Volume 19 | Issue 5 | Number 5 | Article ID 5546 | Mar 01, 2021

Slaves to rival nationalisms: UNESCO and the politics of 'comfort women' commemoration

Edward Vickers

Abstract: *In October 2017, the application to list the Voices of the Comfort Women archive on UNESCO's "Memory of the World Register" was rejected (or "postponed"). In this paper, I set that decision in the context of other recent instances of "heritage diplomacy" in East Asia, highlighting the tensions between nationalistic agendas and UNESCO's universalist pretensions. I then discuss the nature and extent of similar tensions in the framing of the "comfort women" issue, as manifested in "comfort women museums" (institutions closely associated with the preparation of the 2016-17 Memory of the World application). I focus especially on the case of China, where the Xi Jinping regime first sought to weaponize this issue against Japan, only to pull back in 2018 as Sino-Japanese ties warmed. I conclude by considering how the story of the comfort women might be reframed to underline its global significance (or "outstanding universal value"), in a manner that makes it more difficult for Japanese nationalists to portray the campaign for recognition and commemoration as an anti-Japan conspiracy.*

Keywords: Comfort women, UNESCO, Memory of the World, heritage, diplomacy, Korea, China

Introduction

This paper builds on research conducted under the auspices of consecutive projects investigating, first, the relationship between portrayals of Japan and discourses of national identity across East Asia, and,[1] second, the politics of war-related heritage around the region (the 'WARMAP' network).[2] In work for the WARMAP network, I investigated the commemoration of "comfort women" in museums and memorials in East Asia, particularly in China.[3] That choice of topic and locale was determined in part by the increasingly prominent role then being assumed by China in cross-national campaigns to secure UNESCO recognition for the comfort women.

Visiting China in 2015 to observe commemorative activities related to the 70th anniversary of the end of World War Two, I undertook the first of a series of interviews with the historian Su Zhiliang of Shanghai Normal University (SNU) (Su's translated article also features in this *Japan Focus* special issue). I had earlier come to know Su through his work as an author and editor of history textbooks for Shanghai schools. But by 2015, he was occupied primarily with spearheading a bid to have Chinese archives related to the comfort women inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register (see also the article by Heisoo Shin in this special issue), and by related projects involving the construction of two comfort women museums – one in Nanjing's Liji Alley, and another within the campus of SNU. This flurry of Chinese activity around comfort women came after a long period during which the state had been either apathetic or actively hostile towards attempts to draw attention to this issue. Analysing this new, and comparatively belated, Chinese drive to commemorate comfort women as heritage

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and to secure international recognition for China's role in their story consequently became the main focus of my work for WARMAP.

That work focused primarily on the treatment of the comfort women in Chinese museums and exhibitions. However, the official decisions to sanction and fund these new comfort women museums came in the context of campaigning for UNESCO recognition for the public history of China's war with Japan. In 2015, this yielded a UNESCO Memory of the World (MOW) listing for documents related to the Nanjing Massacre. A simultaneous bid to secure a listing for China's comfort women archives was not immediately successful, but, in consideration of the transnational scope of the comfort women phenomenon, the adjudicators encouraged the Chinese to fold their application into a collaborative international effort. This took the form of the "Voices of the 'Comfort Women'" application, submitted by an international alliance chaired by Heisoo Shin, who provides a personal account of this campaign in her contribution to this *Japan Focus* special issue. Through interviews with Professors Su and Shin, my attendance at meetings of their international alliance in Seoul (2016) and Tokyo (2018), and interviews with other participants from Japan, Taiwan and elsewhere, I sought to track the progress of this campaign and understand the politics surrounding it. This material informed my analysis of the Chinese interest in commemorating comfort women and pursuing a related MOW listing.[4]

The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the context for the international (rather than specifically Chinese) push for international acknowledgement of comfort women's experience as heritage. In particular, the focus is on the role of UNESCO as an arena for this campaign, and for related efforts to secure recognition for contested memories. I begin by discussing UNESCO's own predicament, and the stresses and tensions affecting its activities in the heritage sphere. I then analyse how these tensions have been manifested in several recent applications, before focusing specifically on the *Voices of the Comfort Women* case. By way of illustrating how this campaign has come to be associated with attempts to weaponize conflict-related heritage, a subsequent section examines in more detail discourses of comfort women commemoration in several recently established museums, especially those in China. Finally, the conclusion considers the failure of the MOW application and some implications for ongoing attempts to assert the universal significance of the 'comfort women' phenomenon.

UNESCO, Heritage Diplomacy and Conflict Commemoration

To understand the depth of UNESCO's fiscal difficulties, one has only to visit its Paris headquarters – something I did in November 2017 for the launch of a UNESCO report I co-authored.[5] Outside the room where we made our presentation, steel reinforcing rods could be seen exposed where concrete had crumbled away from the building's façade. America has paid nothing into the UNESCO budget since 2011, and Japan – subsequently the biggest contributor, though recently overtaken by China – briefly withheld funding in protest over the 2015 MOW inscription of Nanjing Massacre documents. Financially, this is an organisation in crisis, and intensely vulnerable to pressure from its principal paymasters.

At the same time, UNESCO has seen other multilateral bodies increasingly encroach on its territory. Nowhere is this clearer than in education, where UNESCO has traditionally championed a humanist agenda distinct from the focus on "human capital" and economic growth typical of the OECD or World Bank. But recently, out of desperation to enhance its credibility with growth-obsessed policymakers and number-crunching economists, UNESCO's

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

education-related work too has increasingly fallen prey to "the tyranny of metrics".[6]

Quantitative, pseudo-scientific approaches lend themselves to simplifying or evading difficult political questions. This is evident even in the treatment of perhaps the most politically complex of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – SDG 4.7, relating to "education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship," the focus of the 2017 report I co-authored. We began our project with an elaborate exercise in coding policy and curricular documents. In the end, refusing to restrict ourselves simply to describing the coding results, we also analysed the cultural, social and political context for education policy across Asia.[7] But this kind of qualitative approach has become somewhat embattled, even within UNESCO. Education for "peace", for example, is increasingly treated as a matter not of promoting political, historical or philosophical reflection, but of inculcating generic, depoliticised "skills" or "competencies". In reports emanating from certain arms of UNESCO, "mindfulness," "social and emotional learning," and neuroscience are portrayed as the keys to "sustainable peace."[8]

Such trends seem to stray rather far from UNESCO's original humanist agenda, but this is perhaps hardly surprising in a multilateral organisation dependent on states where extreme forms of nationalism are increasingly in the ascendant. UNESCO's multilateralism means that it has always had to balance attempts to pursue a normative ethical agenda with the messy process of diplomatic compromise and horse-trading. What, then, has changed in recent years as regards the politics of heritage listings, and the Memory of the World Register in particular? And how has this politics played out in East Asia?

During the Cold War, UNESCO's pacifist rhetoric, its role in providing Soviet bloc states with an international forum, and its French connection all contributed to a fractious relationship with the Anglophone West, especially America. But its relationship with Japan was far more harmonious.[9] UNESCO assumed special importance for Japan in part because it offered the country early readmission to the international community: Japan was already involved in UNESCO activities from 1947, and formally joined in 1951, the year that the San Francisco Treaty ended the American occupation and restored Japanese independence. The "Peace Constitution" imposed on Japan by the Americans arguably diminished the country's diplomatic heft and left it dependent on the USA. But in lending Japan a kind of moral authority, pacifism could be seen as actually strengthening its role within an organisation such as UNESCO – or so, at least, many Japanese have believed.

That belief was reinforced by the early stirrings in Japan of what has come to be termed "global memory culture."[10] As Zwigenberg argues, this saw "Japan play the role of the victim, and the context both of its own war crimes on the continent and the horrors inflicted on it by the Americans conveniently ignored."[11] In the early 1960s, in an act of what Zwigenberg calls "victim diplomacy," Japanese peace activists organised a march to Auschwitz. A "Hiroshima-Auschwitz Committee" sought to organise joint exhibitions and establish an Auschwitz museum in Hiroshima. Until the 1990s, it was common for commentators, not just in Japan but worldwide, to pair the atomic bombings and the Jewish Holocaust as if these were commensurable tragedies. While memories of World War II have always been much more contested in Japan than in Israel, trends towards the sanctification of national victimhood and the commodification of atrocity were common to both. The 1996 inscription of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial as a UNESCO World Heritage Site can be seen as setting the seal on that vision. But it came just as

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

controversies over Japan's war crimes, not least the comfort women system, were intensifying, challenging this carefully constructed image of Japanese victimhood.

UNESCO's Memory of the World Register was established at around the same time, in 1992, partly as a response to new fears about the loss of cultural heritage (especially libraries and documents) sparked by destruction during the Yugoslav wars. But it was also a product of a renewed post-Cold War faith in normative, universal values. Following revisions to the MOW guidelines issued in 2002, the focus of the Register broadened from prioritizing documentary heritage considered "endangered" to encompassing any manifestation of "collective memory" deemed of "world significance."[12] The early 2000s witnessed a slew of inscriptions relating to memories of persecution and victimhood, including *Documentary Heritage of the Enslaved Peoples of the Caribbean* (in 2003) and the *Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives* in Phnom Penh (2009). Significantly, and in contrast to the system for proposing new World Heritage Sites, the nomination process for MOW bypasses state parties: not only is "any person or organisation" entitled to make nominations, but there is "no mechanism for state parties to prevent non-state actors from making an unwanted nomination," and "state parties cannot get involved in the selection process."[13] Decisions are left to appointed experts deliberating in meetings closed to the public.

The Japanese international relations scholar, Nakano Ryoko, portrays these features as weaknesses in the MOW nomination process as compared with that for selecting World Heritage sites (established in the early 1970s). In her view, the latter achieves a sensible balance between "solidarist" and "pluralist" impulses – combining, in other words, the pursuit of universal values with the realities of national sovereignty and competing state agendas. But as Huang and Lee observe, in practice UNESCO has functioned as a "market place, where nation-states compete with one another for the branding effects of world heritage."[14] The MOW process attempts to transcend this messy world of diplomatic horse-trading – thereby, Nakano suggests, pursuing an approach that is naïve and doomed to failure. Although not originally designed to handle archives relating to contemporary conflict, the structures of the MOW Register are informed, she maintains, by the universalism and widespread push for "truth and reconciliation" typical of the early post-Cold War years. She argues that this is unsustainable, inconsistent with UNESCO's nature as a multilateral organisation, and liable to fuel polarization and conflict rather than to calm or contain it.

Nationalist Narratives in an International Arena – UNESCO and East Asian Heritage Diplomacy

Though Nakano's analysis sidesteps questions of historical accuracy and the politics of Japanese revisionism, UNESCO heritage listings - for both the World Heritage Sites and MOW - have undoubtedly become arenas for highly politicized tussles for recognition across East Asia. As states have become increasingly drawn into competitive "heritage diplomacy,"[15] the comfort women issue has assumed totemic status for both transnational feminists and nationalists of all stripes. To understand the struggle over the heritagization of comfort women, it is important to see it as part of this broader contest, involving a slew of East Asian applications seeking UNESCO recognition for contested heritage.

In Japan, campaigns to garner international recognition for heritage sites or archives often echo or reinforce messages associated with what Hayakawa has called the "Japan is Great"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

boom.[16] The administration of Prime Minister Abe (2012-2020) energetically promoted Japan's greatness to the world – displaying a tendency for national self-aggrandizement not peculiar to Japan, but rooted here "in historical revisionism and nationalistic political interests concerning territorial issues."[17] On the one hand, there has been a "Cool Japan Strategy," the "Wonder Nippon" campaign of the Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry (launched in 2017), and propaganda surrounding the aborted 2020 Tokyo Olympics; while, on the other, the government has enhanced media censorship, pressured textbook publishers to remove coverage of comfort women, and pursued history wars against Seoul and Beijing. As Hayakawa points out, all of this is disturbingly reminiscent of the "Japanese spirit" discourse of the 1930s and coincides with an explosion of hate-speech directed at Chinese and Koreans on social media.[18]

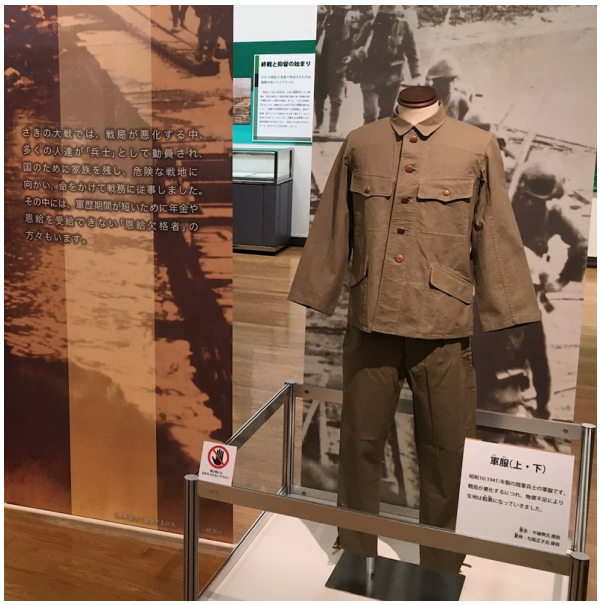
It is in this context that the *Sites of the Meiji Industrial Revolution* in Western Japan were inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2015. The introduction to these sites on the UNESCO website is a paean to Japanese greatness, and to Japan's exemplary regional role: "Collectively the sites are an outstanding reflection of the way Japan moved from a clan based society to a major industrial society with innovative approaches to adapting western technology in response to local needs and profoundly influenced the wider development of East Asia."[19] Absent here, despite Korean and Chinese protests during the registration process, is any acknowledgement of the use of slave labour at many of these sites during the Asia-Pacific War. Nor does domestic Japanese publicity relating to these sites make any reference to that history.[20]

Hard on the heels of that inscription came the listing of the Nanjing Massacre archives on the MOW Register, prompting a furious reaction from the Japanese government. Nakano's verdict on this is that the MOW process is flawed in neglecting to "provide an opportunity for state parties to participate in the social and cultural process of making global documentary heritage for all humanity."[21] In a context in which "the remembrance of the past is highly diverse," she argues that UNESCO's "unilateral decision on the inclusion of the Documents of the Nanjing Massacre does not help to create a situation in which Japan and China can move towards a more constructive dialogue for mutual understanding and reconciliation." In these circumstances, "inclusion can be polarizing and harmful." Outside Japan, however, interpretations of the Nanjing Massacre are not especially "diverse", but largely a matter of settled consensus: as Rana Mitter puts it, the dispute over the numbers killed in Nanjing "should not obscure the fact that a very large number died as the out-of-control Imperial Army exacted revenge on a population that had stood in the way of its advance."[22]

Even while the Japanese government fulminated against the MOW Nanjing Massacre listing, it greeted a controversial inscription pertaining to the suffering of postwar Japanese refugees: *Return to Maizuru Port – Documents related to the Internment and Repatriation Experiences of Japanese (1945-1956)*. The nomination documents for this application focused exclusively on Japanese suffering, without acknowledging suffering inflicted *by* Japanese forces during the preceding hostilities.[23] Seeking to whitewash its own questionable conduct in interning thousands of Japanese civilians as well as soldiers, Russia protested the decision to register this archive.[24] But the narcissistic focus on Japanese victimhood with which this issue was infused was on full display at an exhibition hosted by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in late 2019: 平和祈念展in福岡：みらいへ伝える体験者の記憶 (*Prayer for Peace Exhibition in Fukuoka: Passing on the memories of sufferers*). As well as commemorating the suffering of civilian internees (with female victims prominently

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

depicted), the exhibition text acknowledged that many internees were soldiers. However, it stressed that many had been forced into uniform as "the state of the war worsened" (戦局が悪くなる中) (see Figure 1). "Leaving behind their families for the sake of the country," a prominent plaque declared, they "headed for the dangerous frontline," with many survivors eventually returning to pensionless poverty. In a manner typical of public discourse under the Abe premiership, the (undoubted) suffering of many Japanese is piously hailed as patriotic sacrifice, while empathy for the Asian victims of Japanese aggression is entirely absent.



Japanese soldiers as wartime victims: an exhibition on postwar Japanese internees in Siberia, Fukuoka, November 2019

In harnessing memories of past suffering to patriotic propaganda, the Abe administration sought to compete with China and Korea in asserting wartime victimhood, while deliberating sowing confusion regarding Japan's role in causing the conflict in the first place. In Xi Jinping's China, meanwhile, heightened rituals of commemoration surrounding the Nanjing Massacre seek not only to intensify consciousness of Chinese victimhood, but also - and increasingly - to celebrate China's victory as a testament to the nation's power and global status. In the early years of Xi Jinping's leadership, the regime sought to tie claims to moral leadership and international status in the present to a narrative of China's past role in the global "anti-fascist" struggle, and to exploit Abe's revisionism to further divide Japan from Korea - with the comfort women serving as a highly effective diplomatic "wedge issue."

The 2015 inscription of the Nanjing Massacre archives coincided with the 70th anniversary of the end of World War Two, which was accompanied in China by a "victory"-themed propaganda blitz, culminating in a vast military parade in Beijing. This was attended by South Korean President Park Geun-hye, though not by representatives of either the USA or Japan. While the Abe administration's revisionism elicited notable public criticism from the Obama administration,[25] this was trumped by American alarm over the apparent Sino-Korean diplomatic rapprochement, prompting a push to de-couple Korea from China and reset relations with Japan. Seeking to detoxify the comfort women issue, America helped broker an agreement for Japan to compensate surviving victims, in return for Seoul dropping official support for any related MOW application. However, this agreement rapidly fell apart as it became clear that Japan also expected it to lead to the removal of the comfort woman statue outside its Seoul embassy (see Figure 2).[26] Far from according lasting recognition to the victims of the comfort women system, the Japanese government's aim was clearly to bury the issue entirely. On the one hand, Tokyo sought to secure Korean silence in return for money plus a tacit acknowledgement of earlier

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

official apologies (without any public restatement from Abe); on the other, within Japan, efforts continued to expunge mention of comfort women from school textbooks and wider public discourse within Japan.[27]

Wednesday Demonstration outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, with the 'Statue of a Young Girl' centre-stage

This messy compromise, and the widespread sense of betrayal it triggered within Korea, formed the backdrop to 2016's multinational *Voices of the Comfort Women* application to the MOW Register, discussed by Heisoo Shin in her paper for this special issue. The terms of the 2015 Korea-Japan agreement denied this application any official support from the Korean authorities, but the Chinese government was not similarly inhibited. As noted in the following section, official Chinese support continued through 2016 and 2017. However, this was ultimately insufficient to secure a MOW listing, in the face of concerted pressure on UNESCO from the Japanese government. While withholding funding to UNESCO, and even threatening formal withdrawal, Japan insisted that the rules governing MOW listings be changed to require "dialogue" in cases where applications are "contested" or controversial.[28] A group of Japanese rightists had earlier submitted a rival bid for MOW registration for an archive purporting to demonstrate that comfort women were merely engaged in "normal" commercial prostitution. The UNESCO committee required the "International Solidarity Committee" (backing the original application) to engage in "dialogue" with the latter as a condition of inscription, thus effectively eliminating any prospect of success (as Shin explains in her article).

Meanwhile, another application to the MOW Register was in preparation that encapsulated a very different view of the history of Korea-Japan relations – relating to the bilateral diplomatic exchanges during the period of the Tokugawa Shogunate (朝鮮通信使). Originally a civil society-driven campaign, this drew strong support from Japan's long-embattled ethnic Korean community. But the chairman of the Japanese nomination committee was Kawamura Takeo, an LDP politician from Prime Minister Abe's home region of Yamaguchi and, like Abe, a member of the far-right group, "Nippon Kaigi (Japan Council)."[29] Indeed, Kawamura had served as an official envoy in Japan's negotiations with the Korean Government over the comfort women issue. Supporters of this nomination expressed anxiety that UNESCO might instead select the simultaneous *Voices of the Comfort Women* application.[30] In the event, their application was accepted, the nomination text emphasising that:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> The nominated documents exhibit wisdom in maintaining peaceful relations between two nations that had been at war. The missions benefited not only the two countries, but also East Asia as a whole by stabilizing relations and maintaining trading channels. These documents have universal significance in fostering permanent peace and cross-cultural communication.[31]

Part of the context for that decision was intense Japanese diplomatic pressure on UNESCO to withhold approval for the simultaneous comfort women-related nomination. But Japan was meanwhile putting its official weight behind another application, this time to inscribe Kyushu's Okinoshima-Munakata shrine complex as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This includes the island of Okinoshima, where an enormous cache of artefacts relating to Japan's trade with the continent were deposited in mysterious rituals dating back to the first millennium. Here the Korean connection, though absolutely central to the history of this site, was ignored in the nomination documents. An ICOMOS report recommended that only the island, and not various shrines on the nearby mainland, be registered, but intense lobbying by Japan persuaded the World Heritage Committee to override that verdict.[32] The expert report also noted that women were excluded from the island on vague "traditional" grounds, but the "Statement of Outstanding Universal Value" accepted by the WHC states only that "existing restrictions and taboos contribute to maintaining the aura of the island as a sacred place." As DeWitt observes, this means that "a site of 'Outstanding Universal Value' is off-limits – and for historically unsubstantiated reasons – to half the world's population."[33]

In the same year that the *Voices of the Comfort Women* archive was refused MOW registration, UNESCO thus accepted two heritage applications from East Asia: one celebrating the history of Japan-Korea relations as a model for achieving world peace; and the other accepting a Japanese nationalist vision of an intrinsically transnational site, while tacitly condoning the exclusion from it of women on spurious grounds of "tradition."

If these were the apparent consequences of UNESCO's anxiety to appease Japan and avoid controversy, what of the politics of Sino-Korean collaboration over war-related heritage? Before turning to a closer examination of China's approach over the comfort women case, it is pertinent to note that this was not an isolated instance of Sino-Korean collaboration in commemorating shared victimhood at the hands of Japan. Huang and Lee have analysed the development since the 1990s of ties between the Lushun Russian-Japanese Prison in Dalian and the Seodaemun Prison in Seoul's Independence Park (see Figure 3).[34] They note how Chinese officials played along with a Korean proposal (made in 2013) for an application to UNESCO for a joint listing of these sites, on the grounds that their shared association with Japanese colonialism would be a means of challenging the enduring colonial legacy and promoting peace.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Seodaemun Prison Museum, Seoul

However, Huang and Lee argue that, for both sides – Chinese and Korean – the promotion of nationalist narratives was in tension with commitment to both historical accuracy and a genuinely universalist agenda. Due to its association with Ahn Jung-geun, the assassin of Ito Hirobumi,[35] the Lushun Prison was seen by the Koreans as an "offshore" monument to Korea's struggle for "independence and peace," while for the Chinese side it stood as a memorial to what the museum's vice-director called the "universal value" of "patriotism".[36] The movement for a joint application to UNESCO was an example of what Huang and Lee call "corrective remembering," or an attempt to weaponize the past through "othering narratives" as a means of inflicting "punishment".[37] For this purpose, inconvenient aspects of the history of the Seodaemun site, such as the incarceration there of pro-democracy activists during the Park dictatorship, were deliberately occluded.[38] A focus on pre-1945 independence activist prisoners (ignoring the many ordinary criminals also imprisoned there) served the myth that "everyone resisted and no one collaborated". At the same time, the complex history of colonialism on the Korean peninsula was also airbrushed. Though the "Independence Gate" at Seodaemun was originally built to mark Korea's liberation from Chinese dominance, the keenness to gain powerful Chinese support against Japan at UNESCO led the Korean side to tactfully ignore this.[39]

Ultimately, however, the Lushun Prison Museum withdrew from collaboration with Seodaemun Prison during 2017. Huang and Lee attribute this to the Sino-Korean dispute over deployment of the THAAD missile system in South Korea – though they note that Chinese enthusiasm already seemed to be dimming by 2016. But this episode also prefigures the evaporation of official Chinese support over the comfort women issue. For the Chinese, as for many Koreans, the commemoration of war heritage serves the cause of what Huang and Lee term "corrective remembering". However, whereas in Korea the driving force for such campaigns typically comes from below, from civil society, in China the priorities of the party-state ultimately determine heritage policy. And those priorities can swiftly change.

Comfort Women Commemoration as Weaponized Heritage in China

The fickle nature of official policy on the comfort women issue has significantly constrained the activities of Chinese scholars or campaigners. For example, Su Zhiliang of Shanghai Normal University (featured in this special issue) struggled for many years to get public funding for research into China's comfort women, with the Chinese government highly ambivalent about publicising such a "shameful" topic.[40] Aside from a small section (that Su helped curate) in the revamped Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (2007), the first substantial exhibitions on the subject were those organised between 2009 and 2012 by the Japan-based "Shanxi Association for Uncovering the Facts" (山西・明らかにする会). That touring exhibition was abruptly halted in Nanjing in late 2012, when the authorities, nervous about the prospect of nationalist protests, closed down the final exhibition of the tour on the same day that it opened.[41]

However, once the political jitters of that year (with the leadership transition and Bo Xilai scandal) were behind it, the new Xi Jinping administration took a decision to weaponize the comfort women issue. This was evidently considered useful both as a stick with which to beat the Japanese, and as a classic "United

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Front" tactic for forming bonds with groups across East Asia critical of Japan. The attraction of this tactic was enhanced precisely by the importance of this issue to Prime Minister Abe and his closest supporters, for whom the "comfort women" are central to what Eleni Christdoloulou, analysing Cyprus' vicious history wars, has termed a "securitised" vision of the national past.[42] The sense of Japan as a quintessentially peaceful nation triumphantly transcending wartime victimhood has become so central to contemporary national identity that challenges to this narrative are experienced by many Japanese as profoundly threatening to their sense of political selfhood – thus rendering them receptive to the revisionist agenda of the nationalist right. Insecurity has been heightened since the 1990s by the rapid relative decline in wealth, power and international status that Japan has experienced vis-a-vis China. In addition, the comfort women represent a particular threat to the sort of "Japan is Great" vision, premised on belief in the nation's ineffable moral "spirit," that organizations such as the Nippon Kaigi promote. For Prime Minister Abe and his circle, defending such a vision was nothing less than a matter of national security. Prodding them here was guaranteed to cause them to lash out, even at the expense of Japan's international reputation.

It is in this context that longstanding Chinese advocates for recognition for comfort women, such as Su Zhiliang, witnessed a sudden surge of official interest in, and support for, their activities during the early Xi Jinping years. Along with official sponsorship for related MOW applications, this took the form of funding for substantial comfort women museums in Nanjing and Shanghai. While the agenda of Su and his colleagues has been quite distinct from that of the Chinese authorities (see my translators' introduction to Su's paper for this special issue), the way in which the comfort women story is told in the two museums he helped establish (and in his paper translated for this special issue) reveals the constraints on the framing of this issue within China, and the sensitivities that continue to surround it.

It is instructive first to look at the nature of these museums as institutions. The founding of both coincided with important points in the heritage diplomacy timetable: the transformation of the former comfort station in Nanjing's Liji Alley into a memorial (see Figure 4) got underway in 2014, just as the first, Chinese-sponsored, application to MOW was submitted; and the *Chinese Comfort Women History Museum* at Shanghai Normal University was rushed to completion in October 2016 as SNU was preparing to host a meeting of the international alliance supporting the *Voices of the Comfort Women* nomination. But while the diplomatic function of these institutions was clear, their domestic role was less so. Almost all Chinese public museums are designated as "bases of patriotic education," and host visits from local school parties. But the Liji Alley Comfort Women Memorial is out of bounds to those under the age of 18 and to tour groups and boasts exceptionally stringent security measures. The SNU Museum, located as it is inside Professor Su's faculty building on the university campus, is not openly accessible to members of the public.[43]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Comfort Women Memorial at Liji Alley, Nanjing

Indeed, in 2016 this fact helped Su to persuade the Chinese Foreign Ministry to allow two comfort women statues erected on the SNU campus, just outside faculty building, to remain in place. Since they were inside the university campus, the general public would not get to see them anyway, and they were unlikely to form the focus of any spontaneous popular protest. It might seem surprising that Communist Party officials were so nervous about erecting statues to victims of Japanese oppression – but the Chinese authorities are intensely anxious about the risk of fomenting any popular protest movement that might get out of hand and are aware that the original comfort woman statue in Seoul forms the focal point for weekly demonstrations. Popular anti-Japanese sentiment is a force the Communist Party often seeks to exploit but knows it cannot completely control.

The exhibitions at the Nanjing and SNU museums are revealing of the parameters within which the comfort women must be told in contemporary China. Their account of the comfort women phenomenon itself is quite comprehensive.[44] The exhibition text at the Liji Alley memorial in Nanjing boasts that it is the world's largest comfort women museum, and it presents a huge amount of information (much of which is repeated, apparently to fill exhibition space). Both here and at the SNU museum, the tone of the narrative is markedly less strident than at other Chinese war museums, perhaps partly reflecting a desire to appeal to the kind of international audience associated with UNESCO. Accounts of individual experiences are more prominent than is typically the case in Chinese museums, and some of the displays – especially the reconstructions of rooms occupied by particular women – are quite powerful. There is some acknowledgement of the transnational nature both of the comfort women system itself, and of the contemporary campaign to secure recognition and compensation for its victims. Pictures of Jan Ruff O'Herne, a Dutch victim of the system, are given special prominence – perhaps reflecting a sense that Westerners' share in victimhood lends extra legitimacy to the international campaign for recognition of this atrocity. The involvement of Japanese activists in that campaign is also acknowledged.

However, as Mark Frost and I argue in our introductory essay to this special issue, there is a larger context within which the significance of the comfort women story needs to be considered. At the 2016 conference in Seoul, several speakers, including Yoshimi Yoshiaki, Christine Chinkin and Yang Hyun-ah, noted that the comfort women system is one of a number of instances of sexual violence during war.[45] The award of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Dennis Mukegwe and Nadia Murad reminds us that this is an ongoing problem. But violence against women, their trafficking and sexual exploitation occur in peacetime as well as wartime. As Chunghee Sarah Soh emphasises, the comfort women term covers a spectrum of atrocity, from battlefield rape to more institutionalized and bureaucratized military brothels.[46] The comfort women system clearly belongs near the extreme end of this spectrum, given the involvement of the Japanese military itself in orchestrating this vast and coercive apparatus of sexual servitude. But that does not imply a neat distinction between "acceptable" forms of state-licensed commercialized prostitution in pre-war East Asia, and the brutality experienced by comfort women.[47] Recruitment for brothels serving the Japanese military occurred sometimes through kidnap by Japanese soldiers themselves, but also through more conventional forms of trafficking by Chinese and Korean criminal gangs working with the Japanese. A 2018 exhibition at WAM in Tokyo reminded visitors that Japanese were

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

victims of the system as well as its ultimate perpetrators.[48] And the exploitation or trafficking of women for sex across East Asia did not stop in 1945. It continues to this day across the region, not least in China, which currently has one of the worst records of any country in the world when it comes to trafficking.[49]

Despite this, the comfort women system has typically been cordoned off as an atrocity in an entirely different category from other instances of abuse and trafficking of women. In public campaigns on behalf of former comfort women, there has often been a tension between transnational feminism and anti-Japan nationalism. Norma argues that while early demands for restitution for former comfort women were often tied to calls for the abolition of prostitution and a clampdown on cross-border sex tourism, by the time the issue came to broad public notice in the 1990s, the dominant premise was of Japanese perpetrators *versus* Korean victims.[50] She goes on to argue that in Korea especially, and to a lesser extent in Japan, too, there have recently been significant advances for feminism, and that reconnecting with a broader feminist agenda offers "a clear future direction and path of sustainability for the 'comfort women' justice movement."[51] But she is unclear about the extent to which this is actually happening. (For further discussion of the "entanglement" of comfort women heritage with transnational feminism, see the introductory essay for this special issue.)

In the case of China, the officially-approved narrative, as manifested in the Nanjing and Shanghai museums, makes no gesture towards any broader feminist agenda. Nor does it acknowledge any comparability between the sort of abuse suffered by comfort women, and the sexual exploitation of women in other conflicts at other times, let alone in peacetime China today. Displays in these museums of artefacts belonging to elderly surviving comfort women constitute a form of silent testimony to the poverty, neglect and discrimination they suffered *after* the war. This is an issue that Su himself has recognised in his published work,[52] but it is not highlighted in the museum text.[53] Here the comfort women story is thus spatially and chronologically quarantined – portrayed as a disfiguring symptom of diseased *Japanese* modernity, prompting no reflection on sexual *mores* or gender norms in contemporary China or elsewhere.

Official determination to quarantine the issue in this way is evident especially in the disinterest or outright hostility of the Shanghai authorities towards comfort women commemoration, despite (or because of) that city's central role in the wartime comfort women system in China. The Nanjing and SNU comfort women exhibits acknowledge Shanghai's importance in this respect, but do not examine how this was related to the city's status as modern Asia's pre-eminent capitalist metropolis, complete with the region's largest commercial sex industry.[54] It is noticeable that, while the municipal authorities today are keen to stress the links between a prosperous and cosmopolitan present and the "Pre-Liberation" past, the seedier side of Shanghai's heritage is scrupulously suppressed.[55] But in this respect, too, the present echoes the past. It has required strenuous lobbying by Su and others to persuade local authorities to preserve just a few of Shanghai's surviving "comfort stations" – and none of these has been officially marked, let alone transformed into a memorial.

The sudden withdrawal in 2018 of official Chinese support for the transnational *Voices of the Comfort Women* campaign should therefore come as little surprise. Just days before Su was due to host a scheduled meeting of the International Solidarity Committee at SNU in early August, the event was cancelled at the behest of Chinese authorities. While no official explanation was given, this occurred in the context of a rapprochement between Beijing

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and Tokyo, by then both facing pressure over trade from America's Trump administration. This suggests that suppression of comfort women campaigning was part of a Japanese *quid pro quo* for collaboration with China on commercial matters. The readiness of Beijing to comply indicates that Chinese official support was always fundamentally instrumental, designed to serve the regime's diplomatic goals rather than to educate domestic public opinion or seek some form of redress for the dwindling band of surviving comfort women themselves.

Conclusion

An immediate consequence of this switch in Chinese policy is to render even more remote any prospect of successfully registering the *Voices of the Comfort Women* documents as Memory of the World. However, the fundamental barrier to registration lies in the stance of the Japanese authorities, and threats to suspend or cut funding to UNESCO. Therefore, the ultimate challenge faced by campaigners on behalf of comfort women is to raise awareness and overcome apathy by transforming public opinion within Japan. Those who argue, like Nakano, that designing the MOW Process to bypass state parties was a mistake, implicitly endorse the self-serving arguments of the Japanese Government and its insistence on what amounts to a "perpetrators' veto". But they may nonetheless have a point in arguing that a multilateral organization like UNESCO can't ignore the concerns of its membership. The more easily Japanese rightists can portray the comfort women campaign as a Korean- and Chinese-led conspiracy to demonize Japan, the more reluctant the Japanese public will be to listen to, let alone accept, the truth on this subject. To put it another way, the spectacle of an international coalition of activists homing in on Japanese villainy lends weight to rightist attempts to "securitize" debates over wartime history, and fuels attempts to whip up anti-Korean and anti-Chinese sentiment within Japan.

Viewed from this perspective, taking the Chinese state out of the campaign for international recognition for comfort women might actually help attempts to "desecuritize" the issue and shift public opinion within Japan. But for this to happen, there will also need to be a marked shift away from the practice, entrenched across East Asia, of framing heritage diplomacy as victimhood diplomacy, or of tying commemorative campaigns, explicitly or implicitly, to nationalist agendas. In the case of war-related atrocities, this means breaking down overly simplistic juxtapositions of perpetrator / victim identities along national lines. In this respect, WAM's 2018 exhibition focusing on *Japanese* comfort women sets a noteworthy precedent.

It might also help if, instead of categorically differentiating the comfort women system from other instances of the sexual exploitation of women, portrayals placed greater emphasis on the continued and transnational prevalence of related forms of abuse. Trafficking in women for sex is still prevalent across much of contemporary Asia and elsewhere, as is rape and sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. Trafficking also remains, as it was for the comfort women, largely a class issue, overwhelmingly affecting women from poor and marginalized communities. Then, as now, it has also been fueled and enabled by profoundly hypocritical attitudes towards "public sex," with widespread acceptance of men's use of sexual services as "natural," but of women's provision of them as "shameful".[56] Toxic masculinity and the disempowerment of women were crucial enabling factors for the establishment of the comfort women system, and they remain widely prevalent today – not only in Japan.

The comfort women system as an instance of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

these problems does not constitute a separate category out on its own, but a point on a spectrum of abuse and exploitation of women. To underline this should not be to diminish the horror of the system by relativizing it, but to emphasize its enduring and universal relevance – in a manner possibly more likely to receive a sympathetic hearing within Japan. At least, that is what my limited personal experience suggests. I have taken Japanese students to two comfort women museums: the Chinese Comfort Women History Museum, and the Ama House Museum in Taipei. While the SNU Museum shocked them into silence, the Ama House Museum produced a very different effect. It is perhaps significant that of all comfort women museums, the museum in Taipei does most to place the system in some sort of comparative perspective, and to acknowledge the complicity of local traffickers and procurers.[57] In the face of official censorship, revisionist propaganda, rising nationalism and public apathy within Japan, it is currently hard to see how a campaign for proper recognition of the comfort women system can make headway. But perhaps the Taiwanese approach and that of WAM in Tokyo offer models worth emulating.

This article is a part of **The Special Issue: The 'Comfort Women' as Public History.** See the Table of Contents.

We created a zip file for download containig all articles in this special issue for your convenience.

Please also see the supplementary issue to this special issue, **Academic Integrity at Stake: the Ramseyer Article**, edited by Alexis Dudden.

Edward Vickers is Professor of Comparative Education at Kyushu University, Japan, and (from April 2021) inaugural holder of the UNESCO Chair on Education for Peace, Social Justice and Global Citizenship. He researches the history and politics of education, and the politics of heritage, across contemporary East Asia. His books include *Remembering Asia's World War Two* (2019, co-edited with Mark Frost and Daniel Schumacher); *Education and Society in Post-Mao China* (2017, with Zeng Xiaodong), and (as a co-ordinating lead author) the 2017 UNESCO report, *Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century*. He is Director of Kyushu University's interdisciplinary Taiwan Studies Program, and Secretary-General of the Comparative Education Society of Asia.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Notes

[1] Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (eds), *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia: identity politics, schooling and popular culture.* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).
[2] Mark Frost, Daniel Schumacher and Edward Vickers (eds), *Remembering Asia's World War Two.* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019). Both this network and the one that resulted in the Morris et al volume were funded by the Leverhulme Trust (UK). See here for more on the WARMAP network.
[3] Edward Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women' Beyond Korea: the Chinese case," in Frost et al (eds), *Remembering Asia's World War Two. (*New York and London: Routledge, 2019): 174-207.
[4] Vickers, ibid.
[5] MGIEP, *Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century: The State of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia.* (New Delhi: UNESCO-MGIEP, 2017a).
[6] Jerry Muller, *The Tyranny of Metrics.* (Princeton University Press, 2018). With Yoko Mochizuki, I am currently editing a special issue of the journal *Compare* analysing the politics of UNESCO's education-related work (publication due in 2022).
[7] MGIEP, *op. cit.* (2017a).
[8] See, for example, MGIEP, *The Blue Dot*, Issue 6. (New Delhi: UNESCO-MGIEP, 2017b).
[9] Yoko Mochizuki, 'Introduction,' in J. Singer, T. Gannon, F. Noguchi and Y. Mochizuki (eds), *Education for Sustainability in Japan: Fostering resilient communities after the triple disaster.* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017): 1-24.
[10] Ran Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima: The Origins of Global Memory Culture.* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[11] Ibid., p. 52.
[12] Ray Edmondson, *Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage.* (Paris: UNESCO Information Society Division, 2002).
[13] Ryoko Nakano, "A failure of global documentary heritage? UNESCO's 'memory of the world' and heritage dissonance in East Asia," *Contemporary Politics* 24.4, 1-16 (2018): 6.
[14] Shu-Mei Huang and Hyun-Kyung Lee, "Difficult heritage diplomacy? Re-articulating places of pain and shame as world heritage in northeast Asia," *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* 25/2 (2019): 143-159 (147).
[15] Tim Winter, "Heritage Diplomacy," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21/10 (2015): 997-1015.
[16] Tomomi Yamaguchi, "The 'Japan is Great!' Boom, Historical Revisionism, and the Government," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus,* 15/6, No. 3 (2017).
[17] Ibid., p. 3.
[18] Quoted in Ibid.
[19] WHC (World Heritage Centre), "Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining," *World Heritage List.* UNESCO: WHC (2018). (accessed November 1, 2018).
[20] At a Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference held on July 5, 2015, to mark UNESCO

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

inscription of the 'Sites of the Meiji Industrial Revolution', Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio insisted that the expression 'forced to work' (to which Japan had agreed) did not imply the use of 'forced labor' (accessed February 9, 2021). For more on the controversy surrounding this World Heritage inscription, see Edward Boyle, "Borders of Memory: Affirmation and Contestation over Japan's Heritage," *Japan Forum,* Vol. 31 (2019): 293-312. In my own visits to sites or exhibitions relating to this World Heritage bid (e.g. in Kita-Kyushu and Hagi), I have found no reference to Japanese colonialism or the deployment of Korean or Chinese forced labour.

[21] Nakano, *op. cit.,* p. 11.

[22] Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan: 1937-1945.* London: Allen Lane (2013): 135.

[23] Maizuru City, "Nomination Form International Memory of the World Register Return to Maizuru Port—Documents Related to the Internment and Repatriation Experiences of Japanese (1945-1956)". (2014).

[24] Associated Press, "Russia Slams Japan for 'violently distorting' UNESCO dossier on soldiers held in Second World War," *South China Morning Post.* 23rd October, 2014 (accessed March 14, 2020).

[25] See Jeff Kingston, "Obama's Pivot to Asia: Rebalance and Reassure," in *The Japan Times*, May 3, 2014: (accessed March 24, 2020).

[26] The reporting of the agreement by the Japanese press emphasized the removal of the statue as a key objective. See, for example, the Asahi Shinbun report: 日本の１０億円拠出「少女像移転が前提」慰安婦問題 ("Comfort Women Issue: Disbursement of One Billion Yen 'conditional on removal of the statue of the young girl'"), December 30, 2015, (accessed March 15, 2020).

[27] For discussion of the historical context for this agreement, see Yoshimi Yoshiaki, "The Kono Statement: Its historical significance and limitations," in Nishino Rumiko, Kim Puja and Onozawa Akane (eds), *Denying the Comfort Women: The Japanese State's Assault on Historical Truth.* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019): Chapter 1.

[28] Heisoo Shin recounts her experience in attempting to pilot this application through UNESCO in her paper for this special issue. See also Edward Vickers 2017, "Japan's Pyrrhic Victory over 'Comfort Women' Commemoration," *The Diplomat*, November 25, 2017, (accessed March 15, 2020).

[29] The Nippon Kaigi was founded in 1997 as part of a right-wing backlash against the 'apology diplomacy' of Japanese governments during the early 1990s, which besides issuing official statements of remorse over the 'comfort women' issue, had also ensured that this and other wartime atrocities were discussed (albeit briefly) in school history textbooks. For more on the Nippon Kaigi, see Tawara Yoshifumi, "What is the Aim of the Nippon Kaigi, the Ultra-Right Japanese Organisation that Supports Abe's Japan Administration," in *The Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus,* Vol. 15/21, No. 1 (2017) (accessed March 24, 2020).

[30] Yuka Yamaguchi, 歴史実践としての朝鮮通信使関連文化事業 ―韓国側の取り組みを中心に ― (The Cultural Project of the Chosen Tsushinshi as a Historical Practice – from the perspective of the Korean side), *Unpublished MA Dissertation.* (Kyushu University: Faculty of Integrated Science for Global Society, 2018).

[31] Busan Cultural Foundation (ROK) and Liaison Council of All Places Associated with Chosen Tsushima (Japan), *Nomination Form: International Memory of the World Register.* (2016).

[32] Lindsey DeWitt, "Report on the 2017 Inscription of 'Sacred Island of Okinoshima and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Associated Sites in the Munakata Region' as a UNESCO World Heritage Site," *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University,* Volume 3 (2018): 135-140.
[33] Ibid., p. 139.
[34] Shu-Mei Huang and Hyun-Kyung Lee (2019), *op. cit.*
[35] Ito is widely revered in Japan as a leading "moderniser" of the Meiji period, and is celebrated in exhibitions related to Japan's "Meiji Industrial Revolution" World Heritage Sites, for example in Hagi in his native Yamaguchi region.
[36] Ibid., p. 11
[37] Ibid., 9.
[38] However, this was already changing under the Park Geun-hye presidency, when exhibits at the site began increasingly to acknowledge the incarceration of political prisoners there during the period of military rule. Such coverage has been further expanded since the election in 2017 of President Moon Jae-in, as I found on a visit to the prison in late 2019. But the original main exhibition has been retained, with its overwhelming focus on independence activists during the Japanese colonial period.
[39] Ibid., 12.
[40] In this section, I draw on interviews conducted with Su Zhiliang in August 26, 2015; March 2, 2016; September 2, 2016; and November 26, 2016.
[41] Vickers, *op cit.* (2019): 183-187.
[42] Eleni Christodoulou, 'Deconstructing resistance towards textbook revisions: the securitisation of history textbooks and the Cyprus conflict,' *Global Change, Peace and Security* (published online 2018)
[43] Vickers, *op. cit.* (2019): 190-196.
[44] For more details on both exhibitions, see ibid.
[45] International Committee, *Voices of the 'Comfort Women': Their Resonance and Amplification*. Proceedings of the International Conference on the 'Comfort Women' Documents: Towards UNESCO Documentary Heritage. (Seoul: International Committee for Joint Nomination of Documents on the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' to UNESCO Memory of the World Register, 2016).
[46] Sarah Soh (Soh Chunghee), *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan.* (Chicago University Press, 2008).
[47] Revisionists in Japan often base their case on a conflation of peacetime state-controlled prostitution and the wartime 'comfort women' system, with some dismissing 'Western' (and Korean) criticism of prostitution *per se* as 'Christian' cultural imperialism; for a notable example, see the latest *manga* by the prominent rightist, Kobayashi Yoshinori (小林よしのり), 慰安婦 *(Comfort Women*). 東京：幻冬舎 (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2020): 249-264. However, this both downplays the extent of the brutality and coercion associated with the latter, and assumes that the system of peacetime prostitution was itself non-coercive, whereas in fact it was underpinned by debt slavery. And while Japan reluctantly acceded in 1925 to an international anti-trafficking convention, having inserted an 'exception allowing women over 18 to be indentured for prostitution,' it appears that the vast majority of Chinese and Korean 'comfort women' were recruited as minors. See Nishino et al, (eds), *op. cit*. Also the review of that volume by Jeff Kingston in *Monumenta Nipponica* 74:1 (2019): 150-157.
[48] *State-Managed Sex: The Silence of Japanese 'comfort women'*（国家に管理された性 ： 日本人

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press

「慰安婦」の沈黙). (Women's Active Museum of War and Peace, Tokyo, 2018).
[49] See Heather Barr, "China's Bride Trafficking Problem," *The Diplomat* (October 30, 2019), (accessed December 23, 2020).
[50] Caroline Norma, "Abolitionism in the history of the transnational 'Justice for Comfort Women' movement in Japan and South Korea", in Patrick Finney, ed. *Remembering the Second World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017): 115-139.
[51] Ibid.: 135.
[52] Certainly this issue is addressed in publications for overseas consumption: see Qiu Peipei with Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). But as his translated paper for this special issue shows, this kind of broader contextualisation appears more difficult in presentations addressed to a Chinese audience.
[53] The museum at SNU, however, does have an audio-visual room where visitors can view the documentary film *Thirty-two*, which focuses on the poverty and discrimination suffered by one former 'comfort woman' and her son.
[54] See Christian Herriot and Noel Castelino, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Also Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-century Shanghai.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[55] See Jiang Lei and Edward Vickers, 'Constructing Civic Identity in Shanghai's Museums: Heritage, Ideology and Local Distinctiveness,' in Vickers and Kumar (eds), *Constructing Modern Asian Citizenship. (*London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 217-239.
[56] Soh, *op. cit.*: Chapter 6.
[57] Although sometimes, as Frost and I notice in our introductory essay in this special issue, the comparative perspective can veer off in somewhat dubious directions (as with the implicit pairing of Anne Frank and the comfort women).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466021030886 Published online by Cambridge University Press