

The Politics of Trauma and Integrity

Stories of Japanese “Comfort Women”

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The victim-survivor-activist

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4 **Shirota Suzuko**

The victim-survivor-activist

Introduction

This chapter narrates the post-war trauma story of Shirota Suzuko, which makes visible her exercise of political agency as she used her voice to break the conspiracy of silence. As argued in Chapter 1, the notion of political agency assumes the capacity of a victim to transform herself from a silenced non-subject to a political and historical subject who creates the counter-narratives to dominant memory/history, thus challenging unequal power relationships based on gender, class and race. The gendered, classed and raced “Other” is denied the capacity of both exercising agency and formulating political subjectivity (Motta 2017). Her silence has a complex construction because it is caused by a combination of the conspiracy of silence and self-silencing for her survival. Silence is, therefore, not a unidimensional sign of non-agency (Motta 2018). Silence can be a form of agency in a situation where a victim of subjugation chooses to be silent as the only way to survive in the social world. This type of agency is indicative of agency inherent in human beings, which always seeks better conditions; however, it cannot be counted as political agency because it contributes to reconstructing dominant memory/history, which perpetuates ‘the boundary of the political’ (Motta 2017:7).

The listener

As Linde’s theory of the self (1993) suggests in Chapter 1, “comfort women” survivors had considerable difficulties in creating their coherent life stories through the interaction between individual identity construction and the social world. It is thus critical to analyse the life stories of the survivors with a focus on how they struggled to speak of their trauma. In this context, being able to tell their uncommunicable stories of trauma is, per se, an act of political agency as the argument with respect to agency demonstrates in Chapter 1. Shirota was initially sold to geisha venues by her father and then became a “comfort woman” in order to pay her family’s debts owed to her geisha house owners. In her post-war life, she encountered her listener/witness who assisted her to construct her respective narratives, and which supported her to finally

break her silence in her own name, Mihara Yoshie. Trauma adds different dynamics to intersubjectivity since the recovery process from trauma through narrative construction requires others to act as their listeners. In this process, the trauma victim acts as a storyteller, who regains her own voice in order to create alternative history through the dialogue with her listener. This is a transformative process of the oppressed non-subject into the political subject of knowledge production, which asks the question of ‘whose memory should be remembered?’ The knowledge created out of this remembering of invisibilised histories constitutes counter-dominant knowledge; that is, other readings of the past and present. As a Holocaust survivor and psychoanalyst, Dori Laub conceptualises, ‘the listener’ to trauma victims becomes ‘a party to the creation of knowledge’ (Felman & Laub 1992:57):

[T]he listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. ... The listener, therefore, by definition partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past.

(Felman & Laub 1992:57–8)

A storyteller of trauma thus needs a listener who can share the unbearable experience through narratives. This ‘shareability of traumatic experiences through narration’ (Peng 2017:126) indicates that storytelling is a collective process. In other words, the narrator and the listener constitute a community for the creation of alternative history. The community is thus a ‘key place of the reinvention of the political’ (Motta 2014:28) and storytelling is collective, collaborative and dialogical.¹

‘The listener’ (Figure 4.1) for Shirota (Figure 4.2) was Christian pastor Fukatsu Fumio (1909–2000) as well as her inner self. Above and beyond her 1971 autobiography based on the 1958 testimony in hospital and the 1986 radio interview, Shirota left a large number of writings, including diaries and letters, along with some drawings and paintings at her final home, *Kanita*. Shirota started to keep a diary on 12 February 1956, when she was advised by Kubushiro Ochimi² to maintain such a diary after moving in to *Jiairyō*, a women’s rehabilitation centre.

Keeping a diary is a method for ‘listening’ to her inner voice. It indicates that this practice signifies a dialogue with her inner self over the meaning of her experience through the prism of the past–present and the public–personal relations. In this manner, this everyday practice of self-dialogue facilitates self-reflection on her subjectivity. Therefore, keeping a diary is an everyday practice of the political, as well as evidencing the moments and practices of her active agency. Shirota’s case implies that the ‘listener’ in storytelling can



Figure 4.1 Fukatsu Fumio. Courtesy of *Kanita*.

be both external and internal. She kept a journal until 1992, a year before she passed away, and in 1980 wrote about how she felt about it in her diary, *Kamisama no gokeikaku* [God's plan] (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 12):

Because I have written everything about my complaints and discontents, I suppose all the irritation and frustration that I have felt is gone. It is important to confess my honest feelings. ... It is wonderful for me to keep writing every day like this.

My fieldwork interviews with those who cared for Shirota, combined with her diaries and letters to Fukatsu, uncover her individual trauma as a victim of the sexual slavery system. As introduced in Chapter 1, Linde's theory of the self (1993) focuses on three dimensions: the continuity of the self through time (the past–present relation), the interaction between the self and social world (the public–private relation) and self-reflexivity (ethical judgement). By focusing on Linde's three aspects of the self, the foregoing analysis addresses how Shirota strove to create her coherent life story, making visible her political



Figure 4.2 Shirota Suzuko. Courtesy of Kanita.

agency, which manifests itself as a process of self-transformation and, at the same time, challenges the dominant memory/history of the Japanese military “comfort women” system.

A poststructuralist feminist, Kimura Maki (2008) raises a fundamental inquiry about the formation of agency in the case of “comfort women”. Her research draws upon narrative research, which centres on ‘individual personal experiences’ (Rustin 2000:40–1, as cited in Kimura 2008:6) and their linguistic, cultural construction (Crossley 2000:527, as cited in Kimura 2008:6). By incorporating Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concept of ‘subalterns’ agency (Spivak 1988, 1999) and Louis Althusser’s theory of ‘interpellation’ as expanded by Judith Butler (1997a, 1997b), Kimura concludes that individuals are recognised as ‘subjects’ when an individual voice synchronises with a particular ideology/discourse (Kimura 2016:185–92). According to Kimura, ‘[t]estimonies, the representation of particular voices’ should be understood as a space where a complex process of subject formation takes place (Kimura 2016:188). In the case of “comfort women”, as she describes, in the 1990s when the “comfort women” discourses underwent ideological changes from military prostitutes to sexual slaves, survivors’ voices were heard. At that moment, they became subjects whose agency was recognised (Kimura 2008:13). It takes the form of an ‘assertive agency as an outcast victim’ (Wakabayashi 2003:107). Kimura calls this process ‘the subject formation’. She argues that survivors’ testimonies are ‘the site of their subject-formation’

and that they are ‘not positioned as helpless victims but are actively involved in the creation of their own narratives and their own selves’ (Kimura 2008:6). In applying the concept of ‘subject formation’ into the “comfort women” case, Kimura aims to transcend ‘the patriarchal dichotomy’ of prostitutes/sex slaves (Kimura 2008:16). Given that the binary concept of prostitution/sexual slavery contributes to ‘partisan politics’ polarising Japanese revisionists and transnational feminists (Kimura 2008; Soh 2008) while excluding Japanese “comfort women” from the transnational feminist activism, the concept of subject formation will help to understand the agency construction process of Japanese “comfort women”. Subjectivity is contradictory and it is from within these contradictions that female agency can arise in this context.

By examining these three main concepts of survival, resilience and dignity, this chapter seeks how Shirota tackled her trauma in relation to Herman’s three stages of recovery (1992): stage 1: establishment of stability for survival; stage 2: subject formation by building a coherent narrative of the self; and stage 3: reconnection to the external world.

Stage 1: establishment of stability for survival

Prior to stage 1, the trauma victim experiences the critical moment to choose either the ‘flight’ mode or the ‘fight’ mode in response to ‘danger’ (Herman 1992:199). The flight response serves as a strategy to ‘obliterate fear’ (Herman 1992:199) by numbing her senses or escaping from the unbearable reality with the abuse of drugs or alcohol. Shirota initially adopted the flight mode, giving in to despair and abandoning herself by ‘choosing gambling and drugs’ (Shirota 1971:89–90). She, nonetheless, demonstrated acts of resistance to the hierarchy of power within the border of the political in which there seemed no choice left except total subordination. At this pre-political stage, her first step to challenge the patriarchal domination in her post-war life illustrates her efforts to reclaim control of her own life from male hands because she had grown tired of being men’s ‘sex toy’ during her entire life (Shirota 1971:83).

It took tremendous courage for Shirota to leave the abusers, such as her patrons and brothel owners. In return, she obtained mobility in seeking places to work. However, social stigma against former prostitutes never allowed her to have a substantive chance of social mobility. For survival, she therefore kept working as a prostitute for the Allied Occupation Forces, which were referred to as “*pan pan*” in Japanese. She chose her clients carefully, as she said, ‘I snubbed those customers whom I didn’t like, even if they wanted to sleep with me’ (Shirota 1971:115). Even trapped within the boundary of gender and class, she still exercised everyday resistance in order to reclaim some degree of control over her own life; however, elements of her dignity and choice were curtailed. Nonetheless, the flight strategy kept her captured in the circle of re-traumatisation without any means of breaking the political border of patriarchal domination.

In 1955, when Shirota was working at a brothel in Kumamoto, she fell in love with a customer. He looked like her first love whom she had met during her geisha apprentice period. The new customer was a senior student at a university and four years younger than Shirota. They were in love. After his graduation, Shirota ran away from the brothel and eloped with her boyfriend to his home town in Tokyo. However, facing rejection from his family, both were so devastated that they attempted to commit double suicide by taking sleeping pills. Ultimately, Shirota was told by her medical doctor that her loved one had died. This tragedy deepened her sense of hollowness, while she was more desperate for something she could rely on (Shirota 1971:115–26). For Shirota, the establishment of both a physical and psychological sense of safety was fundamental to switching her strategy to the fight mode. The establishment of a sense of safety constitutes a foundation for the next stage of reconstructing her trauma story (Herman 1992:155). In order to speak the unspeakable, the trauma victim needs to be surrounded by reliable and trustworthy people in a place absent of potential abuse or violence (Herman 1992:155–74). To establish her sense of safety, Shirota required the provision of not only basic needs, including housing, food and grounding in social/occupational skills, but also a shelter that protected her from the hostile social situation.

In 1955, another tragedy hit Shirota. Her younger sister committed suicide. Shirota did not have a clue about her suicide; however, her sudden death made her strongly determined to wash her hands of prostitution by paying off her debts to her brothel owner in Kumamoto so as to pay a visit to her sister's tombstone. With the strong support and advice from a sixty-something Japanese American traveller from Hawaii, who deeply thanked Shirota for finding his priceless ring, she was still struggling to find a “new” job. Finally, she decided to go to Tokyo for her job hunting. While waiting for her train at a station, she happened to find an article about the women's rehabilitation centre, *Jiairyō*, in a weekly magazine, *Sandē Mainichi* (Shirota 1971:127–40). *Jiairyō* seemed to her a perfect haven because the organising entity *Kyōfūkai* was known as one of the most active feminist groups. Since its establishment in 1886, the group had sought the abolition of prostitution in Japan and developed activities that were effective in supporting the rehabilitation of prostituted women (Shirota 1971:11). She decided to move into *Jiairyō* instantly. As soon as she arrived at the organisation, she burst into tears with the feeling that she had finally come to the safe place.³

Even in the fight mode, trauma victims who have decided to cope with trauma are likely to fall into a trap during the initial stage of gaining stability. This trap is a form of numbing trauma, which is usually categorised as one of the flight modes. Shirota was trapped in this numbness at the beginning of stage 1. At *Jiairyō*, Shirota swore to complete her rehabilitation in order to integrate herself into the social world. As Fukatsu wrote *Atogaki* in 1958, Shirota meant ‘a fully rehabilitated person’ as a person ‘without a past’ (Fukatsu 1958). On 7 March 1956, she wrote in her diary: ‘I want to forget my past. ... I want to be born again with a brand-new body and

soul, and then start a new life' (Shirota 1956). At this point, she refused to accept her self-identity as a former prostitute and decided to erase it by creating her new identity. This illustrates a psychological self-defence strategy called 'self-as-other' (Rose 1999:170). On the surface, the eradication of the traumatised memory appears to help stabilise the victim. In reality, the outcome is the opposite, and the strategy of numbness is destructive to her since it prevents her from creating her coherent life history. In other words, she will never be able to heal because she has lost the way to move on to the second stage of life storytelling. Even though her capacity for religious faith and conversion to Christianity at *Jiairyō* gave Shirota the power to channel her predicaments into her empowerment for recovery, repression and negation of her traumatised memory continued to restrict her survival. For recovery from trauma, it is thus significant to go beyond the binary reactions of fight or flight and to move towards different ways of being and relating and of knowing oneself in the world.

Despite her initial impression of *Jiairyō* as a safe place, Shirota faced institutional and individual judgement based on the patriarchal dualism of "good" versus "bad" women. She was subjected to humiliation and stigmatisation as a former prostitute by other residents, who had previously committed minor crimes or who had run away from home. Shirota fought back against such acts of bullying as opposed to being silenced (Shirota 1971:156–7). Although her great level of determination and resilience revealed her agency for a potential transformation, even her small female community still refused to listen to her story of trauma. This exclusion by her new community pushed her back again to the narrative of the 'betrayal of trust' (Edkins 2003:4), which she had felt from her family and society. This feeling of betrayal re-confused her about whom she could really trust.

Her lack of a sense of stability in life at *Jiairyō* prevented Shirota, as a former prostitute, from being completely successful in her resistance or agency as a coming to wholeness and integrity; that is, transcending the political boundaries between what was allowed and what was not. In this first stage, listening to the inner voice of the self constitutes an integral part of building stability for survival and resistance against the 'conspiracy of silence' (Danieli 1998). When the inner listening ends up silencing her own voice of trauma, this initial stage becomes so unstable that her political agency as a survivor is jeopardised. At *Jiairyō*, recognising her new self-identity as a victim and survivor of prostitution in general, Shirota started to exercise her agency of resistance. She became active in rescuing other prostituted women facing the same fate as she did by appealing to them through the media. For example, she conducted a radio interview on the 1956 NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai) programme entitled '*Kieru Kanrakugai*' or 'Disappearing Pleasure Districts' (Kinoshita 2017:239). Over the course of the interview, she explained her reason for accepting the interview in her diary on 13 February 1956: 'I wish even one of my old friends will come to this women's centre for rehabilitation' (Shirota 1956).

Nearly a month later, all of a sudden, she exercised her agency as a survivor in an opposite way. She refused to grant any further interviews, writing again in her diary on 7 March 1956 that she did not want to be used by the media for their benefit and became concerned about stigmatising her family, fearing that her real identity had been disclosed (Shirota 1956). Her dialogue with her inner self through keeping a diary altered her way to exercise her agency, resulting in self-silencing. This self-reflection reveals the complexities and complicities of her agency as a survivor. It also uncovers the fragility of stage 1, illustrating the oscillating nature of trauma between a thin layer of resistance and multiple layers of silencing. Given that it is ‘the survivor’ who makes the choice between the two (Herman 1992:174), the establishment of stability is central to nurturing her political agency.

Jiairyō finally removed Shirota’s opportunity for establishing stage 1 by refusing to re-admit her after her initial seven-month hospitalisation, due to the multiple gynaecological diseases⁴ caused by her long-term prostitution (Shirota 1971:189). Given the mission and purpose of the women’s rehabilitation centre and the organiser, *Kyōfūkai*, it was overwhelmingly shocking for Shirota to face their betrayal of her trust because she had been thus far traumatised by the continuous betrayals of trust by both her family and society. Shirota reveals her feelings in her 1958 reflection on her past ordeals by writing them in 1965:

Whenever I desired to be loved, I was deceived and betrayed, resulting in being sold. ... I lost everything while dangerous diseases undermined my health so severely that I finally found myself lying on a bed in a gynaecological ward. ... What is left with me is desperation, fear of the diseases, unbearable mental pains, and hatred towards the betrayers.

(Shirota 1965, vol. 1)

Jiairyō’s rejection of Shirota’s re-entry completely devastated her to the point that she started to think of working as a prostitute again (Shirota 1971:180). This incident in Shirota’s life demonstrates how fragile the initial stage is in that all of her previous work in order to establish a stable life began to unravel, jeopardising her chances of survival. It also plays into the dominant narrative, which shames her as a “bad” woman who deserves her pain, thereby pushing her into closure and crisis.

Recognising the importance of safety to the trauma recovery process, after this experience, Fukatsu literally pulled Shirota out of a dangerous situation by providing her with a physical and psychological sense of safety that facilitated her growth. This bloomed into her political agency as the survivor of the civilian and the military sexual slavery systems. First, he provided Shirota with a temporary shelter and a caregiver in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, from 16 October 1957 to 20 March 1958. Then, he admitted her into a newly established rehabilitation centre for former prostitutes, *Izumiryō*. He

became the director of the centre run by the Bethesda *Houshijo Haha no Ie* (Mother's House of Schwester⁵). His unwavering support and continuous encouragement of her rehabilitation not only elicited trust from her heart frozen by mistrust and confrontation, but also kept enhancing her faith and commitment to rehabilitation.

This strong bond between Shirota and Fukatsu foregrounds the significance of collectiveness in recovering from trauma as an everyday practice of the political. Recovery cannot take place without connecting to other people (Herman 1992:133). In Herman's words, Fukatsu played 'the role of a witness and ally' who continued to empower her to 'confront the horrors of the past' (Herman 1992:175). On the one hand, he was the only person she 'trusted and respected with all her heart' (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 25). On the other, he considered Shirota as 'his teacher', as he wrote on 15 August 1985 for the afterword to the second edition of Shirota's biography:

Whenever I get lost about what to do for the residents [of this rehabilitation centre], she gives me suggestions. They come neither from what she has by nature or from what she has learned at school. They are based on the human wisdom possessed only by those who have risen from the quagmire.

(Fukatsu in Shirota 1985:285)

His faith in her experience, knowledge and recovery was central to encouraging her to exercise her political agency, as well as increasing her chance of survival. Her dialogue with him was a conversation with an *intimate* sense of the external world for her reflection. His openness to listening to her voice of trauma laid the ground for the second stage of reconstructing her life story.

Stage 2: subject formation by building a coherent narrative of the self

The establishment of safety enables a victim to restore 'a sense of power and control' robbed by trauma, whereby she is ready to proceed to the next stage of telling her trauma story (Herman 1992:159–74). In the second stage, she tells her story of trauma 'completely, in depth and in detail' (Herman 1992:175). Yet, this stage increases the risk of her suicide as a way of rejection of a world where she confronts the horror and despair of her life (Herman 1992:194). This vulnerability of stage 2 foregrounds the fragility of the entire process of the complex formation of political subjectivity. Shirota faced the risk in Karuizawa, where she was constantly exposed to the oscillating threat of trauma between life and death in her fierce battle against multiple illnesses. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, she attempted suicide twice: once when she lost all hope for her future, and also when her lover's family opposed their marriage due to her occupation as a prostitute. In both cases, she blamed

the heavens and people for rescuing her life (Shirota 1971). However, in Karuizawa, resisting the temptation of death, she finally found the meaning of her life: 'Showing women in the prostitution industries the path for rehabilitation' (Shirota 1971:209–12). Her stronger commitment to the survivors' mission evoked the energy for life and drove away thoughts of dying/suicide.

Shirota's new identity as a survivor of civilian and military prostitution emerged from her ethical reflection of her own past. In Herman's words, she recognised a political and historical dimension in her 'misfortune' and found that she could 'transform the meaning' of her 'personal tragedy' by converting it to 'the basis for social action' (Herman 1992:207). For Shirota, social action meant sharing her experience with others suffering the same fate, thereby encouraging them to regain hope for life. This personal action manifests 'collective healing' for the dehumanised under a similar form of oppression and victimisation whose dignity and hope are stripped (Morales 1998:5). This political act of collective healing empowers those fractured by abuse to reclaim the integrity of their soul and body, recovering their humanity. This 'politics of integrity' is central to hope for their present and future life (Morales 1998:5).

The 'politics of integrity' is also key to the establishment of 'a culture of resistance', a milieu where 'the oppressed are able to diagnose our own ills as to the effects of oppression' (Morales 1998:18). The diagnosis needs a body that can perceive external harms of oppression by using all five senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. The integrity of her senses, thought and body compensates each other for a firm self-diagnosis and determined resistance (Motta 2018). In this vein, Shirota's witness to terrible deaths of "comfort women" and Japanese soldiers completed her listening to her inner self for the culture of resistance against the dominant memory/history. She became engaged in the politics of integrity when she had a narrow escape from death when her spine was broken in the shower room of *Izumiryō*, after she had just moved into the new women's rehabilitation centre. She confessed her fear facing death: 'I shuddered with fear. I am thinking of dying in this shower room, without being known by anybody' (Shirota 1965, vol. 1). It was a shared knowledge among the staff of the centre that she could live only one more year, as she wrote in December 1978 (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 3). Recovering from her close encounter with death, Shirota appreciated the value of being alive. In 1965, she recalled the great joy she felt in 1959 and wrote it in her 1965 diary: 'Various desires such as sexual desire, materialistic desire and desire for fame disappeared. Desire for life remained' (Shirota 1965, vol. 2). In 1958, Shirota accepted Fukatsu's request to publish her life story in order to 'empower people facing predicament' (Shirota 1965, vol. 1). Then, she told her trauma story in her bedridden situation to his secretary, Schwester Morikawa Shizuko (1932–present).⁶ Fukatsu asked Morikawa to visit the hospital every day in order to look after Shirota and to transcribe her testimony (Morikawa 2016). In my interview in 2016, Morikawa described an episode that illustrated how Shirota appreciated the fact of being alive:

When I was wiping Shirota's body with a towel, she was excited by her finding of the grime coming out. I did not understand the reason for her excitement. Then she said to me, 'Grime is a proof of being alive. Don't you understand that simple thing?'

(Morikawa 2016)

Shirota miraculously survived, transcended the boundary of the hegemonic political and constructed her subjectivity and voice as a survivor of civilian and military prostitution by breaking her silence. This was the moment when her unwavering political agency emerged and led her to resistance against the conspiracy of silence.

Shirota's (1958) trauma story is the testimony of a Japanese "comfort woman" survivor. By connecting personal memory and public history, a testimony transforms an individual trauma story of 'shame and humiliation' into a collective narrative of 'dignity and virtue' (Anger & Jensen 1990, cited in Herman 1992:181). In her testimony, recognising her past self as both a civilian and a military sex slave, rather than eliminating it from her life story, Shirota established the coherence of the self as a survivor of the sexual slavery system, both in Japan's peace time and wartime. Further, by identifying her victimhood of 'the feudal family' in 1978 (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 4), and 'the military's unreasonable demands' in 1988 (Shirota 1988), she turned her life-long shame and humiliation, which she had been forced to internalise in her outer and inner self, on to her perpetrators. Shirota's manuscript thus constituted the intersection of her political and historical subject formation and the act of her resistance to the dominant narrative of the "comfort women" history. In this way, she became not only 'the author and arbiter of her own recovery' (Herman 1992:133), but also the author of her history and her life.

Women's writing signifies 'the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the ruptures and transformation in her history', as opposed to men's writing, which represents 'a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated' (Cixous 1976:660, 679, emphasis in original). For this reason, in 1971, Kanita self-published Shirota's autobiography by the title of *Maria no Sanka* [*Maria's Song of Praise*]. In Japanese society of the 1950s and 1960s, finding a publisher for Shirota's story of her survival, resistance and transformation proved difficult. During this period, Japanese society witnessed a nationwide movement against the Japan–US Security Treaty, whereas the "comfort women" as prostitutes discourse was the social norm.⁷ Against this backdrop, some of her testimonial accounts were extracted in a women's magazine, *Fujin Kōron* [*Women's Public Opinion*] under the title '*Tenraku no Shishu*' [*An Anthology of a Fallen Woman's Life*] as opposed to '*Kōsei no Kiroku*' [*Biography of a Woman's Rebirth*], as expected by Fukatsu (Shirota 1971:4). In 1962, the entire transcript was edited and published by a minor publisher, Ōtōsha. Their edition, entitled *Ai to Niku no Kokuhaku* [*Confession of Love*

and Flesh], also disappointed Fukatsu because he thought that their edited version would be nothing more than reproduction of patriarchal gender roles intended to stimulate the sexual desire of men and women (Shirota 1971:4). Here, her female writing was revised into the male writing of masculinity in order to maintain the dominant narratives and legitimacy of the patriarchal state and nation.

Unfortunately, Shirota's (1971) testimonial narrative of trauma did not resonate even with Japan's first women's liberation movement (*Wōman Libu* in Japanese language), which challenged Japan's patriarchal power structure based on male exploitation of female sexuality in October 1970. The flyer entitled '*Benjo karano kaihō*' [*Liberation from toilets*] written by the organiser, Tanaka Mitsu, denounced Japanese male invasion of female sexuality by mentioning Korean "comfort women". Tanaka, as the standard-bearer for the first Japanese *Wōman Libu*, theorises what the ruling power gained from its control over women's bodies and sexuality in modern Japan (Tanaka 2004:333–47). Her 1970 manifesto for the group *Tatakau Onna* [*Fighting Women*] emphasises the political function of the patriarchal dichotomy between "good" and "bad" women, namely, 'affectionate' mothers who are the reproductive symbol and 'toilets' who represent the disposal of male sexual lust. Therefore, 'sexual liberation' was the goal of the movement:

...the 'double structure of rule' means that 'the ruling power has been accomplishing its class will by the control and oppression by the male sex of the female sex'. In brief, 'sex has existed as a fundamental means of human subordination', so, recovering, with their own hands, their sexual power, which has been stolen from them and controlled by the system and by men...

(Tanaka, *A Short History*:47, as translated by
and cited in Mackie 2003:155)

As the German sociologist Ilse Lenz notes, Tanaka's theorising of women 'as an embodied sexual and political subject represents a ground-breaking departure in view of the Japanese gender order' (Lenz 2014:219), in which the ruling patriarchal power structure utilises both types of women to control men's sexuality and ultimately to control all people in the service of the state. Tanaka finds sadness in such society:

By forcing women to be the toilet, men end up being excrement. Given that women and men are mutually related, female sexual misery means male sexual misery, which symbolises the misery of the modern society.
(Tanaka 2004:339–40)

In modern society, a woman 'who by nature owns both affectionate nature and sexual pleasure as a physical expression of love' has been divided into two patriarchal dichotomies, thereby being forced to live 'as a fragment' rather

than ‘as a whole human being’ (Tanaka 2004:333–8). However, men who allow women’s existence to be reduced to fragmented pieces are also forced to live as a segment by suppressing their own sexuality (Tanaka 2004:338). This fragmentation of both men and women runs counter to the politics of integrity. Tanaka further emphasises the nature of dehumanisation embedded within modernity, which resonates with Motta’s critique (2018). Tanaka’s theorising of the relationship between power and male/female sexuality is of value for understanding how the state has controlled males both in peace time and war-time by exploiting and sacrificing female sexuality.

This was the first critique of the “comfort women” system by a Japanese feminist (Kinoshita 2017:119). In her book, *‘Ianfu’ mondai no gensetsu kūkan: Nihonjin ‘ianfu’ no fukashika to genzen* [*The Space Within Discourse of the Issue of ‘Comfort Women’: Invisibilisation and Emergence of Japanese ‘Comfort Women’*], Kinoshita Naoko analyses why *Wōman Libu*⁸ could not raise the issue of Japanese “comfort women”:

On the one hand, *Wōman Libu* activists had potential sensibility to be able to understand the pains inflicted upon Japanese “comfort women” without contempt. On the other hand, the victims of the “comfort women” system were not those women to whom they had a feeling of closeness. This is because the victimised women were the symbol of sexual oppression and different from these activists in class and generation, even though both lived in the same times. *Wōman Libu* was the movement of self-liberation and its basic policy was not to support others. It would appear that they had little interests in the surviving victims since their priority was to establish liberated female agency. In the era when the survivor did not officially come out yet, *Wōman Libu* could not pose the unresolved issue of “comfort women” to the public and find the survivors.

(Kinoshita 2017:144)

Tanaka and her group launched the movement for liberating women from the patriarchal dichotomy between virgins and whores; however, the patriarchal media marginalised this new women’s liberation movement by labelling it as ‘female hysteria’ (Tsukamoto 2017:189). As discussed in the previous chapter, hysteria is a strongly feminised category of traumatic neurosis, in contrast to shellshock as a masculinised form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Thus, the first women’s collective voice of resistance against the patriarchal imperialist state of Japan was banished to silence and removed from history by the hegemonic conspiracy of silence. Accordingly, Shirota’s life story of resistance never came to the attention of even Japanese feminists. However, Tanaka’s argument inspired future activists who would participate in the transnational justice movement for “comfort women”, such as Ikeda Eriko, the honorary director of WAM or Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (Ikeda 2016).

Despite the fact that Shirota's life story was subsumed within the asphyxiating nature of Japan's patriarchal structure, the establishment of her coherent story of trauma nonetheless empowered Shirota to move forward to the final stage for reconnection. Herman describes the survivor at this transition step:

Time starts to move again. When the 'action of telling a story' has come to its conclusion, the traumatic experience truly belongs to the past. At this point, the survivor faces the tasks of rebuilding her life in the present and pursuing her aspirations for the future.

(Herman 1992:195)

Shirota's engagement with life and aspirations for her future opened up the opportunity to foster solidarity within her intimate community of *Izumiryō*. During her six-year hospitalisation caused by her broken spine, she suggested to Fukatsu that he establish a permanent care home for former prostitutes who had had difficulties with social reintegration. Instantly, the pastor realised Shirota's long-cherished dream, which was the construction of her final home, where she could spend the rest of her life. It could be a life-long shelter for formerly prostituted women who were assessed as having low potential for social reintegration under the anti-prostitution law.

In order to realise her dream, he and Schwesterns launched diverse political activities, such as lobbying the Ministry of Health and Welfare for the inclusion of funds in the state budget for the establishment, holding demonstrations in front of the parliament building and asking visitors to *Izumiryō* for their help and support in 1959 (Shirota 1965, vol. 2). Due to her broken spine, Shirota was paralysed from the waist down and on the left half of her body. All she could do in hospital was to keep praying for their success, full of determination in the face of what she called the 'persecution' inflicted upon her by some other patients, doctors and nurses, who knew her plan for the permanent residence, as she recalled in her diary (Shirota 1965, vol. 2). Shirota's bed-ridden fight against what Motta calls 'othering', in which they denied her capacity for exercising political agency (Motta 2017:7), manifests the awakening of her political activism as a survivor. Her alliance with Fukatsu and Schwesterns nurtured her trust in humanity. This development also expanded the community of everyday politics, in which all are 'equal members and participants' (Motta 2009:35). This intimate community nurtures the political agency of autonomy in order to reclaim dignity. Shirota's political campaign ended successfully and *Kanita* (Figure 4.3) was completed with state subsidies in 1965.⁹ Settling down in *Kanita* brought her a feeling of safety for the rest of her life, which enabled her to engage in day-to-day life.

Stage 3: reconnection to the external world

This section demonstrates the complexities of Shirota's political agency through the political literacy that enabled her to understand the interaction



Figure 4.3 Kanita Fujin no Mura in Tateyama, Chiba, 2016. The office is in the building on the left. In the foreground, the three houses serve as residence for female survivors.

Source: Photograph of the author.

between state violence and women as well as the relationship between war memory and history. The trajectory of developing her political agency marked the two sites of her subject formation: the 1958 oral history and the 1986 radio interview. Both signify the culmination of the exercise of her political agency, which develops and declares her self-identity in public. Her journey to those culminations informs us of her life-and-death struggle to complete the continuity between the past and present self. To bring some coherence into her life and alternative history manifests the sign of her agency to survive, resist the dominant narrative and restore her dignity.

In the third stage of recovery from trauma, a trauma victim who has already faced her past self by telling her story must ‘develop a new self’ by ‘reconnecting with others’ (Herman 1992:196, 205). In this vein, the stage of reconnection signifies the political stage of Shirota’s further evolution in gaining her agency and self-identity from *a* survivor to *the* survivor of the military sexual slavery system. Her mourning of all dead “comfort women” in *Kanita* made the self-transformation possible and opened up the channels for reconnection to the external world beyond her intimate community, as

well as activism for their justice and dignity. This form of mourning should be differentiated from Herman's model, in which a trauma victim mourns the past self because she feels that she lost 'her moral integrity' due to 'the profound feelings of guilt and shame' internalised by the perpetrator (Herman 1992:192–3, 196). Shirota found her own way to mourn all deceased "comfort women", which allowed her to develop new relationships beyond *Kanita*. Her radio interview signifies the culmination of her political agency for collective resistance and dignity. Therefore, in this specific case, mourning is included in stage 3, as opposed to stage 2 in Herman's analysis (1992).

In this final stage, recognition and acknowledgement of testimonies by others are central to reconnection to the wider community since they allow the survivor to feel that her subjectivity is recognised and accepted by the external world. This feeling also gives her a sense of dignity. From stage 1, Shirota understood the social and political values of her testimony as a witness to and survivor of sexual slavery upon raising awareness of the issue of prostitution and venereal diseases. For example, in 1978, an abolitionist activist told Shirota that her reflective narrative of rehabilitation published in the women's magazine, *Hataraku Fujin no Koe* [*Voices of Working Women*],¹⁰ could facilitate the passage of the Anti-Prostitution Law (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 3). The law was passed on 24 May 1956 and, accordingly, the country's red-light districts were abolished, marking the end of the state-licensed prostitution system. The law also changed Shirota's situation, in which she became a subject of the relief project of former prostitutes. In stage 3, Shirota became increasingly more active in testifying in interviews with the media or in personally lobbying politicians, activists and reporters by letter. In 1978, she became excited while watching a programme broadcast by the Japanese public broadcaster, NHK, because it focused on the issue of juvenile delinquents and prostitution, which she had already raised in her letter to the broadcasting company, as she described in her diary (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 6). Although it is unknown whether either the parliament or NHK actually listened to her voice, these incidents convinced her that her testimony was gaining public recognition. The self-acknowledgement of acceptance by others encouraged her to promote more connection to the social world through testifying. In 1978, she wrote in her diary: 'After writing letters to Asahi Shimbun and NHK, something solid uncomfortably stuck in my throat disappeared' (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 6). This indicates both the embodiment of the nature of trauma and the process of healing. By reconnecting with wider society, she healed her psychological scars and regained the basic human capacities for trust, autonomy and dignity.

Shirota further developed her capacity for inner listening, which facilitated the profound transformation of her self-identity from a survivor to the survivor of the military sexual slavery system. Having witnessed numerous brutal deaths of her colleagues at "comfort stations", Shirota considered the meaning of her *luck* in surviving having been at the brink of countless deaths, including her two suicide attempts. Her conclusion was that the spirits

of many “comfort women” who had died in foreign countries protected her because they wanted her to ‘clamour for their plights on their behalf’, something she wrote about in her 1986 letter to the then-prime minister. This ‘clamour’ is the voice of resistance against the hegemonic boundary of the political. By bringing in other temporalities and subjects from the past, the collective voice disrupts the present politics as normal. This collective resistance manifests ‘the struggle over who has the authority to tell the stories that define us’ (Morales 1998:5).

The connection between silence and death of the victimised is the key to the legitimate authority. Based upon her interviews with the offspring of Holocaust survivors, Nadine Fresco (1984 as cited in Felman & Laub 1992:64–5) emphasises that the site of ‘concentration of death’ marks the site of silence. This notion of silence indicates how significant it is to imagine the whole picture of countless deaths behind much fewer survivals. Further, silenced survivors are not visible; however, as the Japanese psychologist, Miyaji Naoko (2007:214) notes, we can imagine their inner voices by listening to survivors who raised their voice. Shirota recognised that she was among the survivors who could speak for *all* “comfort women”, saying ‘I assume that many of those women could not survive. Even if some of them do, none of them will come forward because they may feel the act as shameful’, as she said in her letter to Fukatsu on 10 March 1984. Her new identity emerged as the survivor-activist who represented the silenced voices of both dead and surviving “comfort women” for resistance against their collective victimisation and for their collective reclamation of their dignity. This is a political movement that connects victims and witnesses for empowerment as well as collective recovery from trauma (Herman 1992; Morales 1998; Motta 2018), where testimony serves as a vehicle of activism for social justice.

The role of spirituality is integral to stage 3 in that bringing the dead from the past disrupts the status quo as granted. Different from religious beliefs, spirituality is political in that it prescribes individual and collective ‘peacefulness’ and ‘compassion’ for others in pursuit of a just society (Gottlieb 2013). This moral and psychological dimension of spirituality is essential to ‘promote a better society by promoting better individuals’ (Gottlieb 2013:170). Since 1983, Shirota was haunted by a different type of traumatised memory as a witness to the brutal end of her former “comfort women” colleagues. Suffering from nightmares, she finally wrote about them in a letter to Fukatsu in 1984:

My former [“comfort women”] colleagues show up in various appearances. Those images are very vivid. Then they begin to sob as if they were appealing to me. I cannot stop them by myself. I want you to establish the monument to soothe the spirits of military “comfort women” in *Kanita*.
(Shirota 1984)

For the most part, this haunting by ghosts could be a threat to her political agency since it could inhibit the completion of her subject formation. As the case study of shell-shocked soldiers reveals, ‘repetitive nightmares’ affect ‘the

formation of subjectivity in the face of assaults on its coherence' (Stewart 2003:9). Conversely, Shirota further developed her political agency as the survivor-activist by recognising her long-time indignation that had been accumulating over the past 40 years. Shirota criticised the state and society in that they had repeatedly consoled the spirits of dead soldiers and war victims while totally ignoring those women who were forced to provide soldiers with sexual service:

No matter how many "comfort women" or sex providers died, there has been nothing to console their tormented souls. Now, looking back on the past forty years, I wonder how stupid it was.

(Shirota 1986)

Of importance here is that, based on Japanese traditional spirituality, she thought that the souls of those dead 'sex providers' (Shirota 1986) were far from resting in peace and actually were haunting Japanese society. For her, the establishment of the monument for consoling those haunting spirits from the past manifested the collective resistance against the collective violence, combined with the collective healing with respect to both victimhood and the inhumane society through the official recognition of their traumatised experiences. This was her activism for justice and dignity of the victims who were forced into what Morales calls, 'the most individual and the most collective places of violence' (Morales 1998:5).

Shirota launched her own activism by urging Fukatsu and all Schwestern to lobby the Health and Welfare Ministry as well as the media for actions and promised him that she would testify if he needed her assistance in these efforts (Shirota 1984). After seriously considering this issue for a year, Fukatsu decided to establish a wooden memorial because he thought that it might be his best way to make an apology to those victimised women.¹¹ On 15 August 1985, a wooden monument inscribed *Chinkon no Hi* [*Monument for soothing the spirit*] was established on the top of the hill in Kanita. The day marked the fortieth anniversary of Japan's defeat, which ended World War II. Shirota returned thanks to him in tears, in her wheelchair (Figures 4.4–4.7).

The wooden monument emerged as the engine to empower her political agency as the survivor who engaged in and appealed to wider society for the purpose of fundraising to replace the wooden monument with a far more permanent stone monument. The stone monument might be a gift to younger and future generations in that it bestowed an official vow never to repeat the same mistake again. Reflecting on Japan's future, she wrote in her diary:

If the militarist era comes back, Japanese citizens will suffer. It is obvious that young lives will be lost in the war. Never give up, Japanese citizens. The Self-Defence Forces is a military. It scares me because I feel as if the dark period will come back again.

(Shirota 1988)



Figure 4.4 Fukatsu and other members carrying the wooden statue to the top of the hillside overlooking *Kanita*. Courtesy of *Kanita*.



Figure 4.5 Two *Schwesters* and a staff member assisting *Shirota* to attend the establishment of the wooden memorial. Courtesy of *Kanita*.



Figure 4.6 The wooden memorial located in Kanita. Courtesy of Kanita.



Figure 4.7 A joyous Shirota reacts to the establishment of the “comfort women” memorial. Courtesy of Kanita.

As the survivor-activist, Shirota understood that ‘those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it’ (Herman 1992:208). She expanded connection with the larger world by testifying in interviews with the media and in letters to politicians or activists for lobbying. *Asahi Shimbun* posted the article based on Shirota’s interview about *Kanita*’s private ceremony for the erection of the wooden monument. Moreover, TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) launched the Kangaroo campaign coinciding with her radio interview in an effort to facilitate her fundraising activities.

The successful establishment of the stone monument in *Kanita* (Figure 4.8) was the material manifestation of the victory of Shirota’s activism as



Figure 4.8 The permanent stone memorial, 2016.

Source: Photograph of the author.

well as her reconnection to the external world. The money contributed to its establishment embodied the public recognition of her activism and restoration of her personal dignity. She received both the prize money that the TBS radio interview won along with monetary donations from 166 people¹² who had listened to her interview or read the article in *Asahi Shimbun*. Given the considerable social pressure to silence the survivors within Japanese society, Shirota's courageous exercise of her political agency without any collective support organised by feminist or other groups deserves great admiration. None of the politicians, from either the ruling or the opposition parties,¹³ journalists or feminist activists¹⁴ who visited or contacted Shirota ever raised the issue of Japanese "comfort women". Until she passed away at *Kanita* in 1993, she continued to grant interviews as far as her health condition permitted. She never gave up her solitary activism in the pursuit for social justice, which 'connects the fate of others to her own' (Herman 1992:209).

Shirota's 'feeling of solidarity with survivors of military sexual slavery from other countries' (Norma 2016:2) was demonstrated by her commitment to the establishment of the stone monument for 'a hundred of thousands of Japanese and two hundreds of thousands of Korean comfort women' (*sic*), as she wrote in her letter to the then-prime minister. Her solidarity beyond national borders was also indicated by 'her expression of happiness with Kim Hak-soon's silence break' (Amaha 2016). After watching the NHK programme featuring the upcoming lawsuit against the Japanese government by Korean "comfort women" survivors, Shirota wrote in her diary on 29 November 1991:

Get compensation or whatever [from the Japanese government]. Some Japanese veterans finally came to testify. As many as fifty years have already passed [since Japan's defeat of the war]. Come forward, more and more.

(Shirota 1991–2)

Both Shirota and Kim Hak-soon highly understood the significance of the interaction between memory and history; as Shirota said in her diary, 'history will repeat itself unless witnesses testify' (Shirota 1988). Therefore, their strong desire to pass historical facts about the sexual slavery system on to younger generations constituted their driving force to come forward. By testifying about their own plight, both Shirota and Kim Hak-soon broke the boundary of the political and established their political and historical subjectivity as the survivor of and activist against military sexual slavery.

In the end, Shirota seems to have come to terms with her traumatised memory by establishing the coherent self as the survivor. However, recovery from trauma is 'never complete', since a traumatised memory continues to influence the survivor throughout her life (Herman 1992:211). In the last period of stage 3, Shirota suffered a haunted memory as the flashbacks of graphic images depicting the scattered pieces of dismembered Japanese soldiers' bodies, which she experienced at the front line as she confessed in her

diary on 6 January 1992 (Shirota 1991–2). The flashback memory indicates the complexity of the conditions for possible healing. Even if the survivor resolved her trauma sufficiently at one stage of recovery, she may suffer its return at a more developed stage (Herman 1992:21). Sufficient resolution depends on what indicator is employed in order to evaluate it. The best one is ‘the survivor’s restored capacity to take pleasure in her life and to engage fully in relationship with others’ (Herman 1992:212). Overcoming both the fear of death and the desire for suicide, Shirota finally celebrated life. Her appreciation of being alive was her driving force to develop and exercise the political agency for survival, resistance and dignity.

The victim-survivor-activist

Shirota never filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government. The idea of appealing to the court never occurred to her. She might have been more concerned about her family. When she learned of Kim Hak-soon’s breaking of silence and the subsequent lawsuit against the Japanese government filed by her and two other Korean survivors in 1991, Shirota wrote of her physical weakness in her diary: ‘I have been living with this body for seventy years. I cannot control my body even if I try to stand up’ (Shirota 1988). The Japanese feminist researcher, Kinoshita Naoko, who focuses solely on Shirota’s own interpretation of her experience as a “comfort woman”, concluded that Shirota could not develop her subjectivity as a victim of a state crime (Kinoshita 2017:237). This conclusion assumes that political agency to facilitate her political subject formation can be traced only by visible acts of challenge to the dominant power and, therefore, implies that political agency is a zero-sum construction. This assumption is likely to ignore the complex construction of political agency since actual acts against the dominant power represent not only the culmination of the fully developed political agency, but also the tip of the iceberg of a wide range of activities exercised by the growing political agency. However, the ‘politics of knowledge’ dominated by the masculinised knower never allows the feminised other to challenge the border of the political between the ‘knowing-subject’ and the ‘known-subject’ (Motta 2014, 2017). For the feminised known, who is ‘subject to logics of elimination and dehumanisation’ in the terrain of the political, it is impossible to become visible in the dominant narrative; rather, she is ‘tamed and assimilated’ by the knower, thereby legitimising the knower’s logics (Motta 2017:3). This move reinscribes her as being without agency, negating the complexities of her knowing and political subjectivity.

The construction of political agency is a multi-phased process in which a victim of trauma develops different layers and forms of political agency at different stages. For example, Shirota countered the dominant memory/history of the Asia-Pacific War in her journals. She repeatedly chronicled the horror of the past war and her anger against those who started the cruelty.

Her explicit criticism directed against the Japanese government was expressed in her two letters to lobby the then-prime minister¹⁵ for the completion of the stone monument to commemorate “comfort women”:

Knowing that in wartime women are deceived by the propaganda, ‘*okuninotameni*’ (for the country) and end up with their miserable deaths, are you going to deceive them again? The past textbooks glorifying loyalty to the head of the nation and families, or patriotism contributed to mobilising a great many naïve youths who ended up dying for nothing. This tragedy evokes my feelings of sorrow and anger. While writing this letter, I can’t stop shedding tears. ... I am wondering how many times I have wandered back and forth between life and death. Given only the painful feelings of those times, the sin committed by the Japanese government would be inexpiable.

(Shirota 1984–5)

Here, Shirota connected both impoverished young men and women as victims of state violence. During the war, she saw through the disguise of the emperor-worship nationalism as a war mobilisation apparatus. In 1979, she wrote in her diary that during the war, she heard what many young soldiers said: ‘I don’t want to die’ (Shirota 1978–82, vol. 8). On the one hand, she showed her sympathetic feelings for the young and poor soldiers who were forced to sacrifice their lives for the state in the same way that she and other destitute girls were. In this regard, she demonstrates understanding through empathy of the complexities of the militarised patriarchy in that it also justified the victimisation of men, particularly poverty-stricken young men for the sake of the Emperor. On the other hand, she never lost the feminist perspectives on female victimisation by males. Her understanding of the complex relations of the domination–subordination nexus demonstrates her capacity to recognise intersectionality. Intersectionality is central to both the analysis of ‘the *dynamics* of structural power’ (Wilson 2013:1, emphasis in original) and to the understanding of intra-group tension (Crenshaw 1991:1242, as cited in Wilson 2013:1). In 1991, Shirota grieved in her diary over what she had lost:

My young days were trampled by soldiers. I cannot retrieve my lost youth anymore. I don’t want money. Rather, give me back the first twenty years of life.

(Shirota 1991–2)

Her outspoken demand to reclaim her life occurred because she strongly desired to start a brand-new time of youth over again if she could. Instead of seeking official compensation for her victimisation, she demanded that she be given back her life that had been stolen by the many facets of the patriarchal capitalism/militarism that characterised Japanese society and state.

Conclusion

Based on Herman's three-stage model, this chapter has analysed Shirota's recovery stage from trauma in order to conceptualise her political agency as a victim of state-sponsored sexual violence. As Shirota's case reveals, trauma has a complex construction with multiple psychological wounds deeply embedded within different layers. Therefore, a victim of trauma needs to construct her political agency through a multi-phased process in which she can develop different forms and layers of political agency according to the stages of recovery she inhabits.

The self-identification as a victim is essential to the development of her political agency at the pre-political stage, where she can nurture and exercise it through the everyday practice of resistance even within the political border of otherness by developing her subjectivity and identity as such. For a trauma victim, the establishment of her physical and psychological safety is the foundation for developing her political agency by which she takes up the fight mode to cope with her trauma, as opposed to the flight. Given the nature of trauma, which oscillates between resistance and surrender complicated by the presence of the conspiracy and the complicity of silence that continuously threaten to silence her voice, the creation of her intimate community where people share her traumatic experience as listeners allows her to enter the next stage: speaking of her trauma story.

Telling her story of trauma is a manifestation of the exercise of political agency for the following reasons. First, it resists the dominant narrative of patriarchal domination, thereby making visible and breaking the political boundary of patriarchy. Second, the establishment of her coherent story of trauma in constant reflection of both the past–present self and the public–personal interaction demonstrates the politics of integrity. It is through the politics of integrity, which encourages her to recognise the full complexity of her whole self as a survivor, that she can transfer shame and guilt inflicted upon her to the perpetrator. Third, this individual act of recovery from trauma can nurture the culture of resistance against oppression, thus eradicating the culture of victimhood. In other words, a personal act of rehabilitation from trauma leads to a collective political act as part of the process for the collective healing of dehumanised society.

Re-connection to the external world beyond the intimate community opens a door for the expansion of the political act from the personal to the collective level. As Shirota's case demonstrates, the moral dimension of spirituality is integral to this re-connecting stage, where an act of mourning plays a pivotal role in reflecting the moral integrity of individuals and society about past collective oppression. Through this mourning process, a survivor establishes her political and historical subjectivity as an activist against sexual violence. Her testimony constitutes the site of collective resistance against collective structural violence. Therefore, in this research, unlike Herma's model, mourning is incorporated into the third recovery stage. Shirota's fully developed political

agency as a victim-survivor-activist finally allowed her to restore human dignity and integrity, transcending national borders in order to *spiritually* connect to the Korean silence breaker.

Notes

- 1 Storytelling constitutes a dialogue between the speaker and the listener.
- 2 Kubushiro was a leading figure in *Kyōfūkai*, the Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which founded and ran the rehabilitation centre. She dedicated her life to abolishing prostitution and winning women's suffrage.
- 3 Japan's 1996 Anti-Prostitution Law allowed former prostitutes to have state protection and rehabilitation as well as punishment and guidance (The Anti-Prostitution Law, 1996):
http://law.egov.go.jp/cgi-bin/idxselect.cgi?idx_opt=1&h_name=%94%84%8f%74%96%68%8e%7e%96%40&h_name_yomi=%82%a0&h_no_geo=h&h_no_year=&h_no_type=2&h_no_no=&h_file_name=s31ho118&h_ryaku=1&h_ctg=1&h_yomi_gun=1&h_ctg_gun=1 (accessed 13 September 2017).
- 4 Shirota had all her gynaecological organs removed in her 1956 surgery. Then she was diagnosed with five diseases, including syphilis, articular rheumatism and intestinal adhesions (Shirota 1971:182–6).
- 5 'Schwester' is a German word meaning 'sisters' (Shirota 1971:202). Although *Schwesters* is equivalent to Christian sisters, the main purpose of *Schwesters* is to engage in volunteer work at church or in hospital (Morikawa 2016).
- 6 According to a note by Fukatsu, kept in *Kanita*, Morikawa transcribed Shirota's life story in accordance with Kubushiro's request for the purpose of keeping a record of her story of rehabilitation (Kinoshita 2017:238). Kubushiro made every effort to produce a film based on her story of rehabilitation. When it was about to start shooting, it was cancelled because the board of directors regarded it as too religious (Shirota 197:3).
- 7 The first publication of a Japanese "comfort woman" survivor's memoir was *Senjō ianfu* [*Battlefield comfort woman*] by Ajisaka Miwa (Tomita 1953). However, Ajisaka's life story was described as a story of a patriotic high-school girl at the front line by the editor, Tomita Kunihiko.
- 8 For more about the analysis of the text written by Tanaka and other *Wōman Libu* activists, see Kinoshita (2017:110–44).
- 9 On 26 April 1965, Shirota described those who participated in *Kanita*'s inauguration ceremony in volume 5 of her diary, *Anjū no chi wo motomete* [*Seeking my final home*]. It said that among participants were bureaucrats of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, female Members of Parliament, *Kyōfūkai* members and Emperor Hirohito's brother, Mikasanomiya.
- 10 The name of the magazine came from Kinoshita Naoko's assumption (Kinoshita 2017:239).
- 11 Fukatsu confessed that it would be sad if the establishment of the monument justified victimisation of "comfort women", in the process of acquitting their perpetrators (Fukatsu 1985).
- 12 Fukatsu referred to the figure of donors. 'Given that all letters in response to the article by *Asahi Shimbun* posting to *Kanita* were written by Japanese veterans'

(Fukatsu 1985, no. 46, p. 04), ‘most of the financial donors were also supposed to be former Japanese soldiers’ (Fukatsu 1985, no. 41, p. 04).

- 13 Shirota wrote letters to members of parliament, such as Tanaka Sumiko and Yashiro Eita, as she wrote in Vol. 9 of her diary *Kamisama no gokeikaku* [*God’s plan*] in 1979. In the inauguration ceremony of *Kanita*, those who participated included bureaucrats from the Health and Welfare Ministry, female members of parliament, some members of *Kyōfūkai* and Emperor Hirohito’s younger brother, Mikasanomiya. She described it in Vol. 5 of her diary *Anjū no chi wo motomete* [*Seeking my final home*] in 1965.
- 14 Shirota appreciated advice and support from Kubushiro Ochimi and Ichikawa Fusae, among others. The former was a leading figure in *Kyōfūkai* and dedicated her life to abolishing prostitution and winning women’s suffrage. The latter was a pioneer in Japan’s women’s suffrage movement and was elected to parliament.
- 15 Her letter to the prime minister was undated. It was presumed that the letter was written between 1984 and 1985. The prime minister was Nakasone Yasuhiro, who held office between 1982 and 1987. Nakasone (1918–2019) boasted in his book, *Owarinaki Kaigun* [*The Navy Forever*] (1978) that as the navy paymaster officer, he put a lot of hard work into establishing “comfort stations” in Indonesia. See LITERA: <https://lite-ra.com/2019/11/post-5119.html> (accessed 6 December 2021).
Shirota also wrote a letter to Ōhira Masayoshi (1910–80), who became the prime minister from 1978 to 1980. However, she did not receive any response from him (Shirota 1984–5). Whether her letters to those prime ministers were actually posted is unknown.

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