arrival of the Americans. This response could be due to the influence of post-war Japan's historical narrative, in which the U.S. is often portrayed as the superiors who brought peace and democracy to Japan. Also, when reflecting on wartime Japan, most of the Japanese interviewees did not mention the atrocities carried out by the Japanese in many Asian countries. Inclusion of the atrocities in their narratives would have created contradictions in their narratives because it would risk Japan's, and therefore the interviewees', position as a victim of WWII.

On the other hand, most of the Korean interviewees' answers were about the significance of Japan's defeat to Korea. Many interviewees stated that WWII led to Korea's liberation, and it is a "good" thing that the war ended with Japan's defeat.<sup>148</sup> The Korean interviewees thought that WWII provided the opportunity of liberation to Korea, and that Japan's defeat was Korea's victory. On the day of liberation, the long period of the Korean resistance to the colonial oppression came to an end, and they did not hesitate to express their joy. Additionally, although all of the Korean interviewees were aware of the atomic bombings in Japan, no one really wanted to talk about it. Talking about the bombings, and eventually sympathizing with the Japanese war victims would have undermined the position that the Japanese held in the Korean national historical narrative as brutal colonizers.

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<sup>146</sup> Ito Yuji, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 15, 2014, transcript.

<sup>147</sup> Matsumoto Satoshi, interview by Hyo Jeong Jung, June 12, 2014, transcript.

<sup>148</sup> The word "good" here is a rough translation of the Korean word "다행(多幸) *da-hang*," which means "good, fortunate, relief."

The childhood memories of the Japanese and the Korean interviewees regarding the end of the war present different events and sentiments of the time. Although Japan and Korea held different positions in the past as the colonizer and the colonized, both nations concluded their histories of the WWII period with a sense of relief. The turbulent era of violence and misguided nationalism had finally come to an end, and the two nations finally stepped into the next chapter of history by embracing peace, democracy, and new possibilities. Though the era that has closed is full of tragedies and pains, these became the fuel and motivation that led Korea and Japan to the new dawn.

## CONCLUSION

### Memory in the Search for Historical Truth

“How can you face us?” asked Kaito Abe, my Japanese friend. We were having a conversation about Japan’s colonization of Korea. In his question, “you” indicated the Koreans, including myself, and “us” represented the Japanese, including himself. His question is not only about Korea-Japan relations, but also about how the Koreans and Japanese remember the past. Kaito’s question lingered in my head as I wrote this thesis, and has inspired me to search beyond what I have known and to explore deeper into my thoughts for an answer. As I conclude this project, I wish to take the responsibility of answering this question both as a friend and as an historian. In answering this question I will have a chance to analyze the current Korea-Japan historical conflict and the significant role of memory within, and explain why seeking historical truth using memory is essential to resolving this conflict.

For the past several decades, Japan and South Korea have been engaged in disputes regarding the historical truth of the colonial period. From the “comfort women” controversy to the territorial dispute regarding the Liancourt Rocks (*Dok-do* in Korean and *Takeshima* in Japanese), the unresolved historical conflicts between South Korea and Japan chain the two countries to the past, preventing them from moving forward.<sup>149</sup> Granted, there have been efforts of reconciliation. The Japanese government has apologized several times to South Korea for Japan’s behavior during the colonial period. However, the Koreans have dismissed the Japanese government’s

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<sup>149</sup> David Hundt and Roland Bleiker, “Reconciling Colonial Memories in Korea and Japan,” *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 61–91.

apologies as insincere and insufficient. One of the primary reasons of the disapproval is the Japanese Prime Ministers' continuous visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which houses the dead spirits of those who served the Japanese empire during WWII. Among the spirits there are those of the Japanese government officials, who were later condemned as war criminals for their involvements in WWII. As victims of Japan's cruelty during its colonization of Korea and WWII, the Koreans deemed the Japanese Prime Ministers' visit to the Shrine and honoring the souls in the Shrine contradicted the Japanese government's apologies.

A problem in this relationship is that neither country's government wishes to contribute to reconciliation. Through this project, I learned that one of the fundamental problems of the Korea-Japan historical disputes is that both South Korea and Japan wish to portray themselves as victims in their national historical narratives. For example, by neglecting the air raids in major Japanese cities that preceded the atomic bombings, the Japanese government puts Japan in the position of an innocent victim in WWII history. Through this distorted and unbalanced historical narrative that only underlines Japan's victimhood, the Japanese government intends to escape from the responsibilities to acknowledge and apologize for the gruesome atrocities that it inflicted upon other nations during the first half of the twentieth century.

Additionally, the vengeful sabotaging of the Koreans on the Japanese residents after the end of the war until the Americans arrived is largely absent in the Korean national historical narrative. The violence that the Japanese residents underwent during the few weeks is certainly not tantamount to the brutality that the Koreans experienced during the thirty-six years of colonialism. Even though

including this aspect of colonial history does not overturn the narrative of Korea's victimhood entirely, it is not included in the official memory of Korea because it could potentially undermine the image of Korea in the colonial history as an absolutely innocent victim. Furthermore, the Korean government explicitly uses this image of the innocent victim to amass public support, and Korean society focuses on vilifying the Japanese to strengthen this image, leaving no chance for reconciliation.

There is a precedent in modern history that provides a solution to the Korea-Japan historical disputes. During her visit to Japan in early March 2015, Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, urged Abe Shinzo, the Prime Minister of Japan, to properly face and address Japan's military aggressions toward its neighbors in Asia during the early twentieth century. Merkel pointed out how the international community and the neighboring nations' support enabled Germany to appropriately address the past. She especially appreciated the accepting attitude of France by stating, "one of the great achievements of the time certainly was reconciliation between Germany and France ... The French have given just as valuable a contribution as the Germans have."<sup>150</sup> The reconciliation between Germany and France demonstrates that the historical disputes can only be settled when both the aggressor nation and the victim nation contribute to the cause. The role of Japan in reconciliation is critical as it is the nation that has to initiate the process by addressing the past properly. In addition, Korea should also contribute to the process of reconciliation by adopting a more accepting attitude.

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<sup>150</sup> Julian Ryall, "Japan Must Face up to Its Shameful Second World War Past like Germany Did, Says Angela Merkel," March 9, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/11458384/Japan-must-face-up-to-its-shameful-Second-World-War-past-like-Germany-did-says-Angela-Merkel.html>.

Unfortunately, at this rate of effort, the reality is that neither Korea nor Japan will be prepared for the reconciliation any time soon. Today, the official memories of the two countries are drifting away from the historical truth, the point where the two official memories must meet to commence reconciliation. Since November 2014, the Japanese government has been pressuring a McGraw-Hill textbook called *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past* to “correct” the wrong information in the paragraph regarding the “comfort women” issue.<sup>151</sup> Abe Shinzo had openly criticized the textbook for containing incorrect information in January 2015, and again in March, a group of Japanese historians pointed out again the erroneous information regarding the “comfort women.”<sup>152,153</sup> The Japanese government and historians argued that the number of women drafted to the Japanese military brothel was exaggerated, and understated the sexual slavery of the “comfort women” as a common form of prostitution. McGraw-Hill refused to make such edits all along the controversy. Additionally, in response to the Japanese government’s request’s obvious infringement on freedom of speech and blatant violence against the historical truth, twenty American professors wrote a letter expressing their dismay toward the Japanese government’s action and solidarity with McGraw-Hill.<sup>154</sup> The McGraw-Hill

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<sup>151</sup> Alexis Dudden, “Standing with Historians of Japan,” *Perspectives on History*, March 2015, <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2015/letter-to-the-editor-japan>.

<sup>152</sup> Martin Fackler, “U.S. Textbook Skews History, Prime Minister of Japan Says,” *The New York Times*, January 29, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/30/world/asia/japans-premier-disputes-us-textbooks-portrayal-of-comfort-women.html>.

<sup>153</sup> Anna Fifield, “Japanese Historians Contest Textbook’s Description of ‘comfort Women,’” *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japanese-historians-contest-textbooks-description-of-comfort-women/2015/03/17/6e5422e3-09a3-4d96-a520-8a5767ab93e4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japanese-historians-contest-textbooks-description-of-comfort-women/2015/03/17/6e5422e3-09a3-4d96-a520-8a5767ab93e4_story.html).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

textbook controversy shows exactly where Korea and Japan are today: a great distance away from being able to properly face the historical truth.

I have always believed that the historical truth will eventually prevail – although absolute truth is unattainable, I thought that truth-seeking, not truth-concealing, voices would narrate history. However, the reality tells me otherwise. The reality makes me anxious. I am afraid that the historical truth will be manipulated, or even be effaced completely by the government. I fear that historical truth will be forgotten while a society refuses to taste the bitterness of the past, and indulges in the sweetness of historical exploitation. Some say that forgetfulness is essential to creating a memory; one first experiences a moment, forgets about it, then when the person recalls the moment, the past has become a memory.<sup>155</sup> This logic of forgetfulness, however, is applicable only to personal memory. A society or a nation cannot afford to forget the past. In a society where the once forgotten past is vulnerable to becoming a manipulated memory, applying the logic of forgetfulness can only diverge the society farther away from the historical truth.

Additionally, the McGraw-Hill controversy adds urgency to the writing of this project. As I used people's painful personal memories to construct this thesis, it was imperative to ask myself this question: how much time needs to pass for the memories to become an aid to understanding? The general answer would be "long enough" because often, traumatic memories require an uncertain amount of time until they can be resurfaced and addressed properly. However, the answer regarding the Korea-Japan disputes is "now." The interviewees who were part of this project shared

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<sup>155</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 205.

their childhood wartime memories because they recognized that the wartime and colonial histories must be addressed now, before they forget, and before they pass away. The neglected wound of the past between South Korea and Japan has only been aggravated during the past decades, and further abandonment will only lead to the state of irreparability.

The time is ripe for reconciliation, but not yet for empathy. When I began this research, I blindly dreamed of a mutual understanding between South Korea and Japan. As the thesis developed, and as I analyzed the stories of the children, the dream eventually became a burden. How can I tell children to comprehend the pain of their parents' murderer? How can I tell a rape victim to empathize with the rapist?<sup>156</sup> The pains of the past in both Korea and Japan are too grave and profound that insisting on mutual empathy even before reconciliation seemed nonsensical and inappropriate. At this point, the best I could hope is that when there is reconciliation, it would lead in the direction of mutual understanding, a process which may take many centuries.

As to answering Kaito's question, my answer is that "we," unfortunately, have not faced "you" properly yet. His question can be answered only when Korea and Japan are prepared for the discussion of acknowledgement and acceptance. As today's numerous historical controversies and political tensions between Korea and Japan hamper revealing of the historical truth during WWII and the colonial period, the journey searching for historical truth has many obstacles and hardships. However, there still are many historians who take steps toward the journey to find the historical

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<sup>156</sup> Vera Schwarcz, conversation with author, April 1, 2015.

truth with incredible passion and courage. I hope this project contributes to their journeys by providing fresh perspectives in studying the Korean and Japanese historical narratives. As I join the historians in their odyssey to historical truth, I can only hope that at the end of the road there will be not only a peaceful rapprochement, but also the beginning of a conversation of empathy.

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