

*The Role of Fact-Finding and Interpretation in the
Construction of Risk and Suffering: The Fukushima
Nuclear Disaster and the Comfort Women Issue*

Naoko Kumagai
International University of Japan

Yoko Ikeda
University of Tokyo

July 2016

IUJ Research Institute
International University of Japan

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IUJ Working Paper

“The Role of Fact-Finding and Interpretation in the Construction of Risk and Suffering: The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster and the Comfort Women Issue”

**Naoko Kumagai, International University of Japan
Yoko Ikeda, University of Tokyo**

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July 2016

The joint project was supported, in part, by the International University of Japan Research Institute for the Research Grant (Partial grant for IUJ research projects) in 2015 FY. The authors are grateful for the grant.

Naoko Kumagai is grateful for the support from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) [Kakenhi Grant Number 25380210 Grant-in-Aid Scientific Research (C)].

Introduction

Policy making and implementation require knowledge that is systematically generated and based on collected facts and interpretations to assess the reality of the issue to be addressed. This paper focuses on a new aspect of the role of knowledge in policy decisions by examining how different fact-finding processes and fact interpretations affect knowledge generation, and thus affect policy making and interpretation. The study involves two recent cases involving Japan: the nuclear power plant accident at Fukushima and the repercussions over the use of comfort women during World War II.

The long-term evacuation and subsequent return of residents to their homes after the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident may appear at first glance to have nothing in common with the recovery of former comfort women's dignity. However, both cases are similar in that they involve a group of victims to be protected, and in both cases the fact-finding processes generated heated dialogues among people who viewed the issue from opposing sides. Each side was able to question not only the veracity of what the other side presented as the truth, but also the intentions behind the claims being made. Both issues involve the difficulty of coming to a final agreement on what the just compensation is for victims and what the solutions should be.

In each case, with respect to the role of fact-finding and fact interpretation, a distinct question arose. A key concept in policy-making in Fukushima is "risk," and that in the issue of comfort women is "suffering." This study thus considers how collected facts were selected, used, and interpreted to understand the "risk" for those affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster and to understand the "suffering" of former comfort women.

In the process of protection of, compensation for, and reconciliation with victims, fact-finding is a crucial factor. Without knowledge of what happened, by whom, how, and why, clear acknowledgement of culpability and victimhood, apologies, and compensation are impossible or untrustworthy.

This paper also explores fact-finding from different disciplinary perspectives, Ikeda in anthropology and Kumagai in political science. The Fukushima part of this paper, inserting stories of two affected towns as an example and written by Ikeda, explores fact-finding in the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident. The issue of comfort women is examined with the cases of lawsuits and scholarly research to see how they complement governmental fact-finding and thus affect governmental policy-making processes.

The consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident have become a subject of interest and debate in academia, journalism, everyday conversation, and on the Internet. In an age of mass information and opinion-sharing, fact-finding involves differentiating baseless predictions, guesses, opinions, and claims of facts from information backed by research and data. In the social sciences, fact-finding also involves thinking about the context and the representation associated with the “fact” and the process of finding the fact.

Risk is a key issue in fact-finding about Fukushima. Risk itself is not a value-free concept but has socially-constructed meanings (Ikeda 2013) and semantic frames that reflect societal changes (Zinn 2010). In the process of conveying knowledge or a point of view, scholars become a part of discourse-making themselves. Komori and Yoshimi (2000, 12) point out that in speaking/writing about an event, what a speaker

presents becomes an interpreted and edited version of that event. In their view, discourse has the power to evoke responses that shape how speakers present an issue. Ōta (2000, 240) argues that anthropological knowledge typically is “a knowledge that evidently goes through an intermediary.” He points to an inherent division between scholars who speak of subjects (people) and the subjects who are represented and studied.

What roles should scholars play in writing about recovery and reconstruction after a disaster, especially when recovery and reconstruction involve contested issues of risk and safety after a nuclear power plant accident? Opinions on how disaster-stricken areas in Fukushima should be recovered and rebuilt are diverse. A different picture may be drawn depending on which voices are presented and how they are framed. An author puts a story together and presents a perspective in pursuit of “facts.” Writing on the ethnography of disasters, Hayashi (2004, 24) argues that if the goal of ethnographic research is to understand a subject (topic), it is important to keep in mind the purpose of understanding it.

In the issue of comfort women, the veracity, extent, and nature of comfort women’s sufferings have been the subject of heated discussion for more than twenty years since the issue appeared on the political agenda in the early 1990s. The deniers and minimizers, mainly Japanese hardline conservatives, argue that comfort women were voluntary professional prostitutes taking part in a practice that had been morally acceptable before as well as during the war, and that they earned money from it. Spokesperson of this persuasion thus deny the need for any state compensation for former comfort women. Former comfort women and their supporters, meanwhile,

highlight the forcible nature of the recruitment and the work of comfort women, and point out the role that patriarchal tradition played in allowing such occurrences to happen. They charge the wartime Japanese authority with the crimes of forcible recruitment and management, and thus demand state compensation for the sufferings of former comfort women. Behind this cleavage are the two sides' respective identities and self-images, and stereotypical images of each other, which reinforce each side's sense of morality. The role of different conceptions of morality and worldviews in generating disparate fact-finding and interpretation processes, and the divergent knowledge that results, has been pointed out in the case of the sharply divided, often irreconcilable, debates between conservatives and liberals in the United States on issues of taxation, abortion, and education (Lakoff 2002). The effect of intuition, which sets in before strategic reasoning starts functioning in the human mind (Haidt 2013), might explain the way that fact-finding and implementation processes become subject to irreconcilable ideological conflict among people. Still, the study of how knowledge affects policy making and implementation has focused mainly on questions of how expertise and scientific knowledge, as theoretically structured information, affect the setting of agendas and the framing of issues by a government, in cases where the experts and the policy makers share beliefs (Haas 1990; Haas 1997). This does not assume the presence of irreconcilable moral conflict. Studies so far have focused on how ideas and world views affect policy rather than on the relationship between morality and objective reality or the sources of beliefs (Goldstein and Keohane 1993).

Thus, diverse fact-finding and interpretation processes have their own unique characteristics, and each fact-finding process itself is also affected by diverse social, moral, and political factors, such as certain social attitudes toward the problem at issue,

the media, advocacy groups, support groups for the victims, experts, and governmental institutions. This study examines the distinctive fact-finding and interpretation processes in the two cases, taking care to avoid making easy generalizations of a pattern of correspondence between a certain process and a certain policy result. The following sections will explain first the case of Fukushima and, second, the issue of comfort women.

1. Fact-finding for Fukushima

The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident triggered by the mega tsunami and earthquake in March 2011 has led to the long-term evacuation of nearby villages and towns. Fact-finding to learn the effects of the incident's aftermath has been important in making plans for the recovery and rebuilding of towns after the evacuation. There have been heated debates and competing claims both among and between lay people and experts over the consequences of the accident and what precautionary measures need to be taken. Despite disagreements, however, consensus must be built and decisions must be made about what is next for the municipalities that experienced massive and sudden relocation.

This part of the paper looks at the complicated nature and ongoing fact-finding efforts to assess potential risk and assure safety in Fukushima, focusing especially on two municipalities still being evacuated. Following the anthropological practice of anonymizing informants by using pseudonyms I call the towns Momo-town and Sakura-town. Both towns have been evacuated for five years since the triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant accident. For such an emotionally

charged topic, the fact-finding process itself can be the subject of scrutiny and the target of criticism. Those criticisms depend on one's perception of what the facts are regarding Fukushima. Affected towns and villages are not merely recipients of the information that comes out of fact-finding conducted by someone else. Being at the frontline of the rebuilding and recovery process, local municipalities are active players in the fact-finding effort as they see and decide for themselves how to plan for the future.

The Evacuation and Ongoing Challenges

After the accident, initial orders to evacuate were based on the distance from the power plant. Subsequent areas were added based on the expectation that over the course of a year they would receive a cumulative dose of over 20 millisieverts (mSv) of radiation. Classification of evacuated areas into three zones was reconsidered by August 2013: 1) “Areas to which evacuation orders are ready to be lifted”: where the current cumulative dose of background radiation is 20 mSv/year or lower; 2) “areas in which the residents are not permitted to live”: locations at which the background radiation level is expected to be more than 20 mSv/year; 3) and “areas where it is expected that the residents will have difficulties returning for a long time”: areas with background radiation levels expected to remain higher than 50 mSv/year for now (Reconstruction Agency 2016). As of 2016, evacuation has ended for two villages and a town (Naraha-town & Katsurao-village, Kawauchi-village) that were once wholly evacuated.

Currently, Sakura-town and Momo-town are assiduously planning and drawing up blueprints for the future of the town in preparation for reopening the towns after their long evacuations. Both towns contain all three zones and require physical reorganization

to accommodate the government zoning, which will keep some areas off limits to habitation.

Challenges to Sakura-town and Momo-town today are mountainous. They are:

1) rebuilding infrastructure damaged by the tsunami and earthquake, reorganizing the town with a new focal point and to build public residences with business and other commercial facilities nearby in areas to which people will return to live; 2) addressing the aftereffects of radiation by demanding and monitoring the decontamination of residential and other areas, testing and resuming agricultural production, demanding official monitoring and conducting independent monitoring of radiation levels, and negotiating location and disposal of contaminated waste; 3) maintaining and nurturing town's culture and maintaining connections among residents; and 4) caring for and helping residents who want to return, who are undecided, or who have decided not to return to town to live.

In planning, both towns emphasize respecting resident choices about coming back or relocating. Through annual resident opinion surveys, both towns are well aware that a percentage of their residents have already decided to settle down elsewhere. Sakura-town's blueprint claims the importance and willingness to accommodate and attend to the needs of those who want to come back, those who are still ambivalent about coming back, and those who will not go back.

Risk and Safety as Social Debate

The villages and town in Fukushima whose evacuation orders have already been lifted experienced a significant outflow of population. It is not unusual for some residents to

choose to relocate for good and to avoid the disaster-stricken area after the long-term evacuation. For example, in the evacuation after Katrina, the hurricane that devastated the city of New Orleans, areas of the city lost their communities and were left with abandoned houses and facilities as evacuees relocated and never returned. After the tsunami devastation, communities in coastal Tohoku chose “Group Relocation for Disaster Mitigation,” which the government promoted to encourage residents to move upland (MLIT 2014, 139) to reduce the risk of future tsunami devastation.

On March 10, 2016, Prime Minister Abe informed reporters that the government intended to help people return to their home town, help businesses reopen, and assist farmers to resume agricultural production in evacuated areas, except for areas deemed difficult to return to for a long time due to the current radiation level. And for areas deemed difficult to return to, Abe indicated the possibility of future rezoning. He promised the government would not forget evacuees’ feelings for their hometowns (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2016). Masakatsu Okamoto (Okamoto, ed. 2016, 45), vice minister of the Reconstruction Agency wrote, “the Japanese people and the government have chosen ‘to support as much as possible people who want to rebuild their hometown.’ That is Japanese democracy. That is how this country is.”

Not everybody welcomed with open arms the government’s goal of returning people to their hometown through rebuilding areas affected by nuclear fallout. Yamashita, Ichimura, and Sato (2013, 31) argues that *hisaisha* (“victims of the disaster”/evacuees) are “forced” to make decision about going back or not going back without sufficient information on which to base their decisions. Ichimura, himself an evacuee from the Fukushima accident, warned that evacuees cannot escape worries and

fear even after the evacuation order is lifted and the government claims it is “now safe” (Yamashita, Ichimura, and Sato 2013, 125).

There were (are) people and groups who insisted and demanded that people, especially children, should be evacuated from the entire Fukushima-prefecture, ignoring that only a small part of Fukushima prefecture was affected by the evacuation order. In one case, for example, parents and children, fourteen in total, in school districts in Koriyama-city (a major city in Fukushima-prefecture which had never been subject to the evacuation order) submitted a petition for an interim order to the local court demanding that students in schools in areas with the cumulative annual radiation of 1 mSv or higher be relocated together to other school facilities. The petition was dismissed on the basis that there was no sign of an urgent and specific risk that would warrant the suspension of education in elementary and junior high school in the area. The court also pointed out that parents could send their children to a different school, if they wanted.¹ This is an example of how people’s perception and tolerance level for various risks differ and what people see as a solution.

How one feels about going back to a once evacuated hometown or staying in never evacuated places in Fukushima vary for different reasons including perceptions of safety and risk from the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident, the sense of attachment to the area, and circumstances. What contributes to ideas and perception of risks and how is the knowledge of the consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi accident produced and consumed?

¹ The decision issued by Fukushima District Court Koriyama Branch on December 16, 2011, *Heisei 23 nen (yo) dai 29 go Kyoiku Katsudo Ssashitome to Kari Shobun Moshitake Jiken*. The paper posted at <http://1am.sakura.ne.jp/Nuclear/111216decision.pdf>. Accessed July 1, 2016.

Diverse Opinions and Perceptions

As information has been made available from various sources—including governmental sources (widely available on the Internet), the media, the Internet, academia, lay publications, and in daily conversations—there have been active discussions of the risk and safety associated with Fukushima. Over time, scientific and medical papers based on actual research on Fukushima have become available (for examples, see Fukushima Medical University 2016). Compared to research-based academic, scientific, and medical papers, however, people find blogs, tweets, and mass consumption publications more accessible. In these, claims and predictions can be made without any research or responsibility to support arguments with citations. In some cases, books of purely personal opinion and casual essays predicting or claiming doom and grave consequences for Fukushima are passed off to and perceived by the public as expert opinion just because they are authored by a college professor. Such books escape the scrutiny an academic paper would receive yet can be more influential as they attract more readers.

Who Are the Experts?

Experts differ on the “safety” and “risks” associated with low dose radiation exposure, the topic that is gaining attention as municipalities reopen or plan to reopen in once evacuated areas. Keiichi Nakagawa (2012), a medical scientist specializing in radiology and an associate professor at the Graduate School of Medicine and Faculty of Medicine, the University of Tokyo, points out that many scholars insist on the risks and consequences from low dose radiation exposure to humans, as if epidemiological data proving their point exist. Nakagawa argues that people confuse science, which looks at

what is provable, with philosophy, which addresses what to think about that which cannot be proven with data. Tatsuhiko Kodama (2012, 55), M.D., a professor at the Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology and the head of the Radioisotope Center at the University of Tokyo, argues that “An American-style large-scale study” based on collecting a large volume of data of the effects of exposure to radiation may not provide any “evidence.” Instead, he values collecting information through reported cases of various symptoms in an affected community over time. He claims those reports can be more revealing of the effects of radiation exposure. He points out that the lack of scientific evidence to prove causal relationships does not mean that scientists have concluded that there is no causal relationship. Both Nakagawa and Kodama are viewed as experts in the field, but they differ on the view of what science can claim about the consequences of the Fukushima radiation fallout or how scientists should address the issue.

The Internet has become not only a contemporary, significant source of information for everyone but also a tool of information-sharing and dissemination available to all. Knowledge-making is not an activity set aside exclusively for experts, but it is conducted by various participants in everyday life. Nowadays, experts are probably more susceptible and exposed to criticism and opinions from laypeople than ever before. Nakagawa (2012, 17) mentions that people ask whether he has received money from TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company), and they wonder if he works for the government (implying he is a government lapdog). The issue of the nuclear power plant accident and fallout are emotionally-charged topics. Scientific fact-finding endeavors attract criticisms from people who question the results as a fabrication,

perhaps because they cannot believe results that show the effect of radiation fallout to be much less than they thought or imagined. In such cases, labeling scientists or medical doctors as pro-nuclear power or pro-TEPCO (regardless of the individual's stance) is a common tactic used on the Internet to dismiss experts with whom critics disagree.

To Go Back or Not

When exactly the evacuation order will be lifted for Momo-town and Sakura-town has yet to be confirmed. The plan for Sakura-town is to allow residents to live in some parts of town starting next spring. The two municipal officers of Momo-town and Sakura-town whom I interviewed told me that the timing to return (to lift the evacuation order) will be ultimately determined by residents in a series of meetings.

The officials from Momo-town and Sakura-town both expressed mixed feelings regarding the range of radiation levels the government used to set the three zones. Both said that the government should be responsible for continuing decontamination until the radiation level in an area is no more than an additional 1mSv/year. At the same time, the Sakura-town official I interviewed also admitted that if a limit of a maximum exposure of 1mSv/year of extra radiation were to be implemented, then the town's recovery effort would be restricted. On the one hand, he noted, the town needs to think about people who already want to go home. On the other hand, there are people who feel uncertain, as if their safety is being compromised, even in areas where the radiation level is within the government-set guideline. The Momo-town officer pointed out to me that a level of 20 mSv or lower is the threshold for returning that the government set and promised to achieve. Therefore, he argues, achieving it is the government's responsibility.

The premise of the current, ongoing efforts to decontaminate and to rebuild these towns is not only that it is achievable but also that it has to be done. One of the ways to cope with environmental risks in general is through a cost-benefit analysis, but that does not seem to be the central focus as the government pursues decontamination of Momo-town and Sakura-town. An official from one of the ministries/agencies deeply involved in the recovery and rebuilding from the disaster told me, “government policies require reasoning and logic, but the heart matters as well.” He added, though, what should be done should be within reason. He pointed this out after saying he sees decontaminating evacuated areas, at least residential areas, as the government’s (country’s) responsibility. The cost of decontaminating such areas will ultimately be shared by the Japanese people because although TEPCO may pay for the decontamination efforts, their costs will be reflected in the price of electricity even as the government shoulders some costs.

Finding Facts

Perhaps in remembering Chernobyl, the discussion of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident and its aftermath will be framed with the assumption that something is being hidden and somebody is hiding the truth. Sakura-town’s official told me he has heard people say, “can you trust the government? Can you blindly believe what they are telling us?” Both Sakura-town and Momo-town have sought experts in the field to convene a committee to check and measure the effectiveness and progress of the decontamination process. Momo-town double- and triple-checks its air and water quality to see for itself the condition of the town. When I asked the Momo-town official whether residents trust local municipal office data more than national government data,

he replied that it is not the local municipal office versus the government, but town residents trust what they see when they have been involved in the monitoring process.

Conclusion of the Fukushima part

Fact-finding is an integral part of decision-making for villages and towns as they plan to rebuild and recover areas affected by the triple disaster, including the nuclear power plant fallout, which requires long-term planning. People, whether experts or not, take part in knowledge production, especially as the Internet has made accessing the information as well as spreading it easier. More studies and research results specific to Fukushima are increasingly becoming available, but it is likely there always will be disagreements over how the nuclear power plant accident has affected the land and people and what should be done. Life goes on and the time moves forward as evacuees and evacuated towns and villages face decisions on when, how, and whether to resume life in their hometown. There is no solution that will satisfy everyone's needs, but continuing fact finding on multiple fronts will make information available for people in affected areas as they choose the best paths for themselves.

2. The Issue of Comfort Women

The following will explain the meanings and roles of fact-finding processes in the construction and understanding of “suffering” in the reconciliation process of the issue of comfort women, following a brief introduction to the issue itself. Comfort women are young women and girls who were purportedly coerced into providing sexual services to Japanese armed forces personnel prior to and during World War II. Most of them

provided these services to Japanese troops in comfort stations established and managed directly and indirectly by the Japanese military. Comfort women came from within the populations of Japan, colonized Korea and Taiwan, China, the Philippines, and other Southeast Asia regions, including the Dutch East Indies, where Japan made military advances. Many of them suffered being torn from their families and hometowns, transported to foreign places, and often treated violently in comfort stations, involving sexual exploitation and coercive labor. Many experienced physical and psychological trauma as a result, and lived in the midst of poverty and social discrimination that made life extremely difficult for them both during and after the war. The Japanese government continues to be criticized for its responsibility in this matter. It was only in August 1991 that the issue started to receive serious attention in Japanese society, when Kim Hak Sun, a Korean, came forward to confess that she had been a comfort woman and filed suit against the Japanese government for compensation. A number of others have also come forward. Former comfort women, as well as advocacy and support groups for them, have demanded an apology from the Japanese government, official reparations, and a thorough investigation into historical facts.

The Japanese government holds the position that the issue has already been resolved by way of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and other postwar bilateral agreements, including the 1965 Treaty on the Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and the 1965 Claims Settlement Agreement with South Korea. The chief cabinet secretary issued a statement in 1993 acknowledging that comfort women had “suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds”

and expressing the government's remorse and apologies,² and in 1995 the government established the Asian Women's Fund to make moral atonement to the victims through private donations, which many Korean former comfort women demanding official compensation declined to receive.

In December 2015, twenty years since then, the Japanese and the South Korean governments agreed to resolve the issue. In the agreement, the Japanese government explicitly acknowledged its responsibility for the sufferings of comfort women and the Japanese Prime Minister expressed most sincere apologies and remorse to all comfort women for the physical and psychological wounds inflicted. The Japanese government promised to provide 1 billion Japanese yen for a new foundation, to be established and managed by the South Korean government, to heal the wounds of former Korean comfort women. As of July 1, 2016, the planning and preparation of the new foundation is still in progress.

Even so, there are still aspects of the issue that leave room for further delving. One is the concept of "suffering." Discussion on the specific nature of the suffering has centered on such key issues such as whether comfort women were forcibly recruited and worked, whether the licensed prostitution was illegal, whether it was carried out in a manner that would be considered morally reprehensible by any standards even as the actual laws might change, and whether comfort women were treated violently in the comfort stations. Two different types of fact-finding in the construction of suffering, judicial proceedings and academic research, have addressed these issues in their distinctive ways.

² Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yōhei Kōno on the Result of the Study on the Issue of "Comfort Women." August 4, 1993.

Judicial proceedings

Judicial proceedings with war criminals as individuals started at the end of the First World War with the Allied Forces' attempt to prosecute Kaiser Wilhelm II for a "supreme offense against international morality and the sanctity of treaties." The idea took a more institutionalized form after the Second World War, with the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials to prosecute German and Japanese war criminals for the crime against peace, conventional war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 1994, in response to the tragedies of ethnic conflicts and genocide after the end of the Cold War, the United Nations Security Council established the Former Yugoslavian War Criminal Court and the Rwanda War Criminal Court; the statutes of both addressed rape and forced prostitution as category of crimes against humanity.³ As the first permanent body to put war criminals on trial, including sexual crimes as part of war crimes, the International Criminal Court was established in 2003, whose founding charter, the Rome Statute, delineates sexual violence as distinct war crimes with explicit definition of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual enslavement, and enforced prostitution. In the meantime, particularly after the end of the Cold War, there have also been domestic lawsuits for individual compensations for sufferings from diverse groups of war victims, such as former Allied prisoners of war, former colonial soldiers under Japanese colonial rule, as well as former comfort women, as explained below. These judicial efforts and practices have generated diverse fact-finding processes with both positive and negative effects on the well-being of the victims.

First of all, judicial proceedings of wrongful war-related acts, as with any other domestic judicial proceedings of criminal cases, require very careful and rigorous

³ Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Article 3 (g) and Article 4 (3).

procedures, such as the principles of due process and no double jeopardy, in the recognition of harm, responsibility, and punishment. Unintended selectiveness takes place in the types of wrongdoing to be prosecuted, partly due to the absence of pre-existing laws in force at the time of the acts, and the statute of limitations. The Tokyo Trials included the cases of rape and forced prostitution within the category of war crimes along with murder and plunder. The Tokyo Trials dealt with the collective culpability of the Japanese military for rape and forced prostitution, in that it had coerced women into serving as comfort women through cajoling, but never addressed the issue with the sentencing of individual defendants. This is partly because the inadequacy of the prosecution's evidence led the court to decide that it was impossible to establish the organized involvement of Japanese leaders at the national policy level in the commission of the offenses (Totani 2008, 185-186). Still, overall, the sexual and racial biases existing within the wartime American military and the subsequent influence on the treatment of sexual crimes have also been pointed out (Tanaka 1996). It was in the 1998 proceeding of the Akayesu judgment of the Rwanda War Criminal Court that systematic rape and sexual assault were first recognized and judged as genocide and crimes against humanity, terms applicable to any inhuman acts committed against a civilian population, before or during a war, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

In the ten individual compensation lawsuits from former comfort women from Taiwan, China, the Netherlands, the Philippines, and South Korea, the Japanese courts rejected their claims for individual compensation for forced recruitment, violence and sexual exploitation in the comfort stations, and any relevant physical and mental sufferings as comfort women on grounds ranging from the expiration of the statute of

limitations to the concept of sovereign immunity. Any judgment of the mental and physical harms to comfort women was not linked to the responsibility of the state authority of Japan for compensation particularly for the reason that under international law, in which only states are actors, it is only the plaintiffs' government that can demand compensation on behalf of the plaintiffs under international law.

Hardline conservatives criticized such legal actions themselves on the grounds that licensed prostitution was common and legal during wartime, and thus so was the comfort station system as the battlefield version of licensed prostitution, even if it is considered morally reprehensible in hindsight (Nishio 2013; Nishioka 2014). They also claim that there are no official documents of forced recruitment, thus indicating that the forced recruitment, if any, was done by private agents.

In the face of the conservative interpretations of law and ethics, supporters for former comfort women organized a people's court, the Women's International War Criminal Tribunal (WIWCT), in 2000 and 2001, which judged Japanese wartime leaders for their involvement in the comfort station system based on principles of moral power.⁴ The morally motivated tribunal interpreted flexibly and inclusively the victims' sufferings as the result of the Japanese military sexual slavery system for which the Japanese government was liable, and crimes against humanity committed by Japanese political and military leaders.⁵ The Tribunal thus recognized not only forced recruitment, the sexual exploitation and violence that women suffered in the comfort stations, but also the psychological, social, and economic harm done to former comfort

⁴ Women's International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. "Judgement." 4 December 2001. Accessed June 29, 2016. http://www.asser.nl/upload/documents/DomCLIC/Docs/NLP/Japan/Comfort_Women_Judgement_04-12-2001_part_1.pdf

⁵ Verdict 1053.

women during the postwar period as a result of neglect of restitution by the Japanese government, and then requested diverse forms of reparations involving rehabilitation and satisfaction, and including public acknowledgement of the state's wrongdoing.⁶

The nature of judicial procedure, with its careful identification and examination of the types of harms done, guilt, and punishment in a specific case at issue, has a number of limitations. As in the lawsuits of comfort women themselves, layers of legal regulations make it difficult for individuals to meet their demands of individual compensation. However, careful reading of the verdicts shows that courts acknowledged the facts of the women's suffering, even while falling short of reaching a verdict of guilty. Of those ten Japanese Court cases mentioned above, eight involved fact-finding concerning the physical and mental sufferings of former comfort women. At least three acknowledged illegal acts committed by the state of Japan. The facts of abduction or abduction-like forcible recruitment were recognized, which mattered in the midst of the unending general discussion over whether forcible recruitment had been heatedly conducted in the absence of any official documents showing it.

Many comfort women say that their lawsuits are not for money but for the restoration of their dignity. In this sense, the judicial acknowledgements of the facts of sufferings matter significantly for the plaintiffs. Still, clear identification of the responsibility of the state or those who are responsible is also an important part of the fact-finding process with respect to sufferings.

Another limitation in judicial procedure is that a verdict in one case cannot easily form a basis on which to generalize. It is thus limited in its capacity to address the social-structural side of the incident under examination even when such an incident

⁶ Verdict 1054-1065.

appears as a pattern in society. Furthermore, being a plaintiff costs time and money, thus causing a certain selectiveness for the question of which wrongdoings are disclosed, examined, and punished. No comfort women from North Korea, Malaysia, East Timor, or Indonesia have filed a lawsuit in court.

Still, a lawsuit serves important functions for both the plaintiffs and society. First and foremost, a lawsuit can single out those who are responsible, recognize the nature of sufferings, and determine their reparation/punishment based on clearly presented and examined evidence, independent of emotions or a sense of vengeance (Minow 1998). One of the main purposes of the WIWCT, albeit a people's court, was to identify those who were responsible and deserving of punishment.

A lawsuit can also attract media and social attention, thus causing evidence of wrongful acts to be examined and discussed in a wider arena, with acknowledgement and memory of the incident and its victims (Osiel 1997, 6). Furthermore, the fact-finding process through the presentation and examination of evidence in judicial proceedings, even if it does not lead directly to punishment of the offender, often serves the victim's psychological need for official recognition of harms, and drives home to the often-apathetic general public details of the harm that was done, through taking "judicial notice" of the evidence of what took place. Supporters for the plaintiffs make efforts to publicize these judicial proceedings. A lawyer and a supporter for former comfort women, for example, compiled a booklet to show all the facts recognized by the courts so far (Ōmori and Tsubokawa 2011). A so-called people's court, as in the case of the Russel Tribunal, can also have such an effect (D'Amato 1969). In the case of the Khmer Rouge Trial in Cambodia since 2006 to prosecute those radical Communist leaders responsible for the genocide in the mid-1970s, one of the locals commented that

the memory of the sufferings would be amplified and explode some day (Ōno 2014).

The adversarial system of judicial proceedings also has the effect of helping the victims to regain self-esteem. Victims have to stand in the court facing the accused and develop and present their arguments, and be cross-examined, which is usually a significant challenge when the victims are elderly and not well educated. Supporters for the lawsuit of three former Korean comfort women in Yamaguchi Prefectural Court, Shimonoseki Branch, commented that they observed a change in the victims in the course of the lawsuits. According to the supporters, the victims, who were shy in the press conference at the beginning, gradually came to express what they thought and felt with greater confidence.⁷ Testifying in court can sometimes have the effect of the restoration of self-esteem and thus a healing effect (Ōno 2014).

Rigorous courtroom proceedings are expected to uncover, in a credible way, a wide range of facts, such as the specific causes and backgrounds of the suffering, the scale and nature of the sufferings, the effects of the sufferings on victims, the identities of those who are responsible, and the type and degree of culpability of those identified as responsible. Actual judicial processes in the issue of comfort women have demonstrated the difficulties in identifying the legal responsibility of the Japanese government and in approving the right of individual compensation. However, they identified the backgrounds, scale, and nature of the sufferings of the claimants as victims, acknowledged illegal act of the Japanese authority, and provided an arena of justice for the complainants. With the ultimate purpose of the complainant to restore their dignity with the social and political acknowledgement of their sufferings, such judicial functions help the victims to move toward reconciliation, albeit on an individual

⁷ The author's interview with supporters for former comfort women in the lawsuit in March 2016.

basis.

Academic Research

The second type of fact-finding is academic research. Academic research collects facts for interpretation and analysis. It is a systemized intellectual process in pursuit of comprehension of causes, mechanisms, and implications of social, human, and natural phenomena, thus seeking the generation of knowledge.

In the issue of comfort women, both scholars and activists have intensely engaged in fact-finding, but with challenges. In terms of documentation, activists and scholars began exploring diverse new documents on the issue of comfort women and found almost 500 new documents on top of the approximately 300 documents found through the two-time governmental investigations of 1992 and 1993, respectively.⁸ They indicate the involvement of the wartime Japanese authority in the management of comfort stations. The Japanese government has not recognized most of the newly found documents as “official” documents related to the issue of comfort women. Furthermore, the significant absence of and difficulty in gaining access to those that do exist have posed such a major challenge to academicians. Some Japanese officers testify that many official documents were ordered destroyed at the end of the war.⁹ Also, an attempt since 1999 by the then Democratic Party of Japan (renamed the “Democratic Party” as of March 27, 2016) to set up a bureau of permanent peace research in the National Diet

⁸ The activists and scholars had found new 539 public documents as of June 2014. The Asian Solidarity Conference on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, “Report of the findings of 524 documents on comfort women found after the Kono Statement,” issued on June 4, 2014. Accessed June 10, 2016. <http://wam-peace.org/koubunsho/doc/01.pdf>. Those new found documents are available at <http://wam-peace.org/koubunsho/>.

⁹ Some orders were decoded by the Allied forces and their decoded documents have been found in the National Archives in the United States and the United Kingdom. Hirofumi Hayashi. “Kobunsho, Tenno Kankei Shorui no Haki to “Ianfu” Kakushi—Nihongun Denpou no Angou Kaidoku Shiryou” (Destruction of Official and Emperor Related Documents and the Hiding of Comfort Women: Decoding materials of the Imperial Japanese Army Telegrams). *Sensou Sekinin Kenkyu* (The Report on Japan’s War Responsibility). 88-06, Spring 2009.

Library for disclosing and compiling war-related documents has not been successful in the Diet.

Testimonies of the victims and the offenders are not adequate since they are usually reluctant to confess their wartime experiences due to the sexual nature of the issue. Thus, in the debate over whether there was forced recruitment or not, the inadequacy of evidence, particularly the absence of official documents, leaves a large amount of room for interpretation, which is easily influenced by the ideological positioning of the interpreter. This leads to another challenge, in academic research, of the interpretation of facts. Even with a single document, scholars have different interpretations. For example, there are diverse interpretations of an Imperial Japanese Army memorandum (No. 2197) of 4 March 1938 concerning the domestic recruitment of comfort women, that explicitly prohibits the use of fraudulent or coercive methods in recruitment and warns that those pursuing such methods will be punished. Hardline conservatives deny that the government actively participated in forcible recruitment of comfort women, and argue that this document was a directive cracking down on fraudulent or coercive recruitment by private brokers.¹⁰ On the other hand, liberals interpret the memorandum as evidence of proactive cooperation of the Japanese authority (military and civilian police) in recruitment, particularly its cooperation with procurers and brokers (Yoshimi 1995, 58-59; Yoshimi and Kawada 2000, 20-22).

Still, the use of testimonies stirs a dispute over positivist insistence on solely relying on official documents. For a fact to be established as scientifically credible, it is argued, it should be cross-referenced and supported by official documents, particularly when an authority is engaged in the matter at issue. One important contribution of

¹⁰ For example, Kōichi Sugiyama. "Paid Advertisement concerning 'Comfort Women' Run in the Washington Post." Accessed June 10, 2016. http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02_1/33_S4.pdf.

recent scholarship is the incorporation of oral history as part of its scientific project (Thompson 2000). This trend has provided more room for the testimonies of former comfort women to be incorporated as research. Unlike testimonies of plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses in judicial proceedings, oral history in academic work can incorporate a wide range of testimonies and voices. This new trend in oral history reflects the voices of the ruled and minorities and—as started in academia in the 1960s and the 1970s in the course of feminism, anti-war movements, and labor movements—allows researchers to go beyond positivism. Oral history obtains information from different perspectives, most of which cannot be found in written sources, often with corrective effects. Academicians have utilized and analyzed vivid and often heart-rending personal accounts of the onlookers and victims, as collected by supporter groups for comfort women, to reveal the pattern that former comfort women tend to be undereducated, from poor families, with dismal life conditions and limited occupational options (Yoshimi 1995).

Ideological inclinations affect the evaluation of the validity of testimonies. Conservative hardliners in Japan, with concern for the protection of Japan's honor, tend to make a low assessment of the validity of the testimonies of former comfort women, particularly about the forcibleness of recruitment, thus denying or minimizing their sufferings. Still, blind trust in public documentation assumes the reliability of state bureaucracy and its record keeping, which is not always perfect or transparent (Sakamoto and Gwan 1999). Still, at the same time, academic analysis based on official documents and media reports has identified the confusion between comfort women and the women's volunteer corps (*teishintai*), which were systematically mobilized by the Japanese authority for providing labor services in factories supporting the war effort

(Takasaki 1999). The confusion seen in testimonies of former comfort women hinted wrongly at the Japanese authority's systematic recruitment of comfort women.

The other challenge in academic research is how to address the facts that could weaken the case for victimhood. In figuring out the degree to which comfort women were coerced, which has been under heated debate in the absence of official documents, what has been addressed so far is the embedded power of colonialism of Japan. The assessment of the latent power working on the seemingly obedient and docile action of the ruled becomes a point of contention (Diseger 1992). Park Yu-ha, in her book *Comfort Women of the Empire*, addresses the embedded power of Japanese colonialism and patriarchal values underlying the issue of Korean comfort women with the viewpoints of “invisible desire” and “desire for control” (Park 2014, 10). She explains that such embedded power produced Korean comfort women as seemingly voluntary patriotic comrades and the equivalent of family members of Japanese soldiers. Her intent is to highlight the special situations of Korean former comfort women under Japanese colonial rule, which differed from those under Japanese military invasion (Park 2014).

Some former Korean comfort women, however, perceived Park's descriptions as offensive and defamatory and sued her for defamation in both civil and criminal courts. A civil court ruled in January 2016 that she had defamed former comfort women and ordered her to pay reparations. In February 2015, a court ruling ordered that her book be redacted in thirty-four sections for defamatory content, pointing out that some facts are exaggerated and distorted. The criminal case is still continuing as of July 2016.

The issue here is whether academic interpretation of facts can be subject to judicial interpretation without violating academic freedom. In practice, Park herself

argues that it is not in the arena of jurisdiction where the debate on interpretation can be resolved.¹¹ The sensitive nature of the issue of comfort women has been thought of as the issue of the nation of South Korea with its colonial legacy (Yun 2003, 169-170). Any interpretation hinting at a voluntary aspect of their participation as comfort women for the Japanese army could be seen as a denial of Korea's sufferings under Japanese colonialism. Even if Park admits the involuntary side of the recruitment of former comfort women, she argues that it was the brokers and agents, rather than the wartime Japanese authority, and thus that they, rather than the government, are legally responsible for the forced recruitment through coaxing and coercion (Park 2014, 46). The structural power of Japanese colonial rule can indicate the subtle cooperation of local village leaders, through their own powerlessness, in Japanese mobilization of Korean people for labor and the army during the war (Park 2014, 48-50). Surely, this process of structural analysis of Japan's colonial rule of the Korean peninsula might indicate the voluntary aspect of Korean people under Japanese rule, thus blurring the category of Korean people as victims and also weakening the culpability of Japan.

Those who criticize Park for downplaying Japan's culpability still see the importance of academic freedom. But they urge for the need for sensitivity to the survivors.¹² Park's argument sheds light on the comprehensive picture of the issue of comfort women under a multi-layered power structure of colonialism and patriarchy, but her effort still resulted in harming the feelings of aging survivors. Their existence as a symbol of Korea's suffering under Japanese colonial rule does not strengthen the voices of Park's proponents who claim the importance of academic freedom and deny

¹¹ Professor Park's comment in her interview. *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 29, 2015.

¹² Lee Kyung-min. "Author ordered to compensate comfort women." *The Korea Times*. January 14, 2016. Accessed June 10, 2016.
http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/01/116_195363.html

that Park is a pro-Japanese traitor to Korea.¹³ The governmental agreement between Japan and Korea in December 2015, in which the Japan government explicitly acknowledged its responsibilities for a “grave affront to the honor and dignity” of comfort women, has had little effect to soften the attitude of Korean former comfort women either toward Park or Japan. This demonstrates the grave sensitivity the victims carry beyond the imagination of scholars or supporters.

Still, such sensitivity cannot or should not suspend the academic effort of fact-finding and fact-interpretation of the types and sufferings of comfort women, without regard to jurisdiction. Park herself acknowledges and explains in her book the deep and complicated harms the survivors have suffered. Continuous academic research on the power structure under Japanese colonialism and patriarchal value system, following up on Park’s study, serves to resolve the misunderstandings and to heal the psychological wounds of the victims.

Academic restraint, or self-censorship, is required even more with the issue of comfort women than in other areas. Restraint from easy generalization, careful assessment of testimonies, and conceptual rigor are required, particularly when evidence, both oral and written, is inadequate. In describing the so-called voluntary nature of the victims, the reference to Korean comfort women as having “patriotism” and a sense of “comradeship” toward Japan and Japanese soldiers as Park, a scholar of Japanese literature, expressed (Park 2014, 83), might serve to highlight the distinctive difference of Korean comfort women from other comfort women, as enemies of the Japanese army, in military-occupied areas. Still, these terms have left room for further conceptual

¹³ “Joint Statement in Protest the Indictment of Ms. Park Yu-Ha” by 54 Japanese and American scholars. Accessed June 10, 2016. <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASHCV468SHCVUTIL01H.html>

analysis of the unique and subtle power structure that Korean people were exposed to under Japanese colonial rule.

Continuous academic research and dialogue among scholars, practitioners, and advocates can resolve the tension between sensitivity and academic accuracy. A case in point is the debate over the use of the term sex slaves. Those who insist that comfort women were “sex slaves” sought to highlight their sufferings (Totsuka 2008, 11) and focused on the forced recruitment by the Japanese authority.¹⁴ From such a point of view, the term comfort women was euphemising the harsh reality and sufferings of former comfort women (Coomaraswamy 1996). A series of discussions over time by scholars, politicians, and the media over the diverse types of actors involved in the management of comfort stations and over the coerciveness of the recruitment of comfort women (Yoshimi 1995; Hata 1999; Asahi Shimbun 2014; Study Team, 2014) and that over the academic accuracy and advocacy effects of the expression of “sex slaves” (Soe 2008) followed. There were also some voices of former comfort women themselves stating that they did not want to be called as “sex slaves” (Ōnuma 2015, 150-151). Gradually, certain common minimum understandings were reached by both the Japanese and Korean sides: recruitment by private operators through coaxing and coercion, the inability to confirm any official systematic involvement in coercive recruitment in the narrow sense of the meaning, and the overall coerciveness of the comfort stations whether under the military or agent management, in which many victims suffered. Subsequently, the term of sex slaves has been less used. In practice,

¹⁴ The main advocacy group for former Korean comfort women accuses the Japanese government of the forced recruitment and has the name of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.

Korean activist groups started mentioning the victims as not only sexual slaves but also comfort women.¹⁵

Academic fact-finding processes so far have identified the overall coercive nature of the conditions comfort women were subject to. The precise subject of forcible recruitment and the complex power relations Korean comfort women were particularly exposed to leave room for more academic work. Academic fact-finding processes have also demonstrated how to deal with three major challenges: the inadequacy in documents and testimonies, the tendency for position-driven interpretation, and the need for a balance between analytical rigor and sensitivity for the victims.

Conclusion

In this project, we have shown how, on the one hand, fact finding shaped the case of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, with the notion of risk, and the evacuation that followed, and how the fact-finding processes in the issue of comfort women have occasioned acknowledgement of the sufferings of comfort women. Both cases have demonstrated that the process of fact-finding itself has been often affected by the emotionally charged opinions and discussions these topics attract and by distinctive social, political, judicial, and academic discourses. The disentangling of the very complicated discourse surrounding these issues highlights the importance of identifying the types and providers of evidence, the format of evidence, the predilections of those who recognize and interpret the evidence, and the methodology and the purpose of the use of evidence.

¹⁵ Asian Solidarity Conference on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. "Recommendation to the Government of Japan For Resolution of the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" Issue." June 2, 2014.

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident made fact-finding on radiation-related issues an urgent matter, then a long-term ongoing effort. The limited examples of fact-finding in this working paper depict how knowledge production is the province not only of experts but open for everyone who wants to get involved. Speculative opinions, biased views guided by conviction or interests, potentially compete with expert opinions and affect people's understanding of how radiation fallout has affected Fukushima.

Momo-town and Sakura-town are planning to make their towns a place to live again, where people enjoy what the towns have to offer. At the same time, there will be a portion of residents who will not return. Having evacuated, away from town for five years and counting, anybody's life can change, but the concerns for radiation linger in many minds. It is an inescapable burden for these towns as they move forward and residents move back in. These towns are active participants in knowledge production, conducting their own testing, because it matters and because knowledge is power. One of the difficulties associated with Fukushima fact finding is that, while scientific research is informative, people's sense of risk and safety are affected by their emotions rather than logic and understanding of the facts.

The issue of comfort women has shown how different fact-finding processes have affected the understandings of the background, the meaning, and the effects of former comfort women's sufferings. Fact-finding and interpretation processes, through both judicial proceedings and academic work, have their own limitations, thus often containing some elements to hinder the reconciliation process. Repeated judicial defeats in the lawsuits for individual compensation naturally do not help push the Japanese

government to work on any measures of individual compensation. They have not even led to any successful legislature efforts to indemnify the victims. However, the judiciary has acknowledged some facts of illegal action of the wartime Japanese authority and backgrounds of diverse sufferings of the victims, which facts are based on rigorous judicial procedures, apart from emotions or a sense of vengeance.

Academic work has significantly contributed to the fact-finding of the widespread pattern of the Japanese military's involvement in the establishment and management of comfort stations and the wide range of sufferings of former comfort women, during both wartime and the postwar period, through official documents and testimonies, limited as they are. Still, the absence of official documents showing coercive recruitment by the Japanese government has intensified a rather ideologically driven debate over the genuineness of the victims' testimonies. Furthermore, the analysis of the subtle power structure surrounding former Korean comfort women had the effect of partially deconstructing the victimhood of former comfort women, thus calling into question the credibility of academic methodology.

These difficulties and challenges notwithstanding, overall the judicial recognition of the facts of sufferings and the academic fact-finding and analysis can fairly be seen as getting closer to greater common understandings, both in Japan and Korea, on the nature of comfort women's sufferings, to the point that there is no denying the physical and mental sufferings of comfort women apart from the dispute of the legal responsibility for those sufferings.

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