

GSGS Research Grant Report 2024

Japan's Postwar Responsibility and Reconciliation in East Asia: What symbolizes the relocation of the comfort women's statue in Tainan?

Misato Nagakawa

Summary

As my Ph.D. research tentatively focuses on "Japan's Postwar Responsibility and Reconciliation in East Asia: How the Postwar Generations Can Change the Sentiment in East Asia?", I conducted the field research in Tainan, Taiwan in August. The main objective was to understand the public sentiment and key stakeholders regarding the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan through the issue of comfort women by visiting related historical sites and attending one of the key events that took place this summer, the relocation of the comfort women statue and the screening of the documentary "Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue" on August 14, the International Day of Remembrance for Comfort Women. The research was significant for my future research, providing a detailed understanding of the issue and a network for further research to understand public sentiment on bilateral relations. After Tainan, my visit also included a brief stop in Taipei, the AMA Museum, and Shanghai, China to attend the Summer School as a facilitator and alumni of their fellowship program organized by the Bai Xian Asia Institute.

About the research

The theme of the research is "Japan's Postwar Responsibility and Reconciliation in East Asia: What symbolizes the relocation of the comfort women statue in Tainan?", took place from August 12 to 18, 2024. Most of the research was conducted in Tainan, Taiwan through three methods: meeting and talking with key local stakeholders, attending related events, and visiting related historical sites.

The aim of this research is to analyze and reveal how the planned event of the relocation of the comfort woman statue in Tainan symbolizes the public sentiment of reconciliation between Japan and Taiwan. As many scholars point out, the memory of the colonial period under Japan in Taiwan is comparatively different from that of the Korean case. While the latter emphasizes humiliation and demands concrete political action, Taiwan takes the approach of acceptance and accommodation, and these differences are clearly shown by both positive national sentiment toward Japan and less bilateral historical conflict in Taiwan. In August, when I heard that the statue would be moved due to the expiration of the land rights, I wanted to analyze how this event symbolized the public sentiment between Japan and Taiwan by visiting the site and meeting with key stakeholders such as Mr. Hsieh, Lung-Chieh from the Kuomintang (KMT), Miki Dezaki, the creator of the film "Shusenjo," and others: "The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue" and Mr. Lin Shenjing.

Achievement and Result

This fieldwork research contributed significantly to my future research by providing a detailed understanding of the issue and a network for further research to understand the public sentiment of bilateral relations. As a result, I would like to write mainly about two things; quantitative achievements and two hypotheses I gained from the original objective of the research.

Quantitative findings

The methods of this field research were three; meeting and talking with key local stakeholders, attending related events, and visiting related historical sites. To talk first about the research conducted in Taiwan, the number of key stakeholders I met during the research by appointment was eight. This number does not include the people I sat with at the two working lunches: one with the students and professor from National Cheng Kung University on August 13, and another with those who participated in the comfort women ceremony, including the artist of the statue, on August 14. I attended two events, a ceremony and a film screening, and visited six historical sites.

In Shanghai, it is difficult to define quantitative outcomes. My main task was to plan and facilitate two sessions: a coffee chat on cultural exchange and future development of Bai Xian Asia Institute with the estimated three speakers, and a casual dinner session on marriage and family. Since these were held as part of the summer school program for the 64 current scholars, with the aim of developing new generation leaders by building bridges across cultures, I was able to exchange some opinions about their future views of the future in Asia and the world, the current perspective of the East Asian region in relation to some historical and political issues, and culture and identity.

Objective of the research

The objective of this research was to analyze and reveal how the planned event of the relocation of the comfort woman statue in Tainan symbolizes the public sentiment of reconciliation between Japan and Taiwan. Through preliminary research and three research methods in Taiwan, there are two hypotheses as a result of the research.

1. The reconciliation process for the Taiwanese comfort woman issue either doesn't contain or doesn't visualize anti-Japanese sentiment compared to the case of Korea and China.
2. The division and ignorance in perspective toward the comfort woman issue exists among Taiwanese mainly from the differences in political beliefs and generation.

On the first point, many stakeholders, including Mr. Hsieh, seemed to emphasize the tone of "forgive but not forget." This means that the ceremony and film screening are not meant to have anti-Japanese sentiments, but to remember history for the future generation. The fact that the statue was placed in front of the Hayashi Department Store in Tainan, which attracts many Japanese travelers, may give some wrong impression. Throughout the field work, the tone of "forgive but not forget" seemed to be emphasized by talking to people and attending ceremonies and events. In addition, it was interesting that almost no travelers paid attention to the statue even when they visited the Hayashi department store. I was the only one who took pictures and read the text on the statue, while the other travelers took pictures of the Hayashi Department Store across the street with the statue right behind them.

As for the second point, division and ignorance are two key words I would like to mention. When I say division, the differences in political beliefs cannot be ruled out, given that the ceremony was planned by the KMT's affiliates. When I talked to the local whom I deliberately avoid identifying, this person was concerned about the negative effect on bilateral relations when I asked about the ceremony and event on August 14. During the ceremony, Mr. Hsieh and former President Ma Ying-jeou also made the remarks. In terms of generation, my observation was that not many young participants attended both the ceremony and the film screening. This observation was confirmed by the casual conversation I had with Mr. Jonah Khu at the AMA Museum in Taipei; he shared his perspective that Taiwan's young generation has little interest in the comfort women issue. This, of course, is related to the tendency to be ignorant of the comfort women issue in Taiwan.

Future Implications

For the above hypothesis, I must emphasize that it is based mainly on the observations and interactions from this fieldwork. Therefore, I would like to continue further research to explore the issue. This field research brought me a significant impact to broaden the perspective of reconciliation and the issue of comfort women, especially in relation to Taiwan, as I had a narrow scope and understanding. Specifically, my previous research was limited to Chinese and Korean comfort women. These two cases were different in the sense that the public sentiment between Japan and these two countries is relatively negative compared to that between Taiwan and Japan. By maintaining the relationship with the key stakeholders and continuing to research through related resources, I am eager to develop my future Ph.D. research. I also plan to translate this report into Japanese and post it on the website of Wake Up Japan, a nonprofit organization that I serve as a vice board member, to share the experience.

Appendix

Detailed schedule

日 Day	曜日 Day of the week	訪問先都市名 City of visit	訪問先機関名 Institute of visit	具体的な用務内容詳細 Purpose of Travel
1	8月12日	Taipei / Tainan (Taiwan)	Arrival	From Haneda to Taipei, then Taipei to Tainan
2	8月13日	Tainan	Comfort Women Statue	6PM: Visit to the comfort women statue and Hayashi Department Store (in front of the statue)
			飛虎將軍廟	10AM: Visit to Military Mausoleum for General Hi Kosho (飛虎將軍廟/鎮安堂飛虎將軍廟)
Local Restaurant	12PM: Dialogue with Mr. Lin and the students from National Cheng Kung University			
City	4PM: Dialogue with Mr. Hsieh, Lung-Chieh (謝龍介) from KMT and Chang Hsin Pei (Translator)			
3	8月14日		林百貨店前	9AM: Comfort Women Memorial Ceremony
			台南市美術館二館	10AM: Film screening of "Shusenjo" in Chinese (《主戰場》紀錄片放映會)
		City	PM: Working lunch and dialogue (Miki Dezaki, Mr. 謝)	
4	8月15日	Taipei	Ōng lok-tek Memorial Museum	3:30PM: Visit to Ōng lok-tek Memorial
			National Museum of Taiwan Literature	Learn about the Taiwan literature including the period of Japanese colonial era in Taiwan.
			Departure	From Tainan to Taipei
5	8月16日	Shanghai	City	11 AM: Dialogue with Dr. Kang
			AMA Museum	1PM: Visit to AMA Museum and dialogue with Jonah Khu
Departure	From Taipei to Shanghai			
6	8月17日		Jiao Tong University / Bai Xian Asia Institute	3 PM: Alumni Dialogue with Ms. Chao, Mr. Aso, and Ms. Laura
				Evening: Gala dinner and dialogue about marriage and partnership (Moderation)
7	8月18日		Departure	From Shanghai to Tokyo

Figure 1: Detailed schedule with the names of the stakeholders of the research

List of Stakeholders

For all the stakeholders in Taiwan and Shanghai, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for warmly welcoming me as well as providing me an opportunity to conduct this field work.

<Stakeholders in Taiwan>

1. Mr. Chang Hsin Pei (Translator and personal secretariat for Mr. Hsieh)
2. Ms. Chiu Yen Kuo /郭秋燕, Owner of Sunrise Hotel, volunteer at Military Mausoleum for General Hi Kosho
3. Mr. Hsieh, Lung-Chieh /謝龍介, Politician, Kuomintang Chinese Nationalist Party
4. Mr. Jonah Khu , Field producer
5. Mr. Lin Shenjing / 林深靖, 平行政府
6. Mr. Miki Dezaki (Filmmakers, creator of Shusenjo)
7. Dr. Shu-Hua Kan, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, National Taipei University
8. Mr. Yang Ta, Staff, AMA Museum

<Stakeholders in Shanghai; Panelists on August 16th>

- Mr. Yutaka Aso, Chairman of Aso Cement Co., Ltd.
- Ms. Laura Cozijnsen, Founder of Lighthouse Consultant Ltd.
- Ms. Ronna Chao, Chief Executive Officer, Bai Xian Asia Institute

List of Resources

- Hikoshogun. <https://aoisystems.jp/hikoshogun/>
- Hsieh, Lung-Chieh. <https://www.ly.gov.tw/EngPages/List.aspx?nodeid=55247>
- Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association. (2022). 台湾における対日世論調査. <https://www.koryu.or.jp/business/poll/>
- Mio, Y. (2022, March 25). 台湾で日本人を祀る—鬼から神への現代人類学. Keio Institute of East Asian Studies.
- Narutaka, S.(2012, December 14). 日本統治下の台湾. 株式会社平凡社.
- Shu-Hua, K. (2023). Taiwanese Comfort Women Survivors and Their Families: The Complexity of Identity, Motherhood, and Intergenerational Implications. McGill University
- Shu-Hua, K. (2022, February 25). Toward a Humanistic Discourse: Approaches to Gaining Public Support for Taiwanese Comfort Women. Oxford.

- Ong lok-Tek. (2021, August 9). 「昭和」を生きた台湾青年.株式会社草思社.
- Thomas J. Ward and William D. Lay. (2019, March 1). The Unusual Case of Taiwan. E-International Relations.
- Y's Consulting Group. (2019, September 11) . 日本人が慰安婦像に蹴り、国民党が反発.
<https://www.ys-consulting.com.tw/news/79189.html>
- Zhang Zhiqi (張智琦). (2018, September 12). 藤井実彦と、台湾における「慰安婦」議論の盲点について. 苦勞網. <https://www.cooloud.org.tw/node/91498>

Visual Resources



Left: The statue of the comfort woman in Tainan City on August 14, 2024
Middle and right: Frayer of ceremony on August 14, 2024



Left: The ticket of film screening on August 14th, 2024
Right: Group photo of the key stakeholders at the ceremony on August 14th, 2024