

Former Comfort Women as Touristic Objects in South Korea

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Introduction

In 1999 a Comfort Women Museum [*Nanumui Jip*, or Comfort House] was built in Kwangju County, on the outskirts of Seoul, South Korea through donations received mainly from members of South Korea's largest Buddhist order. The museum is devoted to an exploration and (re)presentation of the history of former military sex slaves, or Comfort Women, serving Japanese soldiers immediately prior to and throughout the Second World War. The main purpose of the museum, according to those who run it, is to expose this previously hidden history through visual and other sensory displays, and to educate Japanese and Korean citizens about this deep wound in the history of these two nations.

The major theme that is behind virtually all of the displays in the museum and the commentary by the museum guide is that the Comfort Women issue is yet to be resolved. This is because neither an official apology nor compensation to the Comfort Women have been made by the Japanese government. Indeed, the museum itself houses a research centre with several full-time researchers devoted to the task of collecting historical evidence and testimonies, and advocating on behalf of the former Comfort Women. This centre also organises weekly rallies outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in which former Comfort Women are the central participants and subjects. These displays and activities together place the museum within a strongly activist framework.

This chapter explores the way in which a particular history of sexual exploitation and repression along gendered, national and class lines has been transformed into a subject of touristic display and consumption through an exploration of the newly completed Comfort Women museum. I also discuss tourist's motivations for visiting the museum, which differ somewhat from the quest for pleasure associated with many other forms of tourism. The museum is an important step in exposing and understanding the system of Japanese militarised prostitution during and leading up to World War Two. For the vast majority of tourists a visit to the museum also enables them to personally achieve a sense of closure on the Comfort

Women issue. This, paradoxically, sits awkwardly with the discursive intent of the museum as a space brimming with activist meaning.

Museums have recently become important subjects of discussion in tourism, particularly in relation to questions of building national identity (see, for example Kaplan 1996 and Karp and Lavine 1991 and Morales–Moreno 1996). Morales–Moreno (1996), for example, discusses the National Museum of Mexico in terms of the construction of “patriotic identity” . In the case of national museums the authorship of the “texts” that inform museum displays resides with state authorities. Indeed, the state is often highly implicated in nation–building processes through tourism, whether it be through museums, cultural and ethnic tourism or heritage tourism experiences (see, for example, Adams 1998). More recently, and in concert with the focus on the museum–tourism–identity nexus, considerable attention has also been devoted to the role of folk and ethnic villages in the construction of national identity (see, for example, Yea, in press). Wood (1997: 4–5) summarises this change in focus neatly when he states that the previous focus on, “sites of direct host–guest interaction” , has been matched by “an interest in how the encounter between tourist and locals is profoundly structured by other, often ‘invisible’ actors, including the host state” .

Issues surrounding museums and folk villages as new sites of tourism are also taken up by Delany (1992). Drawing on Shields in her discussion of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation, she argues that, “...spatial practices are concretised in the landscape. Such practices ‘articulate’ the multitudinous possibilities of sites. They are part of the constitution of the qualitative reality of sites as places where certain events and actions are known and expected to take place” (1992: 137). This Chapter extends this focus on museums as tourist spaces with profoundly political meaning(s) asserted both by the organisation behind the development of museum displays and consumed by tourists. Through discussions with Korean and Japanese tourists visiting the Comfort Women Museum it is asserted that tourists use the Museum as a site through which to variously assert activism, identify with anti–colonial/ nationalistic discourses in Korea, and achieve a sense of closure of the Comfort Women issue.

The chapter begins by briefly situating discussion of the Comfort Women museum within the context of research on the nexus between tourism and human sexuality. It then provides a short background on the Japanese system of military sexual slavery and the recent exposition of this issue internationally. The discussion about the Comfort Women museum itself

draws on my reading of the displays in the museum, the guide's commentary and comments by Japanese and Korean visitors to the museum collected from the official museum guest book and personal discussions with them.

Tourism and Human Sexuality

In the growing body of research exploring the relationship(s) between tourism and human sexuality two themes have come to form the basis of most studies. The first is sex tourism, that is tourism where the primary purpose is to engage in sexual relations/ liaisons with members of the destination country or region (see Hall 1994, Truong 1983). Here the focus is variously on the impacts of sex tourism for local women and men, the perpetuation of colonial hierarchies and relations through sexual exploitation of non-Western Other(s), and the spread of HIV/ AIDS. The second area focuses on the transgressive dimensions of travel and sexual relations. In this case much of the emerging research explores the association of travel with escapism, including sexual license and deviation from accepted social and behavioural norms. Enloe neatly summarises this intent for Western men, "If the women are of a different culture, the male tourist feels he has entered a region where he can shed civilisation's constraints, where he is freed from the standards of behaviour imposed by respectable women back home" (1989: 28). Other studies (see Thomas 2000, Khan et al 2000 and Chapters.. in this volume) have begun to explore this notion of escaping accepted norms and constraints for different age groups (for example, school or college groups) travelling in different geographical spaces and tourism zones (for example, resorts or backpacking). Within postcolonial studies several very good pieces have also recently appeared which consider the ways in which travel writing during colonial (and neo-colonial) times has produced enduring representations of non-Western women as sexualised Others (see, for example, McClintock 1995 and Manderson 1997). Related research has extended the theme of representation through analyses of the way sexual imagery is used in tourism destination marketing (which can normally be distinguished from advertising of sex tours) (see, for example, Oppermann and McKinley 1997).

Whilst these are worthwhile subjects to appear under the heading of tourism-human sexuality relations, there is a range of other manifestations of this relationship which have yet to be explored. One such area is the touristic display and consumption of histories of sexual deviance or exploitation. As the catastrophic events of the First and Second World

Wars, a variety of civil wars, and repressive nationalistic and political movements become the subject of representation, memorialisation and commodification, their production through touristic mediums, particularly museums, has expanded enormously (Lennon and Foley 2000, Winter and Sivan 2000 and Werbner 1998). Thus, along with histories of genocide, large-scale massacres and so on, histories of sexual exploitation in times of conflict and war have begun to emerge framed within touristic spaces.

Such a subject differs from the research areas identified above, which tend to privilege either the host communities or the traveller/ tourist in fairly well-established ways. In both cases the subject (tourist or local) directly experiences sexuality and/ or sexual relations in tourism. The touristic consumption of histories/ representations of sexuality presents another dimension to this nexus, one in which a history of sexuality is objectified, observed and interpreted from the position of a tourist. But neither is the tourist simply a passive consumer of these histories: her/ his visit to the Comfort Women Museum can be an act that is fraught with as much political meaning as an encounter between an Australian male tourist and a Thai sex worker.

This chapter thus explores this less common interface between human sexuality and tourism. The chapter focuses on the way in which an historical case of sexually repressed and exploited Others have come to be the object of touristic construction and consumption. Unlike discussions of sex tourism, or issues around sexual license associated with travel, in the Comfort Women museum the visitor/ tourist is not the perpetrator or subject of sexual relations and liaisons. The tourist does not engage directly in the consumption of sex and is, rather, an observer of material and sensory manifestations of a complex historical system of militarised prostitution. Nonetheless, the tourist can become inserted into the politics of the Comfort Women issue by visiting the Museum.

Former Comfort Women and the History of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery

Until recently the issue of the former Comfort Women remained hidden and was the subject of much speculation (see Howard 1995 for an explanation of why the Comfort Women issue did not emerge publicly until the 1990s). Research has recently uncovered the extent and characteristics of the Japanese system of militarised prostitution in the 1930s and 1940s. The collective findings of this research may be summarised as follows:

- The Japanese government policy of recruiting women to work as prostitutes for Japanese military personnel began in the early 1930s and lasted until the conclusion of World War Two
- Estimates of the number of women involved range generally between 200, 000 to 300, 000 women
- These women were drawn from several countries in the Asia–Pacific region that were either Japanese colonies or spheres of influence, including Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Japan itself
- Despite the multiplicity of nations from which the women were drawn, it is estimated that Korean women comprised between 80 and 90 per cent of all Comfort Women
- Approximately 80 per cent of all the Comfort Women were between 14 and 18 years of age when recruited
- The vast majority of the women drawn into this system of militarised prostitution were done so unwillingly, with most being told that they would be engaged in paid employment in Japanese factories or as domestic servants
- Hicks (1994: 19) estimates that the average overall ratio of soldiers to Comfort Women was 50:1

In addition, it was ascertained that the Comfort Women system entailed gross human rights violations for those involved. Stories have recently been circulated to the effect that, not only were most of the women held against their wills, but that many suffered enormous and long term physical and psychological damage as well as social discrimination and were ostracised in their own countries when (and if) they managed to return.

This issue came to public attention in South Korea in November 1990 when The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan was formed with the purpose of “recovering the human rights of the comfort women” . Since the first public testimony by a former comfort woman, Kim Han Soon was given in August 1991 over 150 victims have come forward to testify about their experiences. Most, however, are unwilling to face the shame and public humiliation they expect would result from declaring their histories as comfort women, since, as Hicks suggests, “Given the high moral value attached to chastity, the comfort women invariably emerged from their wartime experiences defiled, yet unable to accuse their abusers. They had everything to gain by keeping silent and everything to lose by making accusations” (1994: 21). Nonetheless, as a result of personal testimonies of a small number of former Comfort Women themselves, as well as some testimonies from Japanese soldiers and

doctors, it was revealed that, unless seriously ill or pregnant (and sometimes notwithstanding this) women were forced to serve between 10 and 40 men per day, seven days a week. There was no respite during menstruation or illness. Many of the women who fell pregnant or contracted serious cases of sexually transmitted diseases were abandoned and left to die or killed. When Japan lost the Second World War, many of the Comfort Women were executed by the Japanese soldiers before committing suicide themselves.

Despite the increasing international profile and emotiveness of the Comfort Women issue, the Japanese government still refuses to make formal apologies to the women involved and pay reparations, arguing that all wartime claims were settled through postwar treaties. The Japanese government helped set up a private fund (the Asian Women's Fund, or AWF) offering US\$17,000 to each victim. Most of the former Comfort Women, however, have refused to accept payments made under this Fund. In April 1998 the South Korean government ended its own efforts to seek compensation from the Japanese government for the victims. Instead, the Korean government paid out a lump sum of US\$22,700 to each victim, and offers a monthly allowance of approximately US\$417 (based on 1998 figures).

The Korean government has consequently left the responsibility for political advocacy and action on behalf of the former Comfort Women to a number of non-government organisations (NGOs) based in Korea ? such as the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan ? and in Japan, where the Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET) has taken up the case of the former Comfort Women. Since 1992 in Korea, weekly demonstrations organised by the Korean Council have been taking place outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul which, incidentally, has also become a tourist attraction (Piper 2001). The Council also provides the women with counselling, medical support and health care and arrangements for funeral procedures.

With the Japanese government refusing to take responsibility for the resolution of the Comfort Women issue, and the transference of efforts in South Korea from the government to third sector organisations, transnational activism on the Comfort Women issue has been stepped up (see Piper 2000). In December 2000 a Women's International War Crimes Tribunal was held in Tokyo on the subject of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery during and prior to World War Two. The Tribunal comprised five internationally recognised human rights figures as judges, including

Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, former President of the International War Crimes Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia and P.N. Bahanwati, Vice-President of the UN Committee on Human Rights. Whilst the “Tribunal, as a people’s and women’s initiative, has no real power to enforce its judgements, it nonetheless carries moral authority…” (Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal Information 2000). The Tribunal found the Japanese government guilty of crimes against women during World War Two, including sexual slavery, rape and other forms of sexual violence, enslavement, torture, deportation, murder and extermination. The Japanese government, however, again refused to accept the judgement of the Tribunal.

Visiting the Comfort Women Museum

The establishment of the Comfort Women Museum is part of this non-official effort by various NGOs in South Korea to address the Comfort Women issue. The Comfort Women Museum opened in August 1999 in Kwangju County, about 45 kilometres from the southeastern outskirts of the South Korean capital, Seoul. It was built with private donations by South Korea’s largest Buddhist order, Chogye. The museum is a two storey concrete building with a large upstairs section devoted to the researchers addressing former Comfort Women issues. One of these researchers acts as guide to visitors of the Museum. Next to the Museum is a small apartment block where seven former Comfort Women now live. Whilst not themselves past of the museum experience, visitors are sometimes invited to meet some of the women and even share a meal with them. Most of the women, however, refuse to meet with Japanese visitors. Others, such as Kim Soon-Duk, say “I feel anger over Japan’s refusal to take responsibility, but I would like to thank all the individual Japanese who came all the way here to listen to our stories” .

The museum comprises several interconnected sections beginning with a room which houses photographs and boards containing factual and background information about the Comfort Women and the system of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. From there, one follows a corridor leading down several stairs to a dark and cold hallway designed to simulate the sensory conditions experienced by the former Comfort Women. To further understand these conditions, on the right side of the hallway behind a large window is a small (2 metre square) room containing an old, dirty looking single mattress, a metal washstand and a broom. Our guide tells us that this display is really “too kind” and that in reality the living and working quarters for most former Comfort Women would have been

much worse. On the left side of the hallway is a glass display cabinet where a half-century old condom and other associated relics are presented. As one walks up the stairs at the other end of the hallway pictures drawn by former Comfort Women as part of the healing process line the stairway. This leads to a third room containing pictures of some of the former Comfort Women, a shrine and the eerie sound of each woman's voice as her photograph is illuminated. Opposite this area stand more glass display cases containing historical documents about the former Comfort Women. Included here are both a Japanese and a Korean school textbook, neither of which contain reference to the Comfort Women's role in the War, an official register of Comfort Women at one particular station, a ticket which allowed a soldier one visit to a comfort station and so on. Also on display are items owned by some of the women during their lives in the comfort stations. Finally, climbing a last flight of stairs, we come to a room where more paintings by former Comfort Women are displayed, along with a variety of medical instruments and medicines given to the women to control sexually transmitted diseases.

The Comfort Women Museum is not a highly commercial operation, and admission is by donation. Given its remote location and difficult access, tourists do not visit on a large-scale. Most visitors are either Korean or Japanese and most visit in small groups of three to five persons. Indeed the Comfort Women Museum does not actively encourage other nationalities to visit since the commentary (verbal and written) is only available in Korean and Japanese.

Sex, Suffering and Touristic Consumption in the Comfort Women Museum

One of the more notable features of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is the increasing tendency to frame experiences of historical suffering, including sexual exploitation and repression, within a touristic medium. Many commentators have discussed the ways in which tourism, particularly as it is encountered in museums and statuary, allows people to experience or recreate conditions and spaces of ethnic, racial and sexual suffering and violence, whether they subvert or support state-centred constructions of that history. The Comfort Women Museum is no exception in this regard. Visiting the museum can be interpreted as a form of touristic consumption with political resonance. This is clear when one examines the ways the tourists themselves view their experience of, and motivation for visiting the Museum.

In this part of the Chapter I discuss the various ways in which tourists consume the Comfort Women Museum. These are gauged by informal interviews with thirteen Japanese and 26 Korean visitors to the Museum over a four day period in April 2000. Upon arrival at the Museum these visitors were asked about their motivations for visiting and, afterwards, about their responses to the presentation of the history of Japanese military sexual slavery in the Museum. Most visitors to the Museum (in general and amongst those interviewed for this research) are men and women in their fifties and sixties ? those who still have personal recollections of Japanese colonisation of the Korean peninsula (1910–1945), the Second World War and the division of the nation into two ideologically opposed regimes of North and South (1948). Amongst the younger visitors to the Museum the majority are women, and many are Korean university students. The vast majority of visitors to the Museum are Korean and Japanese, in accordance with the linguistic parameters of the displays and commentaries mentioned above. The interviews yielded three loosely identifiable motivations for visiting the Museum: pilgrimage/ ritual, protest/activism and healing/historicisation.

Pilgrimage and Ritual

All but three of the Koreans interviewed for this research saw their visit to the museum as an act of pilgrimage, similar to that identified by Delany (1992). In her discussion of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation Delany introduces the concepts of “ritual space” and “pilgrimage destinations” . She suggests that, “One way in which the CMC makes itself meaningful is that, as a shrine containing national treasures, it can be seen by Canadians as an appropriate pilgrimage destination where their experiences of national culture/ identity will help transform them into ‘good citizens’ . All Canadians should feel a certain obligation to visit ... the CMC as an integral part of that pilgrimage” (1992: 140). Quoting Moore (1980), she continues, the CMC recognises, “the need [of tourists] to become transformed through having visited a symbolically significant destination. Terms such as ‘sacred space’ , ‘obligations as a citizen’ and ‘ritual’ are used repeatedly” (1992: 143). Whilst the Comfort Women Museum does not offer tourists the opportunity to consume discourses of the nation, it does nonetheless provide a “symbolically significant destination” for understanding the Comfort Women issue.

Many Korean visitors commented on the significance of their visit in terms of a duty or responsibility. A Korean man who was a boy under Japanese

colonial rule spoke of the Museum visit as “something he would encourage every Korean to do as their duty to their country and to the memory of these grandmothers [*harumonim*]” . In fact, most Korean visitors spoken to understood their visit to the Museum in terms of a duty (to the former Comfort Women) and responsibility (as Korean citizens) to both understanding and publicly recognising “our history” . A younger Korean women stated, for example, that because she was never educated about the Comfort Women at school, she felt that she “had to make this visit to the Museum to demonstrate that she was sympathetic to these women” . In a similar vein a middle aged Korean women said that she felt “obliged” visit to the Museum because it acknowledges such an important part of Korea’ s history.

Protest and Activism

Because the Comfort Women issue was deliberately covered up by both the Japanese and Korean governments, engaging directly with this history through the Museum becomes a political act of transgression of accepted levels of knowledge about the Comfort Women system. As one Korean woman in her fifties commented, “Our government has kept this issue from us in the past. We were so shocked to hear about the Comfort Women, but now we want to show the government that they can’ t keep this from us any longer” .

Younger Korean visitors also spoke in terms of a responsibility to the former Comfort Women and to historical truth. Like many of the other Korean visitors who grew up during the period of Japanese colonial rule, visiting the Comfort Women allows young Koreans to contribute to nationalistic and anti-colonial discourses that remain deeply embedded in Korean society. Within these discourses both former Comfort Women and Korean prostitutes working in US military camp towns in South Korea are seen as the embodiment of national suffering and violation at the hands of the Japanese and Americans respectively (see Kim 1998 and Yang 1998). In interpreting this discourse Yang (1998: 130) suggests, “The underlying assumption... is that since our Korean women had been humiliated, so to have all Koreans been victimised by Japanese. This is because nationalism holds that “We Koreans are one and the same body” . The former Comfort Women are thus the embodiment and a metaphor for *all* Koreans suffering under imperialism.

One female university student claimed that she felt it was an important part of her education to visit the Museum since “our government hasn’ t really

made much effort to tell us about this part of our history” . Nonetheless, she, like virtually every other Korean visitor in this study, *already* knew the details of the Comfort Women issue before making the visit. Her visit was prompted by, “...the need to demonstrate a commitment to people who have suffered at the hands of foreigners” . Another young Korean women identified a similar motivation for her visit to the Museum, suggesting that, “The Comfort Women are one of the biggest symbols of the abuse of our country by foreign powers. I feel that by coming here I am showing the Korean government that what it is doing on this issue is not acceptable and that I support the efforts of the NGOs who are trying to help achieve justice for these women” . Thus, unlike the infamous street protests and violence that have characterised Korean student movements in the past, the Museum provides a different context in which to express anti-imperialistic and nationalistic sentiments. The former Comfort Women, as metaphors for foreign occupation and colonisation of Korea, are important symbols in these populist discourses.

For Japanese visitors as well the main, but often implicit, motivation for visiting the Museum is related to their desire to support the Comfort Women’ s calls for compensation and the righteousness of their claims against the Japanese government. Thus, Japanese visitors see themselves as ambassadors, reflecting the good Japanese citizen who stands apart from any of the actions of the Japanese government regarding the Comfort Women issue. As one middle-aged Japanese couple stated, “The Japanese government would never make anything like this Museum. They don’ t want any kind of public acknowledgment of this issue. So for us, visiting this Museum is kind of a way to say that we don’ t agree with our government on this issue” . Similarly, one member of a group of young Japanese female tourists, reflected on her motivation for visiting the Museum in the following way: “I feel that it is my duty, as a Japanese citizen, to visit this place. I also hope to meet some of the old women and tell them that at least some Japanese people do feel sorry for this issue” . Another young Japanese women made similar claims to the extent that she saw the act of visiting the Museum as a “way for Koreans to see that in Japan there are people who are concerned to set history straight on this issue” . In the case of all three interviewees the act of visiting the Museum was related to the desire to create a distance from the “official” Japanese government position on the subject. The visitors also wished for this expression to be made publicly and in a manner that could be acknowledged by the former Comfort Women themselves. The Museum, as a public and activist space, is the ideal location in which to make this point.

Healing and Historicisation

Amongst both Japanese and Korean visitors alike, there was a strong sense of personal healing or closure through visiting the Comfort Women Museum. References to the Comfort Women issue as history were made by many visitors. In the Museum's visitor's book one Korean man (age unknown) stated, "This Museum exposes the topic of the Comfort Women for the public to see. It is good to know that this kind of place exists for our future generations to know this history". A middle-aged Korean man made a similar comment: "This Museum puts the Comfort Women issue in our history, for everyone to see and know".

For many tourists the visit to the Museum not only enables the issue to be placed in the nation's history, but also to be placed in their own pasts.

"I feel better about myself for visiting this Museum. It gives me a feeling of pride when I can say to my friends that I know about this history and have made the effort to come to terms with it". Coming to terms with the Comfort Women issue by simply visiting the Museum is an important motivation for almost half the tourists interviewed during this research. Phrases like "putting the issue in the past", "feeling closure" and "helping to heal" were common ones amongst interviewees. Ironically, however, many of the Museum displays and signboards have an activist intent running through them. The ability of some tourists to feel they can place the Comfort Women issue in history through their visit subverts this activist intent to some degree.

Conclusion

Most Korean visitors to the Comfort Women Museum combined their visit with a social/ family outing. Most Japanese visitors are on holidays in Korea such that the visit to the Museum is firmly embedded within a broader travel/ tourist experience. Despite the theme of the Museum and the emotional intensity of the experience, for most visitors spoken to during this research it is nonetheless part of a broader recreational/ touristic excursion. It thus offers the opportunity to consider a different kind of interface between tourism and human sexuality.

As Sibley (1992) reminds us, tourists (and consumers more generally) seek destinations that fulfil some experiential and social ? and increasingly political ? function. These destinations are become more and more tied to sites like museums, memorials and folk villages. In the case of the Comfort Women Museum visitors are able to combine a tourism experience with a

nationalistic/ political act. For many Korean and Japanese visitors to the Museum their experience is framed by a conscious political motivation established prior to the actual visit.

For some the Korean visitors to the Museum this motivation is tied to an activism that has its origins in anti-colonial and nationalistic discourses in which the former Comfort Women are central metaphors. For many others the experience resembles a pilgrimage in which an important (and largely hidden) part of Korean history can be revealed. This is also a political act to the extent that it is transgressing accepted (state-sanctioned) knowledge about the Comfort Women issue. Finally, many see their visit to the Museum as a means of finally coming to terms with the Comfort Women issue and, moreover, of being a final act of responsibility towards the subject. In other words, many Koreans view their visit to the Museum as, implicitly, a means of not having to take any further responsibility or action on the matter. This is highly ironic given that the Museum also contains a staff devoted to research and activism on behalf of the former Comfort Women.

For Japanese visitors, the act of visiting the Museum is a way of protesting against the Japanese government's continual inability to deal with the Comfort Women issue in a satisfactory manner. In this case individual Japanese citizens see themselves as deliberately distanced from the official Japanese stance on the issue and examples of a morally conscious or progressive citizen. The Museum provides a public context in which to make such a declaration.

The construction of a museum in South Korea which is devoted to the representation and display of the history of the Former Comfort Women and system of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery raises interesting issues about sexual exploitation, violence and repression as subjects of touristic consumption. Unlike some other issues which fall under this heading, such as sex tourism, travel writing and the projection of sexual fantasies and so on, consumption of Comfort Women histories is not considered exploitative. Nor is the tourist experience framed in a direct sexual liaison or relationship. Rather, it is expressed in a public space, which mediates the tourist's interaction with, and knowledge of the former Comfort Women. In a similar fashion the tourist-subject relationship is not premised on highly inequitable interactions in the Comfort Women Museum, particularly given that the women themselves have played a central role in constructing the displays. Nonetheless, for virtually all the visitors to the Museum interviewed during this research, the experience was centred

around the needs of the tourist to act out a political role and posit a political stance in relation to the Comfort Women issue. In this way, the Comfort Women Museum becomes an important place for understanding the multiple expressions of the relationship between tourism and histories of sexual violence and exploitation.

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