

**Contemporary Chinese Studies**

This series provides new scholarship and perspectives on modern and contemporary China, including China's contested borderlands and minority peoples; ongoing social, cultural, and political changes; and the varied histories that animate China today.

A list of titles in this series appears at the end of this book.

**Chinese Comfort Women  
Testimonies from Imperial Japan's  
Sex Slaves**

Peipei Qiu, with Su Zhiliang  
and Chen Lifei



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**Figure 6** Locations of the “comfort stations” where the twelve women whose stories are related in this volume were enslaved.

The stories of the twelve comfort station survivors – Lei Guiying, Zhou Fenyong, Zhu Qiaomei, Lu Xiuzhen, Yuan Zhulin, Tan Yuhua, Yin Yulin, Wan Aihua, Huang Youliang, Chen Yabian, Lin Yajin, and Li Lianchun – are based on oral interviews conducted by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei from 1998 to 2008.<sup>1</sup> At the time this book was written, seven of the twelve women had died.

The interview process was extremely difficult for both the survivors and the interviewers. The nature of the torture to which they were subjected in the comfort stations during the war, coupled with the postwar socio-political climates, made it very painful for the victims to speak of their past. In addition, in the rural areas, where most of the Chinese comfort station survivors lived, traditional attitudes toward chastity remain deeply rooted and contribute significantly to the embarrassment and pain experienced in the telling. In Yunnan Province, for example, although there is concrete evidence of a large number of military comfort stations, few survivors are willing to step forward and relate their experiences. People acquainted with the victims also avoid the subject, fearing damage to their relationship with the victim’s family. Li Lianchun, one of the few survivors in Yunnan Province who revealed her experiences as a comfort woman, would not have done so without the support of her children. The psychological trauma and fear of discrimination continue to haunt these survivors, even after breaking their silence. After the war, Yuan Zhulin was exiled from Wuhan City in central China to a remote farm in northeastern Heilongjiang Province for seventeen years because it was revealed that she had been a comfort woman for the Japanese military. Even many years later, when she was invited to participate as one of the Chinese plaintiffs in the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery held in Tokyo in December 2000,<sup>2</sup> Yuan Zhulin experienced tremendous anguish the night before her scheduled testimony and said she could not go on stage the next day to recount what the Japanese military had done to her. Chen Lifei sat with her for hours until she finally overcame her pain and fear and gave a powerful speech in the tribunal court. Yet, when a group of legal experts and researchers sought her out at her home in 2001, she would have been unable to go through the account notarization process without professional psychological support to deal with the return of her fear and anguish. In order to minimize the pain of talking about the horrors of the comfort stations, Su and Chen conducted their interviews in locations that were as convenient and as comfortable for the survivors as possible. The interviewers frequently travelled across China to remote villages and walked for hours over rough mountain roads to reach the survivors’ homes. Three groups of basic questions were asked of each survivor concerning her experiences before, during, and after the Japanese invasion:

- 1 What was the survivor's prewar family and personal background?
- 2 During the war, how did she become a comfort woman? Were there any witnesses? What did the comfort station look like? How was she treated in the comfort station? How did her comfort station experience end?
- 3 What is her current marital situation? Does she have any children? What are her relationships with her immediate family members, more distant relatives, and neighbours like? Does she think that she has suffered discrimination or political persecution as a result of her comfort station experience? Has she experienced any psychological aftermath? What is her life like currently?

Out of concern for each survivor's emotional and physical condition, the interviewers refrained from imposing a rigid format and from designating a specific amount of time; instead, they altered the time and direction of the conversation to comply with the needs of each survivor. Therefore, the accounts are uneven in length and format, but all were prompted by the above questions. Some of the survivors were interviewed several times over a long period of time. For example, Su and Chen visited Zhu Qiaomei in her home seven times over the course of five years until her death in 2005. However, due to health concerns, multiple interviews were not possible for every survivor. Su Zhiliang said: "I would not bother these survivors over and over again when I was able to verify the facts of their victimization through one interview, because they told me that each time they talked about their horrible experience, it was as if they were going through the hell again." Su then added: "It's very, very painful. Even I myself could not sleep for days after each interview."

Being sensitive to the condition of the aged survivors, the interviewers carefully verified the accuracy of each woman's oral accounts by such methods as locating the site of the comfort facilities in which she was enslaved, collecting testimonies from other local witnesses, and comparing her accounts with local historical records (see Figure 7). For example, when she was being interviewed, Wan Aihua had trouble remembering some of the details of her abduction due to the trauma it had entailed. However, from the information she provided, such as the plants she saw and the food people were eating at the time, the interviewers were able to approximate the time of year when she had been kidnapped and tortured. After recording her life story, the interviewers drove a long distance to Yangquan Village and found Hou Datu, the owner of the cotton-padded quilt Wan Aihua had used in the comfort station, and obtained his affidavit relating to her torture. With the help of a local volunteer, Zhang Shuangbing, the interviewers also located the cave



**Figure 7** The interviewers took a picture of the rock cave where Li Lianchun hid in 1943 after her escape from Songshan "Comfort Station."

in which Wan Aihua was confined and the riverbed where she was first captured. All twelve accounts in this chapter have been verified by such field methods.

The translation makes every effort to be faithful to the survivors' words, which are spare but extremely powerful. In order to enhance the flow and readability of the transcripts, the translation omits the interviewer's questions. The accounts are grouped according to the geographical location of the survivor's confinement and are listed in chronological order: the eastern coastal region in the beginning of full-fledged warfare; the warzones in central and northern China from late 1939 to 1944, where Japanese military expansion reached an impasse; and, finally, the southern Chinese frontlines from 1941 until the end of the war. Before each survivor's account, brief background information is provided to help to situate her experiences within a larger historical context of the war. The testimonies of local witnesses are added to the accounts when there is a lapse in the survivor's recollection, and explanatory notes are provided for terms and events that are unfamiliar to non-Chinese-speaking audiences. Additional information about the postwar experiences of Chinese comfort women is provided in Part 3.

## 5 Eastern Coastal Region

### Lei Guiying

*At the age of nine, Lei Guiying witnessed the atrocities the Japanese soldiers committed in her hometown in the Jiangning District of Nanjing around the time of the fall of Nanjing in December 1937. At age thirteen, as soon as she began menstruating, she was forced to become a comfort woman for the Japanese military.*



**Figure 8** Lei Guiying giving a talk in Shanghai in 2006 to teachers and students from Canada.

I was born in a place called Guantangyan. My father died when I was only seven, so I don't remember his name. My mother's surname was "Li" and her parents lived in Shanghe Village. Guantangyan is located on the bank of a river that runs through Tangshan Town.

In the winter of the year after my father's death, my mother was taken away by a group of people from nearby Ligangtou Village while she was on her way to work. At that time a poor man who could not afford a wedding would snatch a woman to be his wife. At the time I had a five-year-old brother called Little Zaosheng. The men from Ligangtou Village let my mother bring my younger brother with her because he was a boy. I was left behind. My grandparents had already died. My late father had a younger brother in the village, but he was not living with my family. A teenager himself, this uncle was unable to support me, so I had no one to depend on.

Before she was taken away, my mother entrusted me to an old woman who lived in the same village. She gave the old lady some money, hoping she would provide for me. However, the old woman said to me after my mother left: "Girl, I have many children in my house so everyone must fight for food. I don't think you can win the battle to survive here. I will have to send you to another family to be a "child-daughter-in-law."<sup>1</sup> I didn't understand what "child-daughter-in-law" meant when I was given away. I was sent to Wangjiabian Village near Tuqiao Town, and my husband-to-be was much older than I.

When the Japanese army came in 1937, I was about nine years old. I remember that it was the season when the weather was getting cold. Villagers were cleaning up the sweet potato fields and the pond in the village had already frozen over.<sup>2</sup> That day my mother-in-law gave me a hoe and told me to dig out sweet potatoes. As I finished digging and was on my way home, I saw a huge crowd of people running southward. The Japanese troops attacked my hometown. People ran southward because there was a big pond, which they hoped might stop the Japanese from chasing them. The villagers hid themselves in holes deep in the ground. My mother-in-law had two daughters. One was over twenty and the other was turning nineteen. Both of them had bound feet so they could not move quickly.<sup>3</sup> My feet had been bound for a while and then released, so I didn't have their problems. My family members dug two holes that were connected, a smaller one above a larger one. My sisters-in-laws hid in the large hole on the lower level. My mother-in-law hid in the small one above them. They brought a big pot of rice to eat in the holes. My mother-in-law didn't allow me to hide in the holes with them. She said if the Japanese soldiers saw me, the whole family would be killed and I would die too. She gave me some roasted sunflower seeds and soybeans as my food.

Hidden at home I frequently saw the Japanese troops come into the village, where they did a lot of shooting. They shot chickens to eat, but they would not eat the wings, heads, or claws. They also shot cattle. They would keep shooting at an ox until it collapsed on the ground. They only ate the meat on the legs of oxen and threw the other parts away. When they saw us children, some Japanese soldiers took out candies and threw them on the ground. One bold child picked up a candy and ate it. Seeing that, we all followed his example. The Japanese soldiers then grabbed the fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girls. Those who didn't have time to run became their victims. The Japanese soldiers took the girls to those abandoned houses to "sleep."

Tuqiao Town was only five *li* [one *li* is five hundred metres] away from Wangjiabian Village. There used to be many shops and buildings, but they were mostly vacated after the war broke out. My mother-in-law told me to go to the town with some other girls to get goods from the abandoned shops. I was very scared. The goods were quite heavy and I had to climb up high to reach them. I was afraid that I might break my legs in a fall. However, my mother-in-law would have beaten me if I had refused to go. I went to Tuqiao Town quite a few times with other children where I saw that the Japanese troops occupied the good houses in that abandoned town. Several times we ran into the Japanese troops riding on their horses, which scared us to death. The teenage girls would flee desperately. The girls with whom I went to Tuqiao Town were of different ages. The Japanese soldiers would pat our heads and ask how old we were. I was only nine then, but some other girls were around fifteen. The Japanese soldiers would take those fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girls away. This happened several times, but I was very young and at the beginning I didn't know where they were taken or what happened to them, until I saw one of the girls dead. She had been sexually tortured to death by the Japanese soldiers! That day we had gone to an abandoned shop to search for goods. In that abandoned shop we saw many abducted girls, some of whom were already dead. I was extremely frightened. The girls who were still alive were too weak to walk. They were not the girls who had been going to the town with me and I didn't know where they were from. One time I also saw a girl whose belly was bloated. Her father, who wore a pair of straw sandals, was massaging her stomach. Her lower body was covered with blood and bloody pus was dripping onto the floor. We did not dare to go to the town again after seeing these girls.

Three years after I was sent to Wangjiabian as a child-daughter-in-law, my husband-to-be died. At that time I was only ten years old and it was not clear to me whether he was killed by the Japanese or died of illness. I only remember his name – Chen Yu. My mother-in-law was very mean to me and often beat

me. My mother-in-law grew silkworms. The silkworms looked like huge caterpillars. When I fed them mulberry leaves they would crawl onto my hands and I would flick them away in fear. When my mother-in-law saw that she would beat me.

One day my mother came to see me. She brought me a pair of flowered shoes made of a quilt cover. I begged my mother to take me with her, but she said: "I cannot. You are a child-daughter-in-law in your husband's family. Besides, I've had a new baby with my current husband." I had no choice but to stay. I fell ill. My mother-in-law told me to spread some straw on the ground outside of the house and lie out there under the sun. A nice grandpa who had relatives in Ligangtou Village was sympathetic when he saw me unable to eat or drink. [This old man was not Lei Guiying's grandfather. It is a Chinese custom to use a kinship term to refer to an older person in order to show one's respect, even though the person is not a blood relative.] He made soup to feed me and persuaded my father-in-law to obtain treatment for my illness. Thanks to this nice old man, I was taken to a doctor and given medicine. I recovered gradually and then I begged that kind grandpa to bring me to my mother. He quietly led me out of the village to Ligangtou, where I was reunited with my mother. My mother had given birth to a little boy with her new husband. This little brother of mine was very cute. I carried him around and played with him, but he was a little too heavy for me to carry. One day when I was holding him up he fell over my shoulders. My mother's mother-in-law grabbed my hair and beat me. My mother cried. She said to me: "Sorry, I cannot let you stay any longer. I will find you another home where you can be their child-daughter-in-law." Thus, my reunion with my mother lasted for less than ten days and I became a child-daughter-in-law again. I was twelve that year [1941].

My father-in-law in this new family owned a dye house in Sihou Village not far from Ligangtou. My husband dyed cloth and I helped him heat the dye pot. Cloth was dyed in the pot and then taken out to dry. My husband went to collect cloth in the town. He also herded cattle and cut hay. I worked hard to help with various jobs, yet my mother-in-law often yelled at me and beat me.

Life in this household was unbearable, so I escaped not long after I was married into the family. With a bowl and a pair of chopsticks I begged, going from village to village. The weather was very cold. I came across a nice old couple, who asked me if I was hungry and gave me crispy rice crust. I heard the grandpa talking about going to Tangshan, so I asked him to take me with him.

Having neither job nor home, I wandered the streets of Tangshan begging. An old woman said to me: "Girl, I know a place where you can have meals to eat. You just have to do some work." She told me the place was called Gaotaipo. It was owned by a Japanese couple named Shanben. ["Shanben" is the Chinese pronunciation of the two characters used to write the Japanese surname "Yamamoto."] I didn't know that place was, in fact, a military brothel until much later. I had no idea that it was a comfort station, nor did I know what a comfort station was at that time.

[Lei Guiying stopped recounting her story and told the interviewers that, besides the Gaotaipo comfort station, there was another comfort station in Tangshan. It was referred to as "Dai Li's Mansion" (*Dai Li lou*) or "Big Mansion" (*Da lou*). The remains of the Gaotaipo comfort station have been removed and a new building has been constructed on the site.]

At Shanben's house I worked as a nanny and maid. There were two children in the family. One was a boy named Haturō, who was about six years old; the other was a little girl named Nobu-chan. [The children's names are recorded as Lei Guiying pronounced them.] Their mother appeared to be kind. She gave me money to take the children out to shows, which she called *katsudō*. I didn't understand any Japanese at first. Once Mrs. Shanben wanted me to buy *nankin mame*, but I had no clue what she was talking about. She then went in and brought out a bag to show me. It turned out *nankin mame* were peanuts.

Mr. Shanben was a businessman. Mrs. Shanben was often not home, but I didn't know exactly what she was doing. It seemed that she worked at a shop local people called "Tianfu Devil's" selling groceries. Every now and then Mr. Shanben would take a military vehicle to Shanghai to buy goods like sugar or soy sauce and then sell them to the Japanese troops. Mr. Shanben had a card that enabled him to enter the military compound freely.

The Shanbens' house, which I later figured out was a military brothel, was near a highway. There was a kitchen next to the entrance and a large storage room on the east side. Next to the kitchen was a small storage room where I slept. They put the things they bought from Shanghai in the small storage room. There was a centre hall with two side rooms. Next to them there was a huge room with a wide bed. Thirteen girls lived there. They were all Chinese but wore Japanese robes. The older girls at Gaotaipo were about seventeen or eighteen, and some of the younger ones fifteen or sixteen. I often saw Japanese men come and take one or two of the girls into the bedroom with them. The robes these girls wore had wide sleeves and a sash. They wore flowers in their hair. None of them could speak Japanese. When the Japanese

soldiers came, they called the girls *gu'niang*. [This is a Chinese word meaning "maiden."]

I turned thirteen in 1942 and I began menstruating that year. Mrs. Shanben smiled at me. "Congratulations!" she said, "You are a grownup now." I remember that it was a summer day and a lot of Japanese troops came to the Shanbens' house. I saw them picking out good-looking girls and mumbling something. Mrs. Shanben told me to change into a Japanese robe that had a bumpy sash at the back and to go to that large room. Before I could figure out what was going on, I was pushed over to the Japanese soldiers. I was frightened. A Japanese soldier pulled me over, ripped off my clothes, and threw me on the wide bed. I resisted with all my strength. My wrist was injured during the fight and the wound left a scar that is still visible now. The Japanese soldier pressed my belly with both of his knees and hit my head with the hilt of his sword while crushing me under his body. He raped me.

On weekdays not many Japanese soldiers came to the comfort station, so I continued working as a nanny in the house. Many Japanese troops came on weekend evenings. Sometimes five or six came in a group. They also came during the day, but they didn't spend the night there. When I first went to Gaotaipo, there were always many girls and a lot of Japanese soldiers; usually ten or more of them would come together. Later the number of Japanese troops decreased to five or six at a time. I could tell that some of them were officers because I saw the guard stand and salute. Each officer wore leather boots and a long sword and threw his weight about. The soldiers each carried a rifle with a bayonet.

The large room containing the wide bed was about twenty-five square metres and had a cement floor. The bed built against the walls was lower than my knees and covered with straw mats. The Japanese soldiers took off their shoes before getting on the bed rather than at the entrance of the room. The wide bed ran from wall to wall without any separators; when the Japanese troops came, curtains were hung on metal wires to divide it into a small space for each girl. A row of stands for bowls stood against the wall on the opposite side of the room. There was also a small dining table. Meals were brought into the room and the girls were not allowed to go out.

The Japanese soldiers used rubber condoms. I had seen condoms before when I was cleaning the house, but I didn't know what they were then. We were told to wash our lower bodies after each time a Japanese soldier came. There was a greenish substance in the wash water. Mr. Shanben distributed towels, toilet paper, and Japanese robes to the girls. The robe had a bumpy sash at the back. We had nothing else besides these things.

At Gaotaipo Comfort Station the girls were given three meals a day – usually rice with soy sauce, and on some rare occasions there was canned fish – but often not enough to eat. Because I worked as the nanny in the house, I was allowed to go to the kitchen. Sympathetic kitchen workers sometimes gave me food, which I shared secretly with the other girls. Unable to leave the room, the girls stayed on the wide bed every day and played cards. Occasionally the Japanese military men gave finery to the girls they liked, but I didn't see any of the girls receive any monetary payment. I saw some of the older girls playing with the gifts, but I never received anything from the Japanese troops because I was too young.

Most of the girls learned to smoke cigarettes in the comfort station and some smoked opium. I had no idea where or how the girls obtained the opium. The girls smoked stealthily in the latrine. Later I picked up the bad habit, too, and it took me a long time to quit smoking opium.

When I was forced to move into that big room, there were only four girls, including me. Life there was hell. Once I saw a group of Japanese soldiers rape a girl continuously. When they left we saw that her belly had already swelled up. The older girls massaged her lower abdomen; then blood and fluid gushed all over the floor. One day I saw the Japanese soldiers burning a dead girl's body on a pile of firewood; the girl had been tortured to death in the station. Many years later my husband told me that, when he had worked as a forest ranger, he had also seen Japanese troops burning the bodies of girls by pouring kerosene on them. The flames leapt up very high.

I suffered horrible torture in the comfort station. One day a Japanese soldier came in the afternoon. He put his two legs on my abdomen, which hurt me badly and made me bleed. I resisted as hard as I could, trying to push him off my body. The Japanese soldier then beat me and stabbed my leg with his bayonet. I used all my strength to crawl toward the door. Several people saw me and one young man who was a distant relative of mine saved me from being killed, but the bayonet stabbing crippled me.

I realized that, sooner or later, I would be tortured to death by the Japanese troops at Gaotaipo; I was determined to escape. I worked as the nanny in the house, so I knew the way out. When my wounded leg recovered and I was able to walk, I made up my mind to run away.

I did so in the early morning one day toward the end of 1943. The weather was very cold. I sneaked out the back door of Gaotaipo Comfort Station when the rest of the people were still sound asleep. Running for my life, I dared not look back. I ran all the way to my mother's house in Ligangtou Village. After a period in hiding, I settled down in the village.

After the liberation my life changed. I worked hard and became the leader of the local women's work team. At seventeen I married a man of the Tang family, but I was unable to bear a child. We adopted an abandoned boy who was very sick and almost dead. I held him in my arms and felt very sorry for him, so I brought him home from the local police station.

I haven't been to Gaotaipo again since my escape. For about half a year I was raped by the Japanese troops there; I never want to see that place again. When I escaped from Gaotaipo, I brought a few things with me, including a Japanese lunchbox and some Japanese clothing. I didn't keep them because they made me angry and upset when I looked at them. Now I only have this left. I saw the girls in the comfort station use it. I thought it must be useful medically, so I took it with me. But I didn't know what it was.

[Lei Guiying showed the interviewers a small bottle with dark powder in it. A test conducted later indicated that the powder was potassium permanganate, which must have been put in wash water for hygienic purposes in the comfort station.]

Now my adopted son has grown old and I have great-grandchildren. I don't have many years left to live. The anguish of my torture in the past is pent-up in my heart and is stifling me. My son said to me: "You didn't do anything wrong. You were forced to become a comfort woman. You should not let this page of history be buried in silence." I think he is right. I must tell the truth, and I want justice.

*Since the redress movement began in the 1990s, support for the Chinese survivors increased in China. When Lei Guiying suffered a stroke and was brought to the emergency room in the Jiangsu Province Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital on 22 April 2007, people from all walks of life came to visit her; flower and fruits baskets piled up in front of her room. Young people from northern China who had never met Lei Guiying also came to visit her and made donations to pay for her medical treatment. Lei Guiying fell into a coma that evening: she never woke up. On 26 April 2007, Lei Guiying died at the age of seventy-nine. She was laid to rest in the Tangshan Christian Church cemetery.*

(Interviewed by Chen Ketao in May 2006; interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in July 2006)

### Zhou Fenying

*After the fall of Nanjing, Japanese forces advanced into the adjacent areas. In March 1938, the Japanese army occupied Rugao, a small county about 280 kilometres east of Nanjing. Japanese soldiers raped women indiscriminately, including young girls of eight or nine and seventy-year-old women. At the same time, the troops established comfort stations both inside and outside Rugao city limits.\* Zhou Fenying was kidnapped and taken to one of the military comfort stations in the area during this period.*



Figure 9 Zhou Fenying, in 2007, speaking to interviewers of her wartime experiences.

My parents were natives of Wenchi Village, a small village across from Yangjiayuan Village, where I live now. My father's name was Zhou Fusheng. My mother didn't have a formal name. People called her the "Sixth Girl." My parents owned no land, so the family depended on my father working as a farmhand for others. I was born in the Lunar Fifth Month [1917]. My parents already had four sons when I was born, and the family was often starving. Seeing no way to provide for another child, my parents thought I might be



able to survive if they could give me away. However, it was not easy to find a family to take me. In rural places at that time boys were wanted because they were seen as able to do the farm work when they grew up. Girls were unwanted and were called "money-losing goods" since they would serve another family when they were married and their parents had to spend a fortune to pay for the dowry. One day, in despair, my parents placed me on the roadside in the early morning, hoping that someone would see me and take me home. However, an old woman in the neighbourhood recognized me and brought me back to them. Holding me tightly, my parents cried their hearts out.

When I turned five I was sold to the Ni family in nearby Yangjiayuan Village to be a "child-daughter-in-law," as was commonly done at the time. [A child-daughter-in-law would be treated as an adopted child first and then become the wife of their son when she reached adulthood.] I was so young that I no longer remember anything else about my family of birth except the nicknames of my older brothers.

My father-in-law was called Ni Er and the villagers called my mother-in-law Ni Er's. They had two sons: the older son was called Ni Jincheng, and the younger one Ni Gui. I was Ni Jincheng's child-bride-to-be. Ni Jincheng was ten at the time, five years older than I. My mother-in-law was a capable and tough woman. My father-in-law rarely stayed home. He had an affair with another woman and had a child with her. My mother-in-law raised her two sons mostly by herself and the family was very poor. Jincheng and I weren't married until 1936, when he was twenty-four and I was nineteen. People said that I was an exceptionally pretty girl for I was fair-skinned and of slight build. [During the interview trip, local people told the interviewers that Zhou Fenying had been a famous beauty in the area. She was already ninety and had lost her eyesight at the time of the interview, but she still dressed neatly, wearing a straw hat that protected her face from the sunlight.] Jincheng and I grew up together and we loved each other very much. He protected me as if he were an older brother. We "separated out" from my in-laws' house after we were married. I said "separated out," but we didn't really have our own house to move to. We just added a small room to my in-laws' straw-thatched cottage and built our own cooking stove. This little thatched addition with mud walls became our bridal chamber.

The Japanese army occupied Rugao about two years after we were married. [Rugao is located in the Changjiang River Delta. Yangjiayuan Village, where Zhou Fenying lived, is in the Town of Baipu, Rugao City.] I clearly remember the day when the Japanese troops came into our village. It was in the spring of 1938 and that day was my cousin Wu Qun's birthday. She was about my age and also good-looking. My husband was away from home

working in the fields. We heard that the Japanese troops accompanied by local traitors had come to kidnap girls. All the women in the village ran desperately trying to escape. My cousin and I ran for our lives. We crossed a little river and hid ourselves behind a millstone in a villager's courtyard, but the Japanese troops chased after us and found us. Later we learned that the Japanese troops had been looking for good-looking girls to put in their comfort station. Because my cousin and I were known for our good looks, we had been targeted. The Japanese soldiers tied our feet with ropes so that we could not run away. Then they had us loaded into a wheelbarrow, one on each side, where they tied us tightly with more ropes. They forced some villagers to push the wheelbarrow to the Town of Baipu. The ropes and the jolting of the wheelbarrow hurt our bodies like hell all the way.

At Baipu we were unloaded at Zhongxing Hotel. The owner of the hotel had fled before the Japanese army came, and the Japanese troops made the hotel their comfort station. We were scared to death and couldn't even cry. When I looked around, I saw about twenty girls were already there. The barracks held about fifty Japanese troops, who kidnapped dozens of young women from nearby villages to be their comfort women. Each of the girls in the comfort station was given a number. The number was printed in red on a piece of white cloth, which was about three *cun* long and two *cun* [1 *cun* equals  $\frac{1}{3}$  decimetre] wide. People said that the numbers were given based on the looks of the girls; I was made number one.

We were not allowed to step out of the station. There were two or three elderly women from the Town of Baipu who cleaned, delivered food and water and so on. There was also an old woman, a Chinese, who supervised the women and collected fees. This old woman gave us a yuan or so every month to buy daily necessities, but this money was far from enough. Because we were only given two coarse meals a day we were always hungry. I had to save that money and ask people to buy me some food when I was starving. At mealtimes we were taken to a large room with six or eight big tables, each of which seated eight people. Each of us had a small room with a bed, a small table, and a little stool. There was also a basin in my room. All the women had to share towels and one big tub of water for bathing. I wore my own clothes all the time I was in the station, and, as time went on, I had to ask my in-laws to send me a change of clothing.

I was extremely frightened when I was forced to service the Japanese troops. I had heard that Japanese soldiers would stab every Chinese man and rape every Chinese woman they found. On the first day I could not stop crying and my mind fell into a trance, so one of the cleaning women stayed in my room with me until a Japanese soldier came in. The soldier became very angry

when he saw me crying. He pushed his bayonet against my chest, snarling in a low voice. I thought he was going to kill me and I almost passed out. The Japanese soldier then raped me.

The Japanese troops came to the station about every seven days, and we were made to do other jobs when the soldiers didn't come. Many of the soldiers had two or three stripes on their epaulettes, so I guessed they were officers. They paid the old woman with military money to buy tickets before coming to pick girls. Quite a few of them would pick me, and some came to my room regularly. I cried every day, hoping that my husband could free me from this place. However, the place was closely guarded by the soldiers and there was no way for him to rescue me.

The Japanese officers made me follow their orders. If I obeyed they sometimes gave me a small gift, but if I showed even the slightest unhappiness they would yell at me. I was forced to do whatever they told me to. I remember that a Japanese person wearing white clothing came to check our bodies, including our private places. I didn't understand what he was doing at the time, but I was very scared and my whole body shook when he checked me. The Japanese doctor also came to check me when I fell sick in the comfort station. The old woman gave us some small rubber caps and told us to put one on the soldier's penis when he arrived.

I was kept in the comfort station for about three months. In the seventh month that year [1938], Mr. Yang, a clerk who was working in the puppet town government, helped free me. People said that Mr. Yang had had an interest in me because of my good looks, so he paid a ransom and used his connections to get me released. Mr. Yang wanted me to be his concubine, but I refused. I told him that I had a husband and I wanted to go home.

When I was released my mother-in-law did not want me to return home. She could not take the widespread gossip in the village, where people were saying that I had been defiled by the Japanese troops. However, my husband, Jincheng, accepted me. He said, "Fenyong was kidnapped by the Japanese troops, but this was not her fault." He brought me home despite what the villagers and my mother-in-law said. Still, he was deeply humiliated because they looked down on me. I could sense that his heart was filled with anger and hatred toward the Japanese troops. At the time Chinese forces were enlisting soldiers to fight the Japanese army in our area. Jincheng wanted to join the Chinese army, but I didn't want him to leave. I said to him: "If you really want to go, take me with you. I'll go anywhere you go." I then followed him everywhere. The Chinese enlistees came to our town several times, but Jincheng was unable to join the army because of me. However, he was determined to seek revenge. One morning when I woke up I found he was gone.

That was at the end of the year [1940], the Lunar Eleventh Month. I knew he went to fight against the Japanese forces. Jincheng never returned home. Years later the local government informed me that Jincheng had joined the First Regiment of the New Fourth Army (Xinsijun).<sup>5</sup> He was killed in a battle at Guxi in Taixing County in 1941.

A kind man in the village, Mr. Jiang, often helped me with heavy work after my husband left home. He was thirteen years older than I and was not married due to the lack of money. In 1943 he proposed to me. We were married that year and had a son a year later. We named our son Jiang Weixun.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, my first husband, Ni Jincheng, was granted military honours. When my second husband died, I told my son and grandchildren about my painful past. I also told them that I had married twice and how my first husband joined the resistance forces and fought to his death against the Japanese troops. I wanted them to remember who had committed the atrocities against me and the Chinese people.

I now live with my son, my grandson, my grandson's wife, and my great-granddaughter. In 2007, my son read in a newspaper article that comfort station survivor Lei Guiying had died. [This is the same Lei Guiying whose narrative is presented earlier.] He also learned that the Japanese high court had just rejected two cases filed by former Chinese labourers and comfort women. I cried when my son told me that. I respected Lei Guiying, who had the courage to reveal her experiences to the world and to testify on behalf of all the comfort women. The Japanese government refuses to take responsibility for the crimes Japanese soldiers committed against Chinese women during the war, but I can be one of the witnesses. I let my son send letters to people telling of my experience in the comfort station. [Jiang Weixun sent the letters to Rugao City Women's Federation, the Association for Research on the Nanjing Massacre, and the Jiangsu Province Academy of Social Sciences.] My son told me that the right-wing activists in Japan want to cover up the crimes committed by the Japanese military, but we cannot let them have their way. Although Lei Guiying died, I will continue her efforts.

*One year after she revealed her experience in the Japanese military comfort station to the public, Zhou Fenyong died on 6 July 2008 at her home in Yangjiayuan Village, Rugao County.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in October 2007)

### Zhu Qiaomei

*On 18 March 1938, three months after the Nanjing Massacre, Japanese forces landed on Chongming Island, which is located at the mouth of the Yangtze River near Shanghai. The island, from a military perspective, was an important geographical position. Two Japanese warships and five combat planes covered the landing and the occupation forces stationed in each of the four major towns on the island. One month later, three hundred additional Japanese troops from Shanghai and Ningbo were assembled on Chongming. Wang Jingwei's puppet government also sent security troops to the area from Shanghai.<sup>6</sup> Although, after the outbreak of war on the Pacific front in 1942, some troops were dispatched to the battlefronts at Burma, Singapore, and elsewhere, a large number of troops remained on Chongming Island until Japan's surrender in 1945. Many local women were assaulted and abducted into the military comfort stations during the Japanese occupation. Zhu Qiaomei and Lu Xiuzhen were both forced to serve as Japanese military comfort women on Chongming Island.<sup>7</sup>*



**Figure 10** Zhu Qiaomei at the 2001 notarization of her wartime experiences.

My name is Zhu Qiaomei. Because my husband's last name was Zhou, I was also called Zhou Qiaomei, or Zhou Aqiao ["Aqiao" is her nickname.] I was born in Ximen of Xiaokunshan in Songjiang County, Shanghai, in the Year of the Dog and am now ninety-one years old.

In my youth I was a bookbinder working at Commercial Press in Shanghai; I married Zhou Shouwen in 1928. In 1932, the Japanese forces bombed the Commercial Press building so I lost my job and fled to Chongming with my husband. From that time on we never left Chongming. We settled in Miaozhen Town and opened a little restaurant named "House of Eternal Prosperity" (Yongxing guan). Our restaurant was not big and mainly served cold dishes and light refreshments, but the business was good. My husband and I had a very good relationship, so we lived a quiet and sweet life. In July 1933, I gave birth to my second son, Zhou Xie.

In the spring of 1938 the Japanese army occupied Chongming and Japanese troops built a blockhouse at Miaozhen, where one company of Japanese soldiers was stationed. The remains of that building were torn down a few years ago. Japanese troops constantly came out to assault the village people. We didn't have anywhere to run to, so we stayed in our little restaurant. One day, several Japanese soldiers dashed into our restaurant, wearing yellowish uniforms and holding long rifles. They forced all of the customers to leave and raped me in a locked room. At that time I was two or three months pregnant with my third son, Zhou Xin.

The Japanese unit,<sup>8</sup> whose name I think was "Songjing Company" ["Songjing" is written in two characters, which are read as "Matsui" in Japanese], lived in a two- or three-story building.<sup>9</sup> I remember that people called the unit head "Senge," and the head of a squadron "Heilian" [These names are hard to reconcile because they do not seem to be the pronunciations of the characters used in common Japanese names; the local people may have pronounced the names incorrectly], and there was an interpreter. They searched high and low for good-looking women to "comfort" the Japanese officers. In order to meet the desires of the Japanese officers, they forced seven townswomen to form a "comfort woman group." These "Seven Sisters" were Zhou Haimei (Sister Mei), Lu Fenglang (Sister Feng), Yang Qijie (Sister Qi), Zhou Dalang (Sister Da), Jin Yu (Sister Yu), Guo Yaying (Sister Ying), and me (people called me Sister Qiao). We became those Japanese troops' sex slaves. They declared us set aside for special service to the military officers. The ordinary soldiers, who were not allowed to touch us, assaulted the other girls of the town.

The seven of us remained in our own homes. The interpreter would give us service assignments or call us to the blockhouse. Sometimes the Japanese

military officers also forced their way into our homes to rape us. If we didn't let them, they would smash things in our houses or shops and would take out their bayonets and threatened to kill us. "Die! Die!" they yelled. The horrors were beyond human imagination.

When I was first abducted by Japanese troops I was already pregnant, but the Japanese officers raped me despite the baby in my belly. And merely two months after I birthed the child I was again subjected to frequent rapes. I had a lot of breast milk at the time, so the officers Senge and Heilian would suck my breast milk dry every time before raping me. Afraid of being killed, I had no choice but to put up with these atrocities. The Japanese troops designated a special room in their blockhouse for raping us. In the room there was only a bathtub and a bed. When we were taken in, first we had to bathe and then the Japanese military men would rape us on the little bed next to the tub. Other than that the troops never took any hygienic measures. We were almost tortured to death; no form of remuneration was ever mentioned.

This kind of torture continued until 1939. Every week I was assaulted by the Japanese troops at least five times, sometimes even more. It has been so many years now that I can't remember the details very clearly, but I remember there were times I was taken in there and kept for an entire day and night before I was released. Let me tell you something I didn't want to say before: among the "Seven Sisters" I mentioned earlier, Sister Mei was my mother-in-law who was already over fifty years old at the time. Those Japanese troops really sinned! Sister Feng was my mother-in-law's younger sister who was about forty years old, and Sister Da also was a relative – a distant cousin of mine. Four in just one family suffered these atrocities; what a miserable fate!

Seeing how I was tormented by the Japanese military, my husband Zhou Shouwen chose to fight and joined the local anti-Japanese guerrilla force. But later he was seized by the Japanese troops and beaten to death. After the liberation, we found only one surviving witness who knew how he had died; this didn't conform to government regulations, which, required at least two witnesses, so my husband didn't earn a title of honour. How regrettable!

I was finally freed in 1939 when the Japanese troops withdrew from Miaozhen. By that time I had already developed serious venereal disease and other diseases. Today I still suffer from constant headaches, renal disorder, as well as incurable mental trauma. I am not able to free myself from mental stress, even though I never did anything of which I should feel ashamed. One thing I feel extremely bitter about is that my husband was beaten to death by the Japanese soldiers. Since his death I have been living in widowhood and have never remarried. For a long time I didn't want to talk about what the Japanese army had done to me: it was utterly unspeakable. Now, I have only my second

son Zhou Xie and my third son Zhou Xin. I live with Zhou Xie. He is my legal representative for my lawsuit against the Japanese government. The Japanese troops were so evil; I am fighting to regain my dignity and honour. Guo Yaying, whom we called Sister Ying and who had lived next door to our little restaurant, had also opened a restaurant. I am a witness to Sister Ying's torture. I demand a formal apology and compensation from the Japanese government.

*After the death of Zhu Qiaomei's husband, their restaurant was destroyed and Zhu Qiaomei's family became destitute, living for decades in an old, tattered shed. On 20 February 2005, Zhu Qiaomei succumbed to illness in her home at the age of ninety-five. The Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" sponsored the placement of a gravestone to commemorate her life.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in May 2000, September 2000, February 2001, and March 2001)

### Lu Xiuzhen

*During their occupation of Chongming Island the Japanese forces set up a comfort station called Hui'an-suo in the Town of Miaozen. The station, whose buildings no longer exist, was established on the property of local Chinese residents. There was no highway connecting the Town of Miaozen and the village where Lu Xiuzhen had lived, so the villagers did not expect the Japanese soldiers to traverse the difficult paths to their homes and, therefore, did not hide. Lu Xiuzhen and other women were thus easily kidnapped by Japanese troops and taken to the comfort station.<sup>10</sup>*



**Figure 11** Lu Xiuzhen, in 2000, giving a talk at the International Symposium on Chinese "Comfort Women" at Shanghai Normal University.

I was born in the Year of the Horse [1917], in a village north of the Miaozen River on Chongming Island. Both of my parents were poor peasants and had no means of supporting me, so they gave me to the Zhu family to be their adopted daughter. However, my adoptive parents changed their minds later

and wanted to make me their oldest son's child-bride. I appreciated being their daughter but didn't want to be their child-daughter-in-law, so I refused and even attempted to run away. Because of this situation, I remained unmarried when I turned twenty-one. [At that time it was a common practice in rural China for females to marry at a very young age, often around or before eighteen. Twenty-one was considered rather old for marriage.] That year [1938] the Japanese army occupied Chongming Island. I heard that the Japanese troops had vacations. Their officers had a week-long vacation, while the soldiers had three days. On their vacation days the military men would come to the villages from where they were stationed. They looted chickens, grain, or anything they could find and shot oxen and pigs to eat. Worse even than that, the Japanese soldiers kidnapped the girls and women they could find. Women in the village were frightened to death, running for their lives as fast as they could when they saw the Japanese soldiers. Those who did not flee fast enough were captured. I was one of the girls captured by Interpreter Jin and the Japanese soldiers. My mother heard about my capture and went to beg the Japanese soldiers to release me. She kneeled in front of them, holding me tightly so that they could not drag me away. The Japanese soldiers then raised their rifles and yelled fiercely at my mother, "Let her go with us or we will burn your house to ashes!" Chinese people suffered hellishly when the Japanese army invaded our country. Japanese soldiers could kill us at will with their guns, so my mother had no way to save me. Those Japanese troops were not human; they were no different from beasts.

The day I was kidnapped was an extremely cold day in the Second Lunar Month, when the Chinese New Year was just over. I was taken to the military compound in the Town of Miaozen, Chongming County. The building was a two-storey house in which were confined over a dozen local young women. I was unfamiliar with most of them. I only knew one girl, whom we called XX the Beggar, and another one named XXX. [The names are omitted to protect the victims' privacy.]

I was assigned to a room on the lower floor of the building. Each of us girls had a very small room in which there was a bed and nothing else. The building was very close to the military barracks. It was guarded by soldiers, but we were allowed to walk around the facility and do things such as washing clothes. The platoon chief ordered soldiers to watch us and not to let us go too far, and we were not allowed to enter the barracks.

Shortly after I was taken into the comfort station I was raped by many soldiers. My lower body hurt so much that I could neither walk nor even sit. The platoon chief came frequently. He was about thirty years old and wore a sword. He came every two or three days, usually during the day, and

sometimes brought canned food with him. I noticed that the Japanese troops stationed at Chongming often ate canned food. Perhaps they feared being poisoned by the Chinese people; they would not eat any dish made by Chinese cooks before testing it by having a Chinese person eat it first. Occasionally the soldiers gave us a little of the food they brought over, but they never gave us any money. Needless to say, I never dared to ask for money.

As time passed, the platoon chief seemed to have said something to the soldiers and prohibited them from entering my room; so only the platoon chief himself frequented my room. The soldiers resented me very much since they were not allowed to touch me. When the chief was not around, they would retaliate by throwing my clothes up on top of the roof and so on. With no extra changes I had to wear the same clothes all the time and wash them at night. When the platoon chief found out about what the soldiers had done to me, he scolded them. The soldiers stopped bullying me after that, while the platoon chief kept me to service only himself, abusing me viciously.

The big house had a cook who made the meals, which usually consisted of rice and a bowl of vegetables. Sometimes the vegetables were served in small dishes placed in a large box. Labourers in the house were all Chinese. One of the workers was a traitor named Xu Qigou, who supervised the comfort women. His wife worked as the cook, did laundry, and also served meals to the Japanese soldiers. This woman was very mean; she often yelled at us and gave us only a very small amount of food. We were always starving.

The Japanese soldiers did not wear condoms when they raped the women in the station. Occasionally a doctor, who was a Chinese person, gave us physical examinations. I remember the doctor came two or three times and he stuck something into our lower body to check it. I don't remember if we were given any medicine.

I was kept in the comfort station until one morning in the Fifth Lunar Month that year [1938] when I escaped from that place. It was when the fields turned golden yellow and the villagers were harvesting wheat. I had planned to escape for a long time. That day, when I saw the Japanese soldiers off guard, I sneaked out. I made sure that nobody noticed me then ran without stopping. There was a highway near the comfort station and I knew my hometown was on the south side of it, but I didn't dare to go back there. Fearing that the Japanese soldiers might come after me by the highway, I didn't go that way but instead ran along small paths. I ran for a long while without a specific destination until it occurred to me that I had a relative who treated me like a daughter in Shanghai, so I decided to go there.

The trip to Shanghai was hard, but I managed to get a free boat ride across the Yangtze River and to find my relative. She sympathized with me and let

me stay at her place. She also sent a message to my family saying that I was with her. I didn't return home until a person from my hometown came to tell us that the Japanese troops had been relocated.

Because I had been raped by the enemy, people in my village gossiped about me, saying that I slept with Japanese soldiers. I was unable to find a prospective husband until I was thirty-three years old, when someone introduced me to Mr. Wang, a custodian at Huaihai Middle School in Shanghai. He was looking for a woman to help care for his family after his wife died, leaving him with two young children. I married him, but I was unable to bear children. People in my village believed that a person defiled by Japanese soldiers would bring bad luck and could not produce anything good. They said I could not even grow things well in the fields. I lack education and have no knowledge of medicine, so it's hard for me to tell if my infertility was due to the damage caused by the Japanese soldiers.

I am so embarrassed talking about these things. These things are so hard to talk about, but my stepson and daughter-in-law have been very supportive and they encourage me to tell the truth and seek justice. I am very old now and I cannot stomach the atrocities done to me any more. I cannot walk, my head is dizzy all the time, and my memory is failing me. I hate the Japanese troops who destroyed my reputation and my life. Japanese troops invaded our country and committed the crimes that caused my misery; whether they admit it or not, that fact cannot be altered. Some Japanese people do not admit the bad things Japanese troops did in the past, but other survivors and I are still alive and we can provide evidence. We will fight to the end!

*On 14 February 2001, Shanghai Jing'an District Notary, Shanghai Tianhong Law Firm, and the Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" notarized the testimonies of Lu Xiuzhen, Zhu Qiaomei, and Guo Yaying regarding their experiences as Japanese military comfort women. A year later, Lu Xiuzhen died on 24 November 2002. Chen Lifei and Zhang Tingting, from the Research Centre for Chinese "Comfort Women," attended her funeral, and the research centre sponsored the placement of her tombstone.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in March and May 2000, and February 2001)

## 6 Warzones in Central and Northern China

### Yuan Zhulin

*When the Japanese forces attacked Nanjing the Chinese Nationalist leaders shifted their headquarters to Wuhan, Hubei Province, then the most populous city in central China as well as a transportation centre. Japanese forces launched major air strikes on Wuhan in April 1938,<sup>1</sup> and this was followed by a massive campaign in the summer of the same year. Chinese forces committed a large number of units to protect Wuhan. Bloody battles, which involved 300,000 Japanese and 1 million Chinese troops, lasted for months in the region and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. The defence eventually fell to Japanese troops at the end of October 1938.<sup>2</sup> The Japanese army continued to press westward and southward after the occupation of Wuhan, but it was unable to completely control Hubei and the nearby provinces. The war in the Chinese theatre was deadlocked. During the seven years of fighting in the region the Japanese military established a full-blown comfort women system in the occupied areas of Hubei. Yuan Zhulin was one of the many Chinese women enslaved in Japanese military comfort stations there.*



**Figure 12** Yuan Zhulin, in 1998, attending a public hearing in Toronto on the atrocities committed by the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War.

I was born in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, in 1922, on the Sixteenth day of the Fifth Lunar Month. My father, Yuan Shengjie, and my mother, Zhang Xiangzi, had three daughters. They were very poor and didn't have the money to send me to school. Unable to support us three girls, my parents sent my two sisters and me to other families, one after the other, to be child-daughters-in-law. My family fell apart and I never saw my sisters again. I married Wang Guodong, a chauffeur, at the age of fifteen. We were not rich, but we loved each other and lived a comfortable life.

However, our peaceful life didn't last very long. In June 1938, the year after we were married, the Japanese armies launched attacks on Wuhan City. My husband was at work in the faraway area controlled by Chinese forces. I had no place to escape to and stayed home. Not long after my husband left, my mother-in-law began to treat me like an outcast. She thought I was an extra burden on the family and, since her son might never be able to return, she forced me to leave the family and remarry. I felt very humiliated, yet I had no choice but to marry a man named Liu Wanghai. The following year I gave birth to a girl named Rongxian. She was the only child I birthed. [Yuan Zhulin didn't want to talk about her only daughter at the interview. Later the interviewers found out that the child had died of neglect while Yuan was held as a comfort woman.] Liu Wanghai didn't have a stable job; in order to help support the family, I worked as a maid, although frequently I could not find a job in the turmoil and economic depression during the Japanese invasion.

In the spring of 1940, a local woman named Zhang Xiuying came to recruit workers. She said that cleaning women were wanted at hotels in the other cities in Hubei Province. I had never met Zhang before, but since it was very difficult to find a job at the time, several other young girls and I signed up. I was eighteen years old then and good-looking, so I stood out among the other girls.

I didn't know until much later that Zhang Xiuying was a despicable woman. Her Japanese husband could speak some Chinese; following orders issued by the Japanese army, he was rounding up Chinese women to set up a comfort station. I still remember how he looked; he was a man of medium height who often wore Western-style suits rather than a military uniform. He had dark skin and bug-eyes, and people called him "Goldfish Eyes." He was about forty years old.

I left my second husband, Liu Wanghai, and my daughter behind and travelled aboard a ship down the Yangtze River. In the beginning I was quite happy to have found a job, and I thought it could bring me a better future after the initial hardship. The ship arrived at Ezhou in about a day. As soon as we went ashore, we were taken to a temple by Japanese soldiers. As a



matter of fact, the Japanese army had already turned the temple into a comfort station. A Japanese soldier was standing guard at the entrance. I was frightened by the devilish-looking soldiers and didn't want to enter. By now the girls and I realized that something was not right, so we all wanted to go home. I cried "This is not a hotel. I want to go home." But the Japanese soldiers forced us inside with their bayonets.

As soon as we entered the station the proprietor ordered us to take off all our clothes for an examination. We refused, but Zhang Xiuying's husband had his men beat us with leather whips. Zhang Xiuying yelled at me maliciously: "You are the wife of a guerrilla! You'd better follow the instructions!" [Zhang was likely referring to Yuan Zhulin's first husband, who worked in the area under the control of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang), which led the fighting against Japanese forces.] The physical examination was over very quickly since none of us was a prostitute and no one had a venereal disease. After the examination, the proprietor gave each girl a Japanese name. I was named Masako. Each of us was assigned a room of about seven or eight square metres that had only a bed and a spittoon.

The following morning I saw a wooden sign hung on the door of my room with "Masako" written on it. There were also similar plaques hung at the entrance of the comfort station. That morning a lot of Japanese soldiers were swarming outside of the temple gate. Soon a long line formed at the door of each room. I ... [sobbing] was raped by ten big Japanese soldiers. I became so weak by the end of the day that I was unable to sit up. The lower part of my body felt as if it had been sliced with knives.

From that day onward, I became a sex slave to Japanese soldiers. I heard that each Japanese soldier had to buy a ticket to enter the comfort station, but I never saw how much they paid. I certainly never received a penny from them. The proprietor hired a Chinese man to cook us three meals a day, but the food was very bad and the amount was very small. We girls who suffered numerous rapes every day needed to wash our bodies, but there was only a wooden bucket in the kitchen for us to take turns using. There were dozens of comfort women at the station, so the bath water was unbearably dirty by the end of each day.

Each Japanese soldier usually spent about thirty minutes in a room. We couldn't get any rest even at night because the military officers often spent a couple of hours, sometimes the whole night, at the station. The proprietor didn't allow us a break even during our menstrual periods; he continued to let the Japanese soldiers come in one after another. He made us take some white pills and told us that there would be no pain if we took them. We didn't

know what the pills were. I threw them away like the other girls. The Japanese army required the soldiers to use condoms at the comfort station, but since many of them knew that I was new and probably didn't have syphilis, they would not use a condom when they came to my room. Soon I became pregnant. When the proprietor found out that we weren't taking the pills, he made everyone take them while he watched.<sup>3</sup>

Life became even more miserable after I became pregnant. I realized I would die sooner or later as a result of the abuse by the Japanese soldiers, but I didn't want to die. My parents were still alive and they needed me to take care of them. I secretly talked to another Hubei girl whom the Japanese troops called "Rumiko," and we planned to escape. However, we were caught as soon as we ran out. A Japanese soldier held my hair and violently hit my head against the wall. Blood immediately gushed out. The beating left me with incurable headaches; I still suffer from them to this day. [Yuan Zhuling had a miscarriage and because of that she was unable to bear a child for the rest of her life.]

From the first days when I was imprisoned in the comfort station, a Japanese military officer named Fujimura took a fancy to me. He was probably the head officer of the Japanese army stationed in Ezhou. At the beginning he bought tickets to visit the comfort station, as the other Japanese soldiers did, but after a while he requested instead that the proprietor send me to the place where he lived. Compared with the conditions in the comfort station, life conditions at Fujimura's house were better, but I was still the officer's slave with no freedom. After a while Fujimura lost interest in me. At that time a lower-ranking officer named Nishiyama seemed to be rather sympathetic toward me, and he asked Fujimura to give me to him. I was then taken to where Nishiyama's troops were stationed. This was quite an unusual experience, which, to this day, makes me believe that Nishiyama was a kind person.

Around 1941, I obtained Nishiyama's permission to return home to visit my parents, only to find that my father had already died. My father had worked as a labourer. Because he was a small man and very old, he was frequently fired and had difficulty finding another job. He starved to death. I went to look for Liu Wanghai, but couldn't find him either. I had no place to go, so I returned to Ezhou, where Nishiyama was.

The Chinese War of Resistance against Japan ended in August 1945. Nishiyama asked me to go with him, either to Japan or to Shihuiyao, a place that was then under the control of the New Fourth Army.<sup>4</sup> I did not go with him because I wanted to find my mother. [Yuan Zhulin stopped talking at this point and heaved a deep sigh.] Nishiyama was a good man. He served in



the Japanese army, but he didn't take advantage of his position to extort money. The shirt he wore was torn and ragged. He told me that he had once made a hole in a ship that was carrying supplies to the Japanese army and sank it. And when he saw Japanese troops electrocuting Chinese people who sold salt illegally, he felt sympathetic and he gave packages of salt to the Chinese people. [The Japanese military imposed strict control over the market during the war. Free purchase of salt was prohibited in some occupied areas.] Nishiyama left alone and I haven't heard from him since.

[Yuan didn't know whether Nishiyama had returned to Japan or had gone to Shihuiyao. She inquired about his whereabouts over the years with no results. Later, however, during the political turmoil in China, Yuan's relationship with the Japanese man brought her more hardship.]

After the Japanese surrender, I found my mother and went to live with her in her hometown, a small mountain village in the vicinity of Wuhan. We worked as day labourers to support ourselves. In 1946, I adopted a girl who was only a little over two months old. I named her Cheng Fei.

I returned to Wuhan after the Liberation in 1949 and lived at Number 2 Jixiangli. One day I saw Zhang Xiuying, the woman who had tricked me and the other girls into the living hell. Zhang was running a shop with an old man at the time. I immediately reported her to the local policeman in charge of household registration. I still remember that policeman's last name – Luo. But Officer Luo said: "Forget it. Those things are hard to investigate." His words chilled my heart as if it were doused with ice water. Zhang Xiuying has probably died by now.

Although deep in my heart, memories of my horrific past have always haunted me and caused me sleepless nights, my life with my mother was relatively peaceful. But, one day at a meeting called "Tell Your Sufferings in the Old Society and the Happiness in the New" (*yi ku si tian*) my naïve mother talked about my miseries when I was forced by the Japanese army to be a military comfort woman. This caused us big trouble. Children in the neighbourhood chased me, shouting: "A whore working for the Japanese! A whore working for the Japanese!"

In 1958, the Neighbourhood Committee officials accused me of having been a prostitute working for the Japanese,<sup>5</sup> and they ordered me to go to the remote northern province of Heilongjiang. I refused to go. The head of the Neighbourhood Committee then deceived me by saying that they needed my residence booklet and food purchase card for a routine check. They took these documents and revoked them. The policemen in charge of household registration then ordered me to reform through hard labour in the countryside. We were forced to move to Heilongjiang. My house was confiscated.

We spent the following seventeen years in Mishan [in Heilongjiang Province, northeast China] doing farm work, such as planting corn and harvesting soybeans. The weather was very cold there and we didn't have any firewood with which to warm ourselves. Each month we only got six *jin* [1 *jin* equals 0.5 kilograms] of soybean dregs to eat. [Soybean dregs are the solids left after the oil is extracted from soybeans, which are normally used to feed horses and cows, etc.] My adopted daughter was so hungry that she would grab dirt and eat it. We suffered all kinds of hardship. Luckily there was a section chief named Wang Wanlou who felt very sorry for how we suffered, so he helped us obtain permission to return to Wuhan. That was in 1975. I will be forever grateful for his kindness.

Today I am receiving 120 yuan [about fifteen dollars at the time] in monthly support from the government. My adopted daughter gives me 150 yuan every month, but she is retired, as am I. My health has long been destroyed. Because of the beatings by the Japanese soldiers, I have headaches every day that cause me difficulties sleeping. Even after taking many sleeping pills, I still cannot sleep more than two hours. For the remainder of the night, I sit in pain waiting for daybreak.

[At the end of the interview, Yuan Zhulin cried.]

My life was destroyed by the Japanese military. My first husband and I would never have been parted if there hadn't been the Japanese invasion. I have nightmares every night. In the nightmares I see myself suffering in that horrible place, suffering miseries beyond human imagination.

I am now seventy-nine years old. I don't have many years left. The Japanese government must pay compensation for our sufferings. I don't have time to wait any longer.

*Yuan Zhulin moved to Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province, to live with her adopted daughter in January 2006; she could no longer live alone due to old age and poor health. Two months later she suffered a stroke and died in hospital at the age of eighty-four. Chen Lifei and Yao Fei, from the Research Centre for Chinese "Comfort Women," attended the ceremony at which her ashes were laid to rest.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang in 1998 and 2001)

**Tan Yuhua**

*Between 29 September and 6 October 1939 Japanese forces suffered a major defeat in Hunan Province south of Hubei.<sup>6</sup> Chinese Nationalist soldiers fought fiercely to stop the advance of the Japanese army and, from 1939 to 1944, engaged in four major battles to defend the provincial capital, Changsha. In order to control Hunan, the Imperial Japanese Army deployed ten divisions with about 250,000 to 280,000 soldiers to the battle in 1944.<sup>7</sup> During approximately five years of fighting in the area Japanese troops established a large number of comfort stations. Tan Yuhua's hometown in Yiyang County, Hunan Province, was occupied by the 40th Division of the Japanese army in June 1944, a few days before the City of Changsha fell to the Japanese.*



**Figure 13** Tan Yuhua, in 2008, in front of her home.

My original name was Yao Chunxiu. I was born in the Seventeenth Year of the Republic of China [1928] in Yaojiawan, Shilang Township, Yiyang County, Hunan Province [today's Yaojiawan Group, Gaoping Village, Town of Oujiangcha, Heshan District, Yiyang City]. My father, Yao Meisheng, was a villager, but he was unable to do farm work due to his disabled legs, so he made a living as a craftsman, making bamboo items. My mother did not have a formal name; people called her "Yao's wife."

I was the only girl in the family, so my parents let me attend school for fun with my cousins. I attended a private village school for a few years. I still remember that our teacher was Mr. Yuan; he later stopped teaching after the Japanese troops occupied our area. I learned how to read *Zeng guang xian wen*<sup>8</sup> and *You xue qiong lin*,<sup>9</sup> but I've forgotten most of the characters I learned.

The Japanese troops came to my hometown in the Thirty-Third Year of the Republic of China [1944], when I was sixteen. Local people all fled. That day I was having my supper when I heard the neighing of horses and braying of donkeys at the riverside. I saw the Japanese troops crossing the Dazha River, marching in our direction, and creating an air of terror. We were frightened and ran away, but my father was unable to run with us because his legs hurt. My mother, uncle, cousin, and I ran without stopping until we reached the Fumen Mountains sixty *li* [thirty kilometres] away, where there were no Japanese soldiers around. We stayed at my aunt's house for about half a year. During the Japanese occupation local people always helped each other, kindly providing food and lodging to others who had fled from Japanese attack.

I remember that, when we ran away, we were still wearing over-jackets, and it was already around the Eighth Lunar Month when we returned home. We heard that the township formed an Association for Maintaining Order run by local people, so we thought that order had been restored and that it would be safe to return home. People who had stayed in the area told me the Japanese troops had burned houses and randomly opened fire in Zhuliang-qiao.<sup>10</sup> They set fire to houses one after another. Many houses had thatched roofs at that time so they were easily burned down.

My family had a tile-roofed house so it was not burned. Our house was across the road from Zhuliang-qiao, where the Japanese soldiers often fired their guns. We placed a large table in the central room and covered it with a cotton-padded quilt. When we heard the gunfire we would hide under the table watching the soldiers passing by my house.

The Japanese soldiers were stationed in Zhuliang-qiao and also on Shizishan Mountain about one *li* away from Zhuliang-qiao. On top of the mountain

the Japanese troops built a lookout tower, which was constructed of wooden boards mounted to three big camphor trees. A guard standing on the tower could keep watch over the entire town of Zhuliang-qiao. The Japanese soldiers made a tunnel, and they went back and forth through it to Zhuliang-qiao.

One day I saw the Japanese soldiers capture a villager named Qiu Siyi, tie him to a wooden frame, and let an army dog maul him to death. The Japanese army dog was huge; it looked like a wolf. I also saw a woman captured by the soldiers, but I didn't know her name. She had attempted to escape but failed; the Japanese soldiers buried her alive. Another girl who was also buried alive looked very young, like a teenager. A soldier shovelled dirt onto her body; he stopped in the middle of his task and laughed until she died. I didn't know the girl's name.

My cousin was married right after we returned to our village in the Eighth Lunar Month, and soon after that I was married, too. Fearing the chaos of the war, our parents urged us to get married as soon as possible. However, fewer than twenty days after my wedding, I was kidnapped by Japanese troops. It was in the Ninth Lunar Month when the weather was not yet very cold. I was so frightened at the time that I cannot clearly remember what happened. I don't know the exact date and time, but I remember that I was wearing a single-layer coat. The Japanese troops came from the other side of the river, not from Zhuliang-qiao, so we didn't notice them approaching the town and were unable to run away in time.

The Japanese soldiers caught my crippled father first. They made him kneel down, and a soldier threatened to kill him with a long curved sword. I couldn't help crying out, so the Japanese soldiers found and caught me. The soldiers also captured two other girls, Yao Bailian and Yao Cuilian, both of whom were my cousins and schoolmates; both were older than I. One of my aunts died during that attack. The soldiers arrested my father to force him to work for them, but my father was unable to perform hard labour due to his disability so the Japanese soldiers killed him. I lost my father forever.

The other girls and I were taken to "Jade Star House" (Cuixing-lou) in the Town of Zhuliang-qiao. Dozens of women were already in the house when I was taken in. We were locked together at first and then sent to separate rooms. For two days I was unable to eat anything; I was too frightened.

Zhuliang-qiao used to have a lot of shops: grocers, cloth shops, drapers' shops, and so on. The shop owners all escaped when the Japanese troops came, abandoning everything to run for their lives. The Japanese soldiers occupied those empty houses and confined the abducted women in them. Jade Star House used to be a house of entertainment that looked like a hotel,

but it had in fact been a brothel. When the Japanese army came, they occupied this and the other shops in the neighbourhood. This house had two stories and was a wooden building; its walls were made of two layers of wooden boards. I was locked in a room on the lower level where there were two or three rooms altogether. They forced me to have sexual intercourse with a Japanese military man. I was so young at the time but was brutally raped. The Japanese man spoke a lot, but I didn't understand what he was saying, and I didn't want to listen either. He beat me if I did not follow his orders.

The room in which I was confined was very small and had no furniture except for a bed. The Japanese military man came to my room every night and left in the morning. He sometimes came during the day as well, bringing several Japanese officers with him; they talked about something I didn't understand. No other Japanese soldiers came to my room. I guess I was assigned to this military officer. I don't remember his face, but I remember that he was neither tall nor particularly fat and was always wearing a military uniform.

A Japanese soldier hit the soft spot on my side with his gun when the troops abducted me. The internal injury it caused became increasingly painful, although there was no scar on my skin. I still suffer from the sharp pain in my side today; it radiates through my entire lower back. At the time no doctor examined me, and they didn't give me any medication either.

I was kept by the Japanese troops for about a month. Only a small number of officers who seemed to be of high rank in the army came to the Jade Star House. Women in the house didn't know their names and called them *taijun*.<sup>11</sup> Many Japanese soldiers were stationed in the stronghold on Shizishan Mountain, and those soldiers carried rifles. Our meals were prepared in the military cookhouse in the stronghold and sent down from Shizishan Mountain. We ate with the soldiers.

We were not allowed to go out. An armed guard always stood at the entrance of the house watching the women. He would catch and beat anyone who attempted to escape. I was completely listless at this time, unable to think or speak properly. The only thing in my mind was going home, but there was no way for me to leave the house. I saw some other women in the house and chatted with one who washed dishes there. She was as listless as I. We knew we would end up dying if we remained there, and we wanted so badly to get out of the place and return home, but we neither dared to talk about this nor did we dare to cry out loud. We could only keep our sorrow deep in our hearts; the only thing we could do was sigh and quietly shed tears together. We lived in constant anxiety, worrying about what would happen to us the

next day. We missed home so much, but we dared not run away. I heard that one woman was captured after an attempted escape and was buried alive. We had no freedom and no way to break out.

I was finally bailed out by Yao Jufeng, head of the local Association for Maintaining Order. He was a relative of my mother's, so my parents begged him to help obtain my release. Yao Jufeng obtained the Japanese officer's permission to let me return home briefly by telling them that there was an emergency in my family and that he would send me back to the comfort station afterwards. The officer gave me a small towel when I left the Jade Star House. He had never given me any money, and the towel was the only thing I received from him.

[Tan Yuhua hid at her relative's house after she left the comfort station and didn't go back. Yao Jufeng's wife was arrested as a punishment for Yao's helping Tan escape.]

Soon after I got out of the Jade Star House the Japanese troops arrested Yao Jufeng's wife; perhaps they found out that Yao Jufeng had deceived them. Yao's wife, named Jiang Yulan, was a tall woman. The Japanese soldiers ripped off her clothes and dragged her naked body over the snowy ground. The weather was very cold and she was dragged through the snow. Her skin was badly blistered from the dragging, and the bloody blisters on her body became infected and didn't heal for a long time. That was in the winter of the Thirty Third Year of the Republic of China [1944], when the Eleventh Lunar Month was already over. I didn't dare to stay at home so I hid in my relative's house and only went back home occasionally. Luckily, the Japanese soldiers didn't capture me; since I didn't stay at home I didn't know if they had come to look for me or not. I couldn't return home until all the Japanese troops left my hometown after Japan's surrender.

I was married twice. My first husband was named Gao Fengsheng, and I had a son with him when I was twenty years old. My son was named Gao Qiaoliang; he died in 1998 of an illness. After my first husband died I married Tan Guifu in 1965 in Yiyang and moved to Mulun Village, Xinkang District, Wangcheng County, Changsha City. My second husband was one year younger than I; he died in 1978 at the age of fifty-two. Tan Guifu's ex-wife was also named Chunxiu, so he wanted me to change my name from Yao Chunxiu to Tan Yuhua, using his family name.

Even today I often have nightmares in which I relive the torture of the Japanese troops and wake up crying. In the nightmares I remain extremely frightened, seeing the Japanese soldiers marching towards me as I run desperately in fear, crying. Looking back, after that experience, I hate the

Japanese troops! I feel so helpless in my old age. If I had the resources I would sue them and demand that they restore my dignity. I hate the Japanese troops so much that I don't know what I might do if I saw them in front of me.

*The Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" invited Tan Yuhua to come to Shanghai in July 2008 to talk about her wartime experience to history teachers from Canada and the United States. Her health has been rapidly declining in recent years.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang in 2001 and by Chen Lifei in 2008, with the assistance of Yin Chuming)

**Yin Yulin**

*The Japanese army entered Shanxi Province in northern China in September 1937 soon after the beginning of full-fledged warfare and occupied the provincial capital Taiyuan on 9 November.<sup>13</sup> From 1937 to 1944, the Imperial Japanese Army operated a series of "mop-up" campaigns to wipe out the resistance activities led by the Chinese Communist Party in Shanxi and the nearby provinces. Japanese soldiers' sexual violence escalated during these operations; they frequently killed women who dared to resist rape and kidnapped a large number of local women, taking them to randomly placed comfort facilities.<sup>13</sup> A 1938 newspaper article reported that, after the Japanese army left the Yuanqu County Seat, the resistance forces found the blood-soaked clothing of over sixty Chinese women in the Japanese-occupied county hall.<sup>14</sup> In August 1940, the communist forces launched a large-scale campaign called the Hundred Regiments Offensive, which significantly damaged Japan's strategic position in the area.<sup>15</sup> The Japanese military retaliated with genocidal operations against the resistance forces and local civilians.<sup>16</sup> Yu County, lying at the border between the Japanese-occupied area and the resistance bases, was within the region of fierce fighting. Yin Yuling was one of the women abducted by the Japanese troops stationed near her village in Yu County during this period.*



**Figure 14** Yin Yulin, in 2001, praying in her cave dwelling.

I grew up in Wuer-zhuang Village, Xiyan Town, Yu County. My parents were poor peasants and I had an older brother and two older sisters. I was born in the Year of the Snake. At fifteen I was married to a man named Yang Yudong of Hou-Hedong Village. Yang Yudong was sixteen years older than I and had been married before. He was an ugly-looking man, but his family was quite rich. Life was comfortable in the family. I gave birth to a boy when I was nineteen, but the boy became ill and died at one year of age.

In the Tenth Lunar Month of that year [1941], when the weather was cold and we were wearing cotton-padded jackets, Japanese soldiers dashed into Hou-Hedong Village. I remember the time because that was the day my husband died. He died of typhoid before my son reached age one. When the Japanese soldiers saw the coffin and heard that my husband had died of typhoid, they feared being infected and left. However, later the soldiers came again after the coffin was carried away. I was in deep grief for my husband at the time and too weak to resist them. The Japanese soldiers easily caught and raped me.

After that initial time, the Japanese soldiers stationed in the blockhouse on top of nearby Mount Yangma came to my house frequently and raped me. Every time my parents heard my screams they rushed over to protect me, but each time they were dragged out to the yard and beaten by the Japanese soldiers. Several times they were beaten until blood covered their faces, and I saw blood gushing out of their mouths. This situation lasted for a long time. Every day two or three Japanese soldiers came down the mountain to rape me at my home, which left me constantly terrified. I remember, among the Japanese troops who came, there was a tall man who had a heavy mustache. He might have been an officer because he always put on an air of grandeur. He often arrived in civilian clothes, and each time he came, the other soldiers would not show up. Another one, who must have been an officer as well, often wore a black top and brownish-yellow trousers; he often came without his gun. Frightened of the rapes while having no place to hide, my body was always trembling with fear. What a horror!

The Japanese soldiers never used any contraceptive devices when they raped me. They would order me to bathe before they raped me. You could never imagine how evil these soldiers were: afterwards they would wash their lower bodies in our cooking bowl! Water in the area was extremely precious; there was no running water or well so I had to carry water from a faraway place. However, the Japanese soldiers didn't care at all when they used my water. I always felt my body was very dirty after I was raped, so each time after being raped I would scoop water from the container and wash myself repeatedly. Since there was no man in the house who could help me

carry water, I had to save every drop of available water and sometimes even had to reuse the washing water.

The Japanese soldiers also took me by force to their stronghold on Mount Yangma, where they raped me. The first time they took me to the blockhouse it was an evening, before I had my supper. I was taken up the mountain by the head of the village's Self Guard Corps, traitor Liu Erdan. He forced me to mount a donkey and guarded me. Once we reached the mountain path I had to dismount and walk on foot. Walking on the mountain road was excruciating on my feet, especially as they had been previously bound.

When we arrived at the stronghold on the mountain, the Japanese soldiers forced me into a small blockhouse. It was already dark outside and it was even darker inside the blockhouse. On a heated brick bed there was something whitish, perhaps it was a cotton-padded mattress. The Japanese soldiers ripped off my clothes and an officer held a candle to examine my body. He looked at my lower body very carefully, perhaps checking to see if I had venereal disease, but at that time I didn't know what he was doing and I was very frightened. I thought I was going to die! I remember that man's face clearly. It was a dark face, full of hair, and his two eyes were glowing like a wolf's! The candle drippings fell on my body one by one and scalded my skin, but I dared not cry. My body shook with each drop of hot wax and I kept shaking out of fear. I didn't dare look at the officer; I only stared at the dripping candle, hoping it would all be over soon.

The officer began to rape me after that. He rose from the bed and returned repeatedly, torturing me almost the entire night. I was shaking in the dark the whole time, and ever since then I have suffered from incurable trembling. Each time when I am nervous my body begins to shake uncontrollably. Look at my hands. They are trembling now. I cannot talk about that horrible experience. Whenever I speak of it, I become nervous and feel tremendous pain in my heart.

The following day I was taken back to the village by Liu Erdan before dawn. A few days later I was again taken to the blockhouse. This time a Japanese soldier and Liu Erdan conducted me there together. They forced me to walk and kept yelling at me for being too slow. I was taken into that small blockhouse again. This time a crowd of Japanese soldiers gang-raped me. I hurt so much that I didn't even have the strength to cry. The soldiers finally let me leave before daybreak. This was repeated again and again; I don't remember how many times I was taken to the mountaintop. After the torture in the blockhouse at night, during the day the Japanese soldiers would come to my home to assault me, wearing wooden sandals. They told a Chinese collaborator

to threaten me and to say, "Don't even think of running away, or your head will be off your shoulders!"

This situation lasted for two full years until I turned twenty-one. By that time I had become very sick. I suffered from constant dizziness and body aches as well as from a menstrual disorder. My sister was also raped by the Japanese soldiers. She was carried to the blockhouse and held there for a long period of time. We often bemoaned our fate, wondering, "Why us?" In order to escape the horrible situation I tried to remarry, but everyone knew that I had been raped by Japanese soldiers, and no man in the region wanted to marry me. Knowing that it was impossible to find a man in Yu County who would marry me, I married a man named Yang Erquan in distant Zhengjiazhai Village in Quyang County and finally escaped the misery.

My second husband was the same age as I. He was a shepherd, a very honest person. His family was poor but I did not mind; he did not look down on me either. Indeed, he was a really nice person. We helped each other in our poor life. The torture of the Japanese soldiers damaged my health. In order to cure my uterine damage my husband took on several hard jobs simultaneously for many years to earn money for my treatments. He peddled goods and also cleaned cesspools to earn some millet, and then he sold the millet to make some money. He encouraged me, saying, "You will get better." I wanted to repay him for his kindness and to be able to have children with him, so I did my part, too, and sought treatment. I was so happy when I finally became pregnant and gave birth to a son at age thirty-three. Later, I gave birth to a girl.

China won the Resistance War, and the Japanese troops fled back home in 1945. However, my misery did not disappear with them. Although I was able to bear children, my uterine damage was never completely cured. It has bothered me for more than fifty years. Sometimes it is better, sometimes worse, with a filthy reddish discharge. My husband worked too hard and damaged his own health as a result. He died in 1991. I was deeply saddened.

My sister has suffered even more than I have. She was not able to have children because of the torture, so she was abandoned by her husband and she had to remarry twice. At this time both my sister and I still suffer from severe uterine damage. Our lower bodies hurt constantly, which makes every movement very difficult. My health has been declining in recent years. The lower back pain that has bothered me for years has become worse, as has the trembling in my hands and legs. I am also suffering from acute psychological problems, such as intense fear and nightmares in which I relive those past experiences. I am trembling right now as I recall the past horror. These

unspeakable things are really hard to talk about, but I can no longer keep silent. If I don't speak out, people will not know how evil those Japanese troops were.

I am now living with my son and daughter-in-law. After I die they will continue to fight for justice. Generation after generation we must continue fighting those who deny the Japanese troops' atrocities, until they admit them!

*In 2001, the Shanghai TV Station and the Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" jointly produced a documentary entitled The Last Survivors (Zuihou de xingcunzhe), which records Yin Yulin's life story. On 6 October 2012, Yin Yulin died in her cave dwelling after the life-long suffering.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in 2000 and 2001)

### Wan Aihua

*After the Hundred Regiments Offensive the Japanese army increased the number of its strongholds to twenty-two in Yu County,<sup>17</sup> and it continued waging fierce campaigns to wipe out the resistance, while the Chinese forces continued fighting back and mobilizing local villagers. Wan Aihua, who participated in the resistance movement, was captured by the Japanese troops during these mop-up operations.*



**Figure 15** Wan Aihua, in 2000, telling the students and faculty at Shanghai Normal University how she was tortured by Japanese soldiers during the war.

I was born in Jiucaigou Village, Helingeer County, Suiyuan Province [today's Inner Mongolia] on the Twelfth Day of the Twelfth Lunar Month in 1929. My original name was Liu Chunlian.<sup>18</sup> My father was named Liu Taihai and my mother Zhang Banni. I had an older brother, a younger brother, and two younger sisters. My father was addicted to opium and he spent all of our money on it, leaving my family destitute. My mother gave birth to my younger brother when I was about four years old. Unable to support so many children, my father decided to sell me. My mother wailed aloud and she repeated to me my birth date, my parents' names, and home village until I was able to



remember them. I was taller than most girls of my age, so my father was able to sell me to the human trafficker as an eight-year-old. After that traffickers traded me again and again, and each time the trafficker increased the price. Eventually, I was sold in Yangquan Village in Yu County and became Li Wuxiao's child-bride.<sup>19</sup> Three other girls were sold in that village at the same time, but I was the only one who survived. Life was extremely hard, as was survival, in those days. My name was changed to Lingyu in Yangquan Village. I learned to do the work expected of a child-bride, and, growing up in hardship, I became a big, strong girl.

In 1938 the Japanese invaders entered Yu County, where the Japanese army ordered the local collaborators to form an Association for Maintaining Order and a puppet county government. In the spring of the following year, the Japanese troops built strongholds and blockhouses in the county seat, Donghuili, Shangshe, Xiyan, and other villages and towns. I hated the Japanese troops for the atrocious things they did to the Chinese people, so I followed the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] and actively participated in the resistance movement. I was among the first to join the Children's Corps and was elected the leader. Although I was still a child, I was tall in stature and had always worked with adults. Soon I became a CCP member through the recommendations of Li Yuanlin and Zhang Bingwu.<sup>20</sup> The people with whom I worked were deeply sympathetic to me because of what I had experienced at such a young age. Liu Guihua, Commander of the 19th Regiment of the Eighth Route Army, renamed me Kezai [The two characters in Chinese mean "to overcome misfortune"] to wish me smooth sailing in life. I worked very hard and served as a member of the CCP branch committee in Yangquan Village, which at that time was called "lesser district committee," and I also served as deputy village head and director of the Women's Association for Saving the Nation. My CCP membership was kept secret, and my activities were underground at the time so that the collaborators and the Japanese troops would not know.

Japanese troops set up strongholds in Shangshe, Jinguishu, and other places once they occupied Yu County. In the spring of 1943, I remember it was the season when plants just begin to grow in the yard, Japanese troops stationed at Jinguishu carried out a mop-up operation in Yangquan Village. My father-in-law was over seventy years old at the time and he was sick with typhoid. Although I was a child-daughter-in-law in the family, he had always treated me with kindness, so I didn't want to leave him behind to flee with the other villagers. The Japanese soldiers caught me.

The Japanese troops took all their captives to the riverbed. They announced that I was a member of the Communist Party. As a Japanese officer was about

to kill me, an aged man in the village knelt down and begged him to spare me. He said that I was only a child and that I was a dutiful daughter to my parents-in-law, not a communist. The interpreter held the arm of the Japanese captain who had drawn his sword and translated the old man's words to him. That captain was a very cruel person and had buckteeth, so the villagers called him "Captain Donkey." Captain Donkey put his sword back after he heard the interpreter's words. I am forever grateful to that old man and to the interpreter. I didn't know if the interpreter was Japanese, but I believe there were kind people in the Japanese troops, just as there are today, when many Japanese people support our fight for justice.

The Japanese soldiers took me and the other four girls back to the Jingui stronghold. Jingui was a small village in the mountains. After the Japanese army occupied the area they built a blockhouse on top of the mountain, forced the villagers who lived in the cave dwellings in the surrounding area to move away, and confiscated their dwellings. The other four girls and I were locked in these caves. In the cave there was a mat, made of sorghum stalks, on the ground. A quilt, a pillow, and a blanket were put on the mat. I was not allowed to go out even when I needed to relieve my bowels. At the beginning of my captivity I still had the strength to empty the excrement pail but soon became too weak to do so.

Because a traitor revealed my anti-Japanese activities to the Japanese troops, they treated me more viciously than they did the other girls. During the daytime the Japanese soldiers hung me up on a locust tree outside the cave and beat me, forcing me to admit I was a communist and to tell them who else in the village were CCP members. I gritted my teeth tightly and refused to say anything. At night the Japanese soldiers locked me in the cave room and gang-raped me. The torture damaged my head, so I don't remember the details clearly now. I only remember that I was imprisoned there for days. I knew I would end up dying at the hands of the Japanese soldiers if I remained, so I planned to escape. One night when the guard wasn't paying attention I broke out through the window and ran back to Yangquan Village. When I was kept in the military stronghold the Japanese soldiers had local people deliver food to us. One of the deliverymen, named Zhang Menghai, saw how I was confined in the cave and what was done to me. According to him, I escaped from captivity by breaking the window lattice, which was in poor shape.

I still remember the quilt I used while in the cave. I knew the quilt had belonged to a villager named Hou Datu, who was my co-worker and a core member of the local resistance movement. Hou Datu is now over seventy years old and still lives in Xiangcaoliang Village on the other side of the



mountain. Li Guiming knows this man.<sup>21</sup> Young people call him "Uncle Datu." I had seen this quilt when I visited Hou's house previously, so I knew it must be one of the things the Japanese troops had plundered during their mop-up operations. The cover of the quilt had a nice pattern, so I remembered it clearly. I tied up the quilt, the pillowcase, and the blanket and took them with me when I escaped. While escaping I ran into three village resistance movement leaders who were on their way to rescue me. They were surprised to see that I had already broken out from the confinement by myself. I asked the village leaders to return the bedding to Hou Datu. [Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei spoke to Hou Datu on 11 August 2000 and verified what Wan Aihua said. Hou was seventy-four at the time of the interview, and he clearly remembered the Japanese army's torture of Wan Aihua. He was the only one still alive who had witnessed Wan Aihua's experience as the Japanese army's sex slave.]

When I got back to my home village, my husband-to-be, Li Wuxiao, wanted to cancel our marriage engagement because I had been raped by Japanese soldiers. A man called Li Jigui, who was also a resistance movement activist in the village and much older than I, was willing to help me out. However, Li Wuxiao asked him to pay for my release. With the help of the village head, Li Jigui paid Li Wuxiao dozens of silver dollars and took me home. Li Jigui married me and paid for the treatment of my injuries.

In late summer of 1943, I was captured by the Japanese soldiers again. I remember that it was when watermelons were ripe and many people were selling them. I was washing clothes by a pond when I heard someone shouting, "Japanese devils are here!" Before I turned around to run, a Japanese soldier grabbed my hair, and I was kidnapped by the Japanese troops yet again. This time a large number of Japanese troops stationed in Xiyan Town and in Jingui came from the south and the north simultaneously and surrounded Yangquan Village. I was taken to the Jingui stronghold and subjected to more brutal torture. The Japanese soldiers pulled one of my earrings off, tearing off part of my earlobe with it.

The Japanese soldiers raped me day and night. Sometimes two or three soldiers entered the room together and gang-raped me. They beat and kicked me when I resisted, leaving wounds all over my body. Later the soldiers came less often at night, perhaps disgusted at the purulent wounds on my body. The torture lasted for about half a month, until one night I found the block-house strangely quiet. "The devils must have gone on another mop-up action," I thought, "It appears there are not many soldiers here." I quietly jacked up the door and crawled out.

I was so weak that I had to rest many times when I was running away. I dared not return to Yangquan Village, so I ran to Xilianggou Village, where my *ganma* lived. [In China, people who are particularly fond of each other can form a fictive kinship and call each other by kinship terms plus the term "gan," such as *ganma* (fictive mother), *ganerzi* (fictive son), *ganjiejie* (fictive older sister). The relationship is only in name and the fictive child usually does not move in with the *ganma*'s family and is not raised by her.] My *ganma*'s family name was Wan. She had five sons; all of them were good men who had joined the Communist Party. Unfortunately, they have all died now. I hid at the Wans' house for about two months and, when my injuries healed, returned to Yangquan Village. My husband Li Jigui was sick in bed when I saw him; he was only skin and bones. I devoted all my time to taking care of him.

A few months later I was captured by Japanese troops for the third time. It was in the Twelfth Lunar Month [around January 1944]; Japanese troops encircled Yangquan Village at night just as the local people were eating Laba porridge. ["Laba" means "the Eighth Day of the Twelfth Lunar Month." The local people customarily eat a special porridge with nuts and dried fruits on this day.] They kicked my door open, came into my house, and took me away with them. This time the Japanese soldiers tormented me particularly cruelly to punish me for my previous escapes. I clearly remember the faces of the Japanese men who raped me. Among them, the "red-faced captain" and the "bucktoothed captain" were especially brutal. They let a group of Japanese soldiers hold my arms and legs while another soldier raped me. They took turns raping me in this manner and also tortured me for information until I passed out. The torment continued day after day up to the Preliminary New Year's Eve on the Twenty-Third Day of the Twelfth Lunar Month. That day I passed out again and didn't wake up for quite a long time, so the Japanese soldiers thought I was dead and threw me into a runnel by the village. I had no clothes on my body and the water in the runnel was frozen. Luckily, Zhang Menghai's father discovered me and saved my life. He said that my body was already freezing cold and that I had almost ceased breathing when he saw me. He watched over me for a day and a night, feeding me soup and massaging my body. When I finally came back to life, he secretly moved me to the home of an acquaintance of mine in Fengsheng-po Village.

I was unconscious for a very long time. When I woke up it was already New Year's Eve, so it must have been in February 1944. I was bedridden for three years, and my body was completely deformed. I could no longer stand straight because my hips and rib bones were broken. My arms were dislocated, my neck was knocked into my chest, and my lower backbone was compressed

into my pelvis. My height had been more than 160 centimetres but was reduced to less than 150 after my torture. The earlobe of my right ear had been ripped off. The Japanese soldiers had beaten my head with a nail-studded board, which left a sunken spot on the top of my head that is still there today. Hair never again grew over the scarred areas. When the Japanese soldiers hung me up and beat me, they pulled out my armpit hair. Although I didn't die, for five years I had to be taken care of by others. Even today I suffer from severe uterine damage and body aches, and I rely on massage therapy to ease the pain. When the weather changes every bone in my body aches like hell.

My past was full of misery, full of horrible experiences. It was very hard for me to survive in the village. My husband died not long after I survived the Japanese torment for the third time. I adopted a two-year-old girl, who has been living with me. I moved from Yu County to Quyang and eventually came to Taiyuan and rented a small room here. We moved often and didn't have a stable place to live.

I still live in Taiyuan City. I moved from the countryside to the city and changed my name to Wan Aihua, using my *ganma's* family name. I have made a living by doing needlework and by doing massage for people. I learned massage from a village doctor when I was young and have been helping local people with this skill. When I was in Yu County many people in my neighbourhood came to see me for massages. I am still doing massages for people now, and I don't charge poor people money.

My daughter has helped me tremendously ever since she was a little girl. She went out to beg for food by herself when I was too ill to work. She is a good daughter. I have worked hard to provide her with a good life, and I want to prove that she has a good mother who was a fighter during the Resistance War.

In 1992, a person contacted me saying that I had been a Japanese comfort woman, which made me very angry. I was not a "comfort woman," and I never comforted any Japanese troops! I came forward to tell people how the Japanese troops abducted me and forced me to be their sex slave. I want the world to know the cruel atrocities the Japanese soldiers perpetrated on Chinese people, and I want justice for all the women who suffered as I did. I don't consider myself a "comfort woman" for the Japanese army. I never comforted the Japanese troops and never wanted to. I attended the International Public Hearing Concerning Post-War Compensation of Japan in 1992 and testified on stage. When I recalled the torture I suffered and the unbearable things the Japanese military did to me I became so angry that I passed out.

From that point on I have sought to reinstate my CCP membership. I was an underground CCP member during the war, so not many people knew about my party membership and I didn't feel that I needed to prove it. Now I feel I must prove to people that I was a member of the resistance movement and Communist Party, and that I would never do anything to "comfort" the Japanese troops. It was not easy to verify my CCP membership because most of the people who knew my history had died. After much effort I finally found a few veteran local leaders, including Yu County head commissioner Zhang Guoying, Gao Cangming, and Li Menghai, who witnessed my activities as a CCP member. All these people have died now. In 1994, after fifty years, my CCP membership was finally restored.

Since 1995, because my past work experience in the Resistance War was verified, I have received a monthly stipend of fifty yuan. Every month the government sends the money to my home. Fifty yuan is a small amount, and the money is not what I really care about. I wanted to prove I fought during the Resistance War. I have to admit, however, that even fifty yuan is a big help to me. I had major surgery in 1993 and am suffering from many medical problems now; I have a large number of medical expenses.

I want the Government of Japan to admit its war crimes. I am willing to go anywhere to tell about the atrocities the Japanese forces committed, and I went to Japan many times to testify in 1996, 1998, and 1999. In December 2000 I participated in the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in Tokyo as one of the plaintiffs. When I was giving my testimony and showed the audience the scars from my injuries, I passed out again. My health is getting worse and worse. I expressed my opinion strongly at the tribunal that the Shōwa emperor and the Japanese government must be found guilty. They must apologize to us and admit their wrongdoing. Only by doing so can we protect future generations from the kind of torture I suffered. I will continue fighting for that as long as I am alive.

*On 30 October 1998, Wan Aihua and nine other Chinese victims of Japanese military sexual violence filed a lawsuit against the Government of Japan at the Tokyo District Court. She went to testify in person with survivors Zhao Cunni and Gao Yin'e in September 1999. Their claims were denied. Wan Aihua is currently seriously ill and bedridden.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2007.)

## 7 Southern China Frontlines

### Huang Youliang

*Japanese troops landed on Hainan Island off the Guangdong coast on 10 February 1939.<sup>1</sup> In order to secure control of this important strategic position in the South China Sea, the occupation units built a large number of strongholds on the island. In Lingshui County alone fourteen strongholds, eight blockhouses, and two military airports were constructed.<sup>2</sup> The occupiers set up comfort stations in towns and cities as well as in military strongholds and village homes, for which they drafted women both abroad and locally. The troops also rounded up women with the help of the Association for Maintaining Order and the Self-Guard Corps. Huang Youliang's treatment by the Japanese military was commonplace: first she was raped, then kept as a sex slave by Japanese soldiers in her home village, and eventually taken to the Tengqiao Detachment Comfort Station. The Japanese troops later burned her village to the ground. The stronghold near the village no longer exists, but the Tengqiao military comfort station, where Huang Youlian was imprisoned, remains.*



**Figure 16** Huang Youliang, in 2000, speaking to interviewers about her experiences in a Japanese military “comfort station.”

That year [1941] I was only fifteen.<sup>3</sup> Judging from the weather, I think it was around the Tenth Lunar Month. That morning, I carried two baskets on a shoulder pole to a rice paddy outside of the village [of Jiama]. All of a sudden I heard shouts. I raised my head and saw a group of Japanese soldiers standing not far away. I was very frightened, so I dropped the baskets and ran back towards the mountains. But the Japanese troops chased after me until I couldn't run any farther. I was caught. One of the soldiers said something loudly. I felt as if my head were swelling and I couldn't understand a word. One soldier with no beard on his shaved face suddenly grasped me in his arms. Another one moved his hands over my back and then began to rip off my shirt and skirt. The rest of the soldiers were laughing like crazy while watching. I was so angry that I wanted to kill them. I grabbed the hand that was roughly fondling my back and bit it with all my strength. The soldier gave a loud scream and pulled his hand away. He was furious and held up his bayonet. As he was about to stab me with it, another Japanese military man who looked like an officer stopped him with an ear-splitting yell. I was scared stiff. The officer smiled at me saying, “Don't be scared.” He turned to the Japanese soldiers and said something I didn't understand, then waved his hand. The soldiers left. After the soldiers went away, the officer pulled me into his arms. I struggled to get away and he let me go. I thought I was free, so I put on my clothes and carried the baskets home. I didn't notice that the Japanese officer followed me all the way to my home. He stopped me at the door, carried me into my bedroom, and ripped off my shirt and skirt ... He left afterwards. I cried alone and tried to keep it to myself. By the afternoon, I could not bear it any longer, so I told my mother what had happened. My mother cried her heart out.

The following day, more Japanese soldiers came to look for me. I was frightened and hid. Unable to find me, the Japanese soldiers knocked my parents to the ground and beat them up. They made them crawl over the ground on their hands and feet doing what we called a “four-hoofed cow.” When I heard what happened to my parents, I hurried home to see them, so the Japanese soldiers caught me and raped me again. From that time on I was forced to wash the Japanese soldiers' clothes during the day and at night the Japanese soldiers would come ... [Huang Youliang stopped talking. Her face had been expressionless while she was speaking; she looked down and fell into silence.]

That Japanese officer could speak a little Chinese; it sounded like Hainan dialect. People called him “Jiuzhuang.” [Huang Youliang said the name in the local dialect. This is perhaps a nickname, but its meaning is unclear because Huang Youliang did not know how to write the name.] Because he was an

officer, whenever he came soldiers followed him. Since "Jiuzhuang" knew where I lived, he came every day, and I was forced to wash his clothes in addition to submitting to rape. If I hid he would torture my parents. This situation continued until the spring of the following year when I was taken away to Tengqiao City of Ya County.

It was the Third or the Fourth Lunar Month when I was kidnapped by a group of Japanese soldiers. They put me in a military vehicle, drove to Tengqiao, and locked me in a house. I was locked in a room with a woman who had been abducted at the same time. Later I found out that there were other women locked in different rooms who had been abducted before us.

There were always soldiers guarding the gate and they didn't let us go anywhere. We laboured during the day, mopping the floor, washing clothes, and so on. At night the Japanese soldiers came to our rooms, usually three to five of them arrived together, but some days there were more than others. Sometimes one of them spent the whole night in the comfort station, but I didn't know if he was an officer. If I didn't do as they said, they beat me. I was very frightened and was forced to do whatever they asked ... sometimes they forced me to assume various positions ... [Huang Youliang could not continue. The interview was stopped to let her take a break and drink some tea. When the interview resumed, the interviewers changed the topic and asked her about her family.]

There were only three people in my family: my father, my mother, and I. My mother was blind. My father was a peasant and I helped him with the farm work. I missed my parents very much in that place [Tengqiao Comfort Station] and wanted to escape. My body felt as if it were falling apart due to the torments every night. Many times I looked for an opportunity to run away and secretly discussed it with the other girls there. But Japanese soldiers strictly guarded the house, and we didn't know any of the roads outside the house, so it was impossible to escape. Once one of my friends there, a girl of Han ethnicity,<sup>4</sup> escaped from the place, but she was captured by the Japanese soldiers and almost beaten to death. Then she was locked up, most likely killed. After that incident, I gave up my hope for escape and submitted myself to fate.

During that time I didn't see any woman given a medical examination in the station, nor did I see any man ever use a condom. I didn't know if any of the girls became pregnant, but I knew one woman, whose name was Chen Youhong, who was tortured to death. She didn't want to do what the Japanese soldiers told her to do, so she was beaten until blood gushed out of her vagina. She bled to death. I heard that another girl committed suicide by biting off her own tongue.

The Japanese soldiers never gave us anything or any money. They didn't even give us enough to eat, never mind paying us. I was kept in the Tengqiao Comfort Station for a long time, at least two years, until I became very sick and my family helped me escape. That was around the Fifth or the Sixth Lunar Month of the year. That day Huang Wencang from my home village came to see me. He told me that my father had died. I cried loudly and bitterly, and went to beg the Japanese officer to let me go home to attend my father's funeral. The officer wouldn't let me at first, but Huang Wencang and I begged and begged, kneeling on the floor to kowtow. Finally he agreed to let me go, with the condition that I would return to the comfort station as soon as my father's funeral was over.

That was in the evening. Huang Wencang took me out of Tengqiao and, via a shortcut, towards home. We arrived at my home in the middle of the night. As I walked through the door, I was stunned to see my father in perfectly good health waiting for me. It turned out that my father and Huang Wencang had made a plan to rescue me from that comfort station by deceiving the Japanese troops. They were afraid that I would have been unable to act as if it were real, so they didn't tell me the truth until I got home.

My father and Huang Wencang worked overnight with hoes and shovels to make a fake grave for me on top of a desolate hill on the outskirts of the village. They told people that I had committed suicide because of excessive grief. My father and I fled from the village right after that. My mother had already died by that time. My father and I became fugitives and for a period lived as beggars. We stayed in one place for a while then returned to Jiama Village. People in our village told us that the Japanese officer "Jiuzhuang" had come with a group of soldiers to arrest me. The villagers told him that I had committed suicide. He saw the fake grave and believed them.

Since everyone in the village knew that I had been ravaged by the Japanese troops, no man in good health or of good family wanted to marry me. I had no choice but to marry a man who had leprosy. My husband knew about my past and used it as an excuse to beat and curse me for no reason other than that he was unhappy. I gave birth to five children: three daughters and two sons. Two of my older daughters are married and the youngest one is still living with us. My children have treated me well, particularly my daughters. However, since I had that horrible experience in the past, even my own children sometimes swear at me. But it was not my fault! What a cruel fate! I hate the Japanese soldiers!

During the Cultural Revolution, because of my awful past, people in the village, particularly those in the younger generations who weren't clear about history, said bad things about me behind my back; they said I was a bad

woman who slept with Japanese troops. Because of this, my husband was not allowed to serve as a village official and my children were not allowed to join the Communist Youth League or the Communist Party.

I am willing to go abroad to testify to the atrocities the Japanese military committed, and I am also willing to go to Japan to testify to the faces of the Japanese. I demand an apology from the Japanese government. I am not afraid. [Visibly cheered by this idea, Huang Youliang's previously expressionless face broke into a big smile.]

*After her interview in 2000, Huang Youliang led the interviewers to the site of Tengqiao military comfort station. The former comfort station is a run-down, two-story building made of bricks and wood; its roof and entrance door are gone. Local residents confirmed the accuracy of her recollection about the comfort station. The Japanese army's blockhouse and water tower nearby are still standing. Although Huang Youliang had not been allowed to leave the comfort station during her captivity, she had been able to see outside from the second floor of the building. She pointed and said, "Look, see that tree trunk over there? It was where the Japanese troops tied up and tortured their captives." On 16 July 2001, Huang Youliang and seven other Japanese military comfort station victims from Hainan Island filed a lawsuit against the Government of Japan in the Tokyo District Court. Huang Youliang is now living with her youngest daughter in Hainan.*

(Interviewed by Chen Lifei and Su Zhiliang, interpreted by Hu Yueling in 2000)

### Chen Yabian

*Chen Yabian was abducted from Zuxiao Village and sent to the Japanese military comfort station in Ya County (today's Sanya) on Hainan Island. From February 1939, the Japanese military stationed a large number of troops in Ya County, using it as a major naval and air force base.<sup>5</sup> It has been confirmed that fourteen Japanese military comfort stations were in operation in the area between 1941 and 1945. During a research trip in 2000 Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei were able to locate seven of the buildings or what is left of them.*



**Figure 17** Chen Yabian, in 2003, in front of her home.

I live in Zuxiao Village, Lingshui County, Hainan Island. I had one older brother and one older sister; I was the youngest child in the family and my parents loved me very much. People said I was a good-looking girl.

During the occupation, the Japanese army organized a puppet self-guard corps in the vicinity of Zhenban-ying Village. [According to the local historical record, the Self-Guard Corps comprised about fifty soldiers and was led by Chen Shilian.] They set up barracks on the hill near our village and ordered local collaborators to draft young women to work in the barracks. One day in 1942 four traitors came to my home and said that the head of the Self-Guard Corps had ordered me to harvest grains. Many girls from the Li ethnic villages in the area were taken into the barracks, including another girl from my village and me. I was forced to work there for months, doing all sorts of miscellaneous jobs, such as washing clothes, sewing gunnysacks, carrying water, and processing grains. At night girls were forced to "entertain" the soldiers. We never received any payment for the work we did at the camp.

After working in the corps camp for a few months, I was taken by force to a Japanese military comfort station in Ya County and locked in a dark room. I didn't know where in Ya County the station was. I only remember that it was a two-story wooden house and that I was held in a small room on the second floor. In the room there was a shabby bed, on which there was a very dirty quilt. There were also a table and two stools. The door was locked and the window was sealed completely with wooden boards, so the inside was pitch black even during the day. Japanese soldiers came at night, sometimes two or three, sometimes more. They made me bathe first and then raped me one after another. Some of the soldiers seemed to have been from Taiwan. The Japanese soldiers didn't wear condoms when they raped me, nor did the army provide me with medical examinations. I was so frightened and resisted them, but they encircled my neck with their hands, strangling me, and slapped my face ... [Chen Yabian stopped talking and cried. She demonstrated how the soldier strangled her.] I cried aloud and tried to push the door open, but the door was locked from outside. From that day on I was never allowed to step outside. They only opened the door to deliver a pail when I needed to move my bowels or to send in some food for me to eat. They sent food twice or three times a day, but I don't remember what the food was like; it was so dark in the room that I couldn't even see the food clearly.

I cannot remember clearly how long I was kept in the Japanese comfort station, perhaps for several months. I cried in horrible fear every day there. My parents were worried to death after I was taken away. They begged everyone they could possibly find to help obtain my release, but there was no hope. After having begged many people for help, but to no avail, my mother went

to the head of the corps and knelt before him. She cried, begged, and said she would die in front of him if he refused to help obtain my release. The head had no way to get rid of her so he, in turn, went to beg the Japanese troops and helped arrange my release.

I could not walk upon my release; my lower body was severely infected and was so swollen that I could not relieve my bowels without excruciating pain. My eyes were damaged by the torture in the comfort station, too. For all these years after the war my eyes have been red and have hurt; I cannot see clearly and my eyes water constantly. Yet I was drafted by the corps again after I was released from the comfort station and forced to work at the corps camp for another three years until Japan's surrender. [Su Guangming, chair of Lingshui County People's Political Consultative Committee, told the interviewers that Chen Yabian, fearing discrimination because she was a Japanese military comfort woman, lived alone in the mountains for a long time until local people prevailed on her to emerge after the liberation.]

My parents arranged for me to marry Zhuo Kaichun when I was a child. [Pang Shuhua, who was the interpreter for the interview, explained that this was called "child-engagement" (*wawaqin*), a local custom whereby parents pre-arranged a marriage for their children in their childhood.] Zhuo Kaichun joined the Chinese forces when I was detained in the comfort station. He later left the Chinese force because one of his hands had been injured. We married after he returned home.

I had terrible difficulties trying to have a child after my marriage. [Chen Yabian cried again.] I had multiple miscarriages and stillbirths. Doctors said my uterus had been damaged by the torture. I always had severe pain during menstrual periods and intercourse. When I became pregnant again in my late thirties, my husband sent me to a hospital in central Hainan, and, under the doctors' diligent care, I finally gave birth to a healthy girl around 1964.

My husband died several years ago and my daughter is married and lives in another village now. I am in very poor health. I continue to have abdominal pain all these years later, and I have difficulty breathing. I also suffer from frequent nightmares resulting from the past horrors and constant fears. During the Cultural Revolution I was beaten and yelled at by local people. They tied up my hands and pushed me out, accusing me of "having slept with Japanese soldiers." How miserable I am for not having a son to look out for me ...

[Chen Yabian cried again. According to local tradition, male offspring take care of aged parents while daughters move away from their parents' home after marriage. Although Chen Yabian is covered under the Five Guarantees Program – a social welfare program that guarantees childless

and infirm elderly people food, clothing, medical care, housing, and burial expenses – because of the high cost of her medical expenses the financial aid she has received from the government is insufficient to meet her needs.]

I could have had many children, but because of the torture by the Japanese troops I was unable to have a son. I want redress. I welcome all who come to interview me because I want to let people know my experiences. I demand an apology and compensation from the Japanese. I want to have a peaceful and good life in my late years.

*On 30 March and 1 April 2000, Chen Yabian attended the First International Symposium on Chinese Comfort Women at Shanghai Normal University as an invited speaker. She had to rely on pain medication to ease her headaches, but despite the constant discomfort she gave a courageous speech on her wartime experience to an international audience. In poverty and poor health, Chen Yabian now relies on the "Five Guarantees Program" provided by the local government and the produce of a few fruit trees for daily life. She lives with constant body ache and abdominal pain, and continues to have horrifying nightmares.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei and interpreted by Pang Shuhua in 2000 and 2001)

### Lin Yajin

*Lin Yajin was kidnapped and imprisoned in the Dalang stronghold at Nanlindong (today's Nanlin Township), Baoting County, Hainan Island, in 1943, which was also the year that the United States began submarine warfare against Japanese shipping.<sup>6</sup> In order to reinforce its military bases on Hainan Island, the Japanese army brought more troops from northeastern China to the area that same year. Nanlin, which is only about twenty-five kilometres from (Ya County) Sanya and is surrounded by mountains, was chosen by the Japanese army as a base for military supplies and munitions. The Japanese troops drove the villagers out of their hiding places in the mountains. Villagers who didn't obey the military orders were killed. Those who followed the orders to register for a "Good Citizen ID" were sent to do hard labour on military highway construction sites, in iron mines, or on farms, where they grew tobacco, grains, and vegetables for the Japanese army.<sup>7</sup> Lin Yajin had been drafted to labour at a military highway construction site before she was kidnapped and taken to a military comfort station.*



**Figure 18** Lin Yajin, in 2007, attending the opening ceremony of the Chinese "Comfort Women" Archives in Shanghai.



I am a Li ethnic woman, born in Fanyuntao, Nanlindong, Baoting County, Hainan Island. My father's name was Lin Yalong, and my mother was Tan Yalong. I had five siblings. My older sister was named Yagan. I am the second child. I had two younger sisters and two younger brothers. My parents and most of my siblings have already died. Now only my youngest brother and I are still alive. I am living in Shihao Village in Nanlin District now. I don't have any children of my own. My siblings' children all live in Nanlin. They come to visit me when I need help.

I was about sixteen years old when the Japanese troops came to Nanlin. Three years later [1943], I was drafted by the Japanese military to build a highway that led to their arsenal. Many people in our area were drafted, including a lot of women. We received no pay and had to bring lunch to work from home. I was released two months later.

In the autumn of that year, I heard gunshots from the direction of Da'nao Village when I was harvesting rice with three girls named Tan Yaluan, Tan Yayou, and Li Yalun from neighbouring villages. [The names are transliterated according to Lin Yajin's pronunciation.] We realized that the Japanese troops had come. The rice paddy was very close to Da'nao, so we had no time to escape. We lay down next to the ridge between the fields, very scared. A long time passed. When we heard some sounds and raised our heads to look around, we found Japanese soldiers standing right behind us. The Japanese soldiers tied our hands behind our backs with ropes and took the four of us to their strongholds, first to the Japanese army's barracks at Nanlin and then to the Dalang stronghold in Ya County. I was nineteen years old at the time. ["Dalang" is the place-name "Shilou" in Li language].

We spent one night at the Nanlin stronghold in a room that was used to incarcerate labourers who attempted to escape. We saw torture instruments and feet cuffs. The Japanese soldiers placed the cuffs on our feet so that we could not move. The cuffs would break your bones if you sat down, so we could only stand. An interpreter who looked to be a native of Hainan came in and said to us: "Do not try to run away. You will be killed if you try to escape."

The following day, we were taken to the Dalang stronghold in Ya County by armed Japanese soldiers. The Japanese soldiers tied us up and forced us to walk very fast. They kicked us ruthlessly if we slowed down even a bit. We left Nanlin in the morning and arrived at Dalang when it turned dark. We were not allowed to eat or drink the whole day.

At Dalang we were locked up in a strange house. The house was divided into small rooms. Each girl was put into a room. The room had a wooden

door but no window, so it was very dark inside. The door was double-locked and there were always Japanese soldiers standing outside guarding the house. The walls felt like metal sheets. The size of the room was about this big. [Lin Yajin indicated a length of about ten square metres.] There was no bed or bedding in the room. They only gave me one washbowl and a towel, and there was a container for urination at the corner of the room – nothing else. I slept on the earthen floor. Luckily the weather was not cold.

The Japanese soldiers only took me out of the house to empty the excrement container. They watched me closely and took me back when I was done. The room was filled with a filthy smell. After I was taken into the stronghold I was not given clothes. The only clothing I had on me was the top shirt and skirt I was wearing when I was abducted, which were almost torn into pieces by the Japanese soldiers later; both sleeves were ripped off.

Twice a day the Japanese soldiers sent us food. It was thin gruel served in a coconut shell. It smelled awful and looked like swill. Our first meal each day was near noon. The Japanese soldiers would come after we had eaten the meal and had emptied the excrement container. Normally three or four Japanese soldiers would come into my room together. One of them would guard the door. The others often fought to be the first to rape me. I was very frightened when they fought, so I stood against the wall to avoid being hurt. They were completely naked, one raping me while the others were watching.

[Lin Yajin cried. She squinted into the distance, and tears flowed from her eyes. Heartbreaking sobs filled the room. After about twenty minutes, Lin calmed down and continued.]

Some of the Japanese soldiers raped me more than once. At night a different group of soldiers would come. They never used condoms, but they gave us some pills to take. The pills were about the size of my pinkie nail, some white, some yellow, and some pink. I feared that the pills might be poisonous, so I spit them out when no one saw it. We were given a bowl of cold water to wash our lower bodies after each group left. I had already begun menstruating at that time. I resisted fiercely when I had my menstrual period, but the Japanese soldiers raped me even when I was bleeding. I developed some kind of disease and had horrible pains when urinating. The lower part of my body became swollen and festered.

The Japanese soldiers often beat me. If I showed the slightest resistance, they would grab my hair and hit my face and breasts. One day a Japanese soldier came to rape me, but I resisted. He punched my left breast so hard that my chest continues to hurt today. [Lin showed where she had been hit. The bones on the left side of her chest were noticeably uneven; the entire



area looked bumpy while some parts were caved in. Lin cried again. Her whole body trembled like a leaf in the wind.]

One time a Japanese soldier pressed me to the floor with a cigarette between his lips. He crushed the cigarette onto my face. The burned area immediately swelled up. The wound left this scar next to my nose. [The scar, which is about the size of a large pea, is clearly visible on Lin's face.] No Japanese doctor ever gave us a medical exam or any treatment. If a girl fell sick, she would be thrown into cold water. As time passed I began to urinate blood and I had severe chest pains. The pain went from my chest to my left shoulder. Even today my chest often hurts, bringing back horrible memories of the past.

I was locked in the Dalang stronghold for a long time. Mother told me later that it was about five months. I cried every day. I also heard the crying of the girl in the next room and the sounds of the Japanese soldiers violating her since the rooms were separated only by metal sheets. Every night we cried in our rooms, talking about our parents, our families, and our fears that we might never see them again. I was already very sick. My injured chest bones hurt, my private parts festered, I urinated blood, and my whole body was swollen and ached like hell. I thought I was going to die soon.

My father heard that I was very sick, and he begged a relative who was a Baozhang to bail me out. [Baozhang was an official position in the old *Bao Jia* administrative system, which was organized on the basis of households. Each *Bao* consisted of ten *Jia* and each *Jia* consisted of ten households. The Baozhang was the head of the *Bao*.] My father and the parents of the other girls sent chickens and rice, which were the best things they could find, to the Baozhang. The Baozhang, in turn, brought these things to beg the Japanese troops to let me and the other three girls out of the Japanese stronghold. By that time the four of us were all infected with the same disease and we were too ill to service the soldiers, so the Japanese troops let us out. I was too sick to walk and was carried back by members of my family. Yayou died soon after she got home. Yaluan and Yalun also died within a year. I was the only one who survived.

My father died not long after I was released from the Japanese stronghold. He had had a chronic disease and constantly had chills and a fever. After I was kidnapped by the Japanese troops, my father did hard labour for the Japanese army, hoping to earn my release. His health declined rapidly because of that. He did not live to see Japan's surrender.

I stayed in the Baozhang's village for about two months, receiving herbal treatments, but the infected area didn't heal and I continued bleeding. My mother then brought me back home. She gathered herbs to treat me herself.

I was so sick that I was unable to walk for a long time and had a bloody discharge with pus. My mother dug up herbs in the mountain, put them in liquor, and then used this herbal wine to treat my disease. She also invited someone to perform sorcery. Gradually I recovered, and by the spring of the following year, I was able to walk.

My mother helped me recover, but she fell sick. She died two years later. I wailed loudly in front of my mother's tomb. Life became much harder after my mother died. My older sister was already married at the time and lived in far-away Fanshabi Village at the foot of the mountain. Seeing the hardship my younger siblings and I suffered, she took me to her house. I lived with my older sister for about four years and met my late husband there.

My husband's name was Ji Wenxiu. He was from a well-off family that owned some rice land and betel nut trees, so he and his younger brother were able to attend school. His family paid for everything for our wedding.<sup>8</sup> Because of my past experience, I was afraid to be with him on our wedding night even though I knew this would be totally different because I was married to the man I loved. Still, I didn't want to tell him about my past. My husband had heard about what had happened to me, but he never asked me about it. He didn't want to hurt me. He was really nice to me. I became pregnant soon, but two months into my pregnancy I had a miscarriage.

Two years after I married Ji Wenxiu, he went to work in Ganzha. His younger brother was a military man at the time and he asked my husband to join him in doing work for the revolution. My husband helped collect grains for the Liberation Army and worked at the local tax bureau. He was later arrested when working as the head of the tax office. [Tears filled Lin's eyes when she was speaking about her husband. The interpreter explained that Ji Wenxiu was one of the many persons wronged during the chaotic 1950s, and it is still not clear why he was arrested.]

I received a note that my husband died of illness in the prison. I couldn't believe it and went to Baoting to look for him but was told that he had been moved to Sanya. I then went to Sanya, only to find that he had been sent to Shilou. I didn't know of a way to make the trip to Shilou, so I had no choice but to return home. I don't know exactly when my husband was arrested and died. I only remember that it was during the time when everyone was eating from the same big pot.<sup>9</sup>

Because of my husband's arrest I was discriminated against. When eating in the communal dining room, I was always given a smaller portion and worse food. I did farm work to support myself. Although I worked very hard, I was given the lowest number of work-points.<sup>10</sup> I was living with my in-laws at the

time. My father-in-law had some land before the revolution so his family was classified as being of landlord status. His lands had been confiscated, but because of his family background, he was criticized and denounced at public meetings during the Cultural Revolution. When my in-laws died, no one in the village came to attend their funerals. My husband had seven siblings. Now all of them have died except his younger brother.

An investigative team came to check into my history during the Cultural Revolution. However, the three girls who were abducted by the Japanese along with me had all died. The investigative team couldn't find any witnesses. Moreover, those who knew I had serviced the Japanese troops didn't tell the team anything because most people in the village belonged to the same Ji family. Even today, people in my village don't like to talk to strangers. Therefore, I was not criticized publicly during the Cultural Revolution. I felt helplessly alone so I adopted a five-year-old boy named Adi from Fanyuntao after the Cultural Revolution ended. Adi has six children now, four boys and two girls. Adi's oldest daughter has two children already.

The Japanese soldiers did horrible things to me. The Japanese government must admit the atrocities it committed and compensate me before I die.

*Since 2000, every month the Research Center for Chinese "Comfort Women" has sent two hundred yuan to Lin Yajin and other Japanese military comfort station survivors in China, using funds from private donors. With that money Lin's adopted son gradually rebuilt their house. Lin Yajin now lives with the family of her adopted son.*

(Interviewed by Chen Lifei and Liu Xiaohong in 2007; interpreted by Chen Houzhi.)

### Li Lianchun

*Yunnan Province is situated between inland China, Burma, and India, and it occupied a key position on one of China's major supply lines during the Resistance War. In 1942 and 1943, the US Air Force built air bases in Yunnan, from which the Fourteenth Air Force provided assistance to Chinese military operations. The Japanese air units countered with major strikes, and the Japanese ground forces began the invasion of Burma in January 1942. The 56th Division entered Yunnan Province in the spring of the same year, and, by early 1943 it had taken control of the area west of the Nu-jiang River (known as Salween River in English) and established its headquarters at Longling.<sup>11</sup> During the occupation the Japanese troops set up comfort stations from the Longling county seat all the way to the Songshan frontline.<sup>12</sup> Li Lianchun, whose home village of Bai'nitang lay to the west of Songshan and on the west bank of the Nu-jiang River, was abducted into one of these military comfort stations.*



**Figure 19** Li Lianchun, in 2001, being interviewed in her daughter's house.

I was born in the Ninth Lunar Month [1924], but I don't know the exact date. My birth name was Yuxiu, and my nickname was Yaodi. Yaodi means "wanting a little brother." I was born in Bai'nitang Village, Lameng Township,

Longling County. When the Japanese attacked this place, I was eighteen years old. I had a younger sister named Guodi. My father smoked opium and didn't care about the family, so everything fell on my mother's shoulders. However, my mother became ill and died, so my father's younger brother took my sister and me to his house. Every day my sister and I went to the mountains to collect hay and sold it in the market, earning some money to help support the family.

On a market day in the summer around the Lunar Eighth Month [of 1942] we went to sell the hay as usual. All of a sudden a group of Japanese soldiers appeared. People at the market tried to hide anywhere they could. I hid in a shop nearby, but the Japanese soldiers found me and jerked me out. They tied my hands and feet with their puttees and stuffed cloth in my mouth to prevent me from crying out ... I was then raped by the Japanese soldiers right at the side of the road ... [Li Lianchun could not continue talking; she tried hard to control her emotions.] About twenty girls were raped that day. My younger sister barely escaped being raped. She was very small at the time and was not found. I had tried to hide behind the counter in the shop, but the Japanese soldiers found me ... [Field investigation indicates that the Japanese troops raped a large number of the local women that day and then moved to Changqing Village before returning to the Songshan stronghold. Soon after, the troops ordered the local collaborators to round up women for the Japanese military comfort stations.]

Around this time my father was drafted for hard labour. A man from the local Association for Maintaining Order said to him: "Send your two daughters to do laundry and to cook for the Imperial Army, then you don't have to do the hard labour. Your tax can be waived, too." My father didn't agree, so he was taken to perform hard labour. The Japanese troops beat him badly. He fell sick upon returning and died soon after. My uncle was unable to support my sister and me. After laying my father to rest, he married me off to a man of the Su family in Shashui Village deep in the mountains. The Su family was very poor and we barely had anything to eat or wear. As I nearly starved to death, I ran away from the mountain village. A team of Japanese soldiers caught me at Bai'nitang when I was almost home and took me to the comfort station at Songshan.

In the comfort station we were given two meals a day while the Japanese had three meals. They ate *baba* [a Yunnan delicacy made of rice powder] but we were given only crude rice. We wore our own clothes at first. Later the Japanese soldiers forced us to wear Japanese clothing. I hated that ugly clothing and didn't want to wear it. I also hated to do my hair as they asked, but we had no choice.

The Japanese soldiers didn't call me by my name. They called all of us *hua guniang* [flower girl], but most of the time they spoke Japanese. I didn't know any of the Japanese words and didn't want to learn them either. Some of the Japanese soldiers could speak a few Chinese words. When they wanted to call me, they would wave their hands and say, "*Wei, lai, lai*" ["Hey, come, come"]. At mealtimes I heard them say "*Mishi*." ["*Mishi*" is not a Chinese word. It might be an incorrectly pronounced Japanese word, "*meshi*," which means "meal" or "rice."]

The Japanese army men made us take some sort of medicine, but I didn't know what it was. During the day when there were not many Japanese soldiers, we had to work, either sewing or making shoes. There were special guards watching us. Many Japanese soldiers came at night. The numbers were different, depending on the day of the week. They liked to pick good-looking girls, so pretty girls had to service more soldiers. The soldiers often beat us. I still have a scar on my left shoulder today. It was caused by a Japanese soldier when he bit me. I also saw the soldiers drag a woman out of her room and beat her. [When asked under what circumstances the Japanese soldier bit her, Li Lianchun seemed to have great difficulty speaking about it. She then showed us her left shoulder. The scar is very long and wide; it is hard to imagine it is a wound from a bite. In order to divert Li from the painful memory, Chen Lifei asked whether the Japanese soldiers paid fees when using the comfort station. Li Lianchun continued.]

Those Japanese soldiers never gave me any money. Money was useless at the time anyway. [Local history indicates that, during the Japanese occupation, Chinese currency was abolished. The Japanese authorities issued "military currency" (*junpiao*), but many Chinese people refused to use it. Therefore, trade in the region at the time was virtually all by the barter system.] The Japanese soldiers didn't give us anything, and we had to work to support ourselves. During the day we sewed clothes and made shoes to earn food and other things for daily use.

I was kept in that comfort station for about a year. I escaped in 1943, if I remember the time correctly. I looked for opportunities to escape from the day I was taken into the comfort station. As time passed, the Japanese soldiers dropped their guard a little bit. During the day they let me go to the town to collect sewing work. Of course, I was never allowed to go out freely, and there was always a guard watching me. But I gradually made acquaintances among the local people. One of them was an old cowherd who was a distant relative. He agreed to help me escape.

One night, I changed into the old cowherd's clothes in a latrine before dawn and sneaked out of the comfort station in Dayakou. I left Dayakou, hiding

myself from the eyes of the Japanese troops on the way. I didn't know where to go. I only knew that I must escape from the west side of the Nu-jiang River and go to the east side.<sup>13</sup> Fearing being caught again, I avoided the main roads and travelled through the mountains. I didn't have any money, so I begged for food and did labour along the way. Several months later I came to a little town. I had no means to go any further, so I stayed there and married a local man. However, life there became unbearable ...

[Li Lianchun fell silent. Later, local people told the interviewers what happened to Li Lianchun in that small town. In November 2001, Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei travelled from Shanghai to Li Lianchun's home in Yunnan with the documentary film production team of the Shanghai Television Station. During this trip they went to Li Lianchun's birthplace Bai'nitang to gather more information about her experience before and after the military comfort station and also to verify the sites of her abduction and enslavement. At Bai'nitang they met Feng Pugu, whose cousin's wife is Li Lianchun's sister. According to Feng Pugu, the old cowherd who helped Li Lianchun escape was a native of Daqishu Village. He had come to know Li Lianchun through her aunt, who had married a man in the cowherd's village. After the cowherd helped Li Lianchun get out of the Songshan Comfort Station, she ran to Xiangshu Village in Lujiang-ba, where she crossed the river by raft. Li was later taken by a local warlord, whose surname was Cha, to be his concubine in a place near Pupiao Town. During the struggle to wipe out the local bandits and despots the warlord was killed and Li Lianchun was mistreated. She then ran into the mountains and lived under a cliff at Longdong for about half a year, until she was taken in by Gao Xixian, her late husband. Feng remembered that Li Lianchun had come back once to visit her relatives in 1999.

On the way to Li Lianchun's home, Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei also made a trip to Changqing Village, which was the first of the places to which Li Lianchun had been abducted. During the war Changqing Village had been occupied by Japanese soldiers who were stationed in the ancestral temple of the Li clan. The village had over two hundred households, of which two-thirds had the family name "Li." The villagers referred to the temple as the "Lis' General Temple." The temple is on a hill and is a well-built, one-story wooden structure. The villagers hold their annual Lunar New Year ceremony in the temple. During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese army's 113th Regiment had three battalions stationed at Songshan and two companies at Changqing; their headquarters were located in the resident's house right next to the Lis' ancestral temple. It was not clear whether the temple had been used as a comfort station or whether this was the Changqing Comfort Station. According to Li Qinsong, an eighty-one-year-old man the interviewers met

in the village, during the war the temple was occupied by Japanese troops and there were Chinese girls confined inside. He said that, during the chaos of the Japanese occupation, most of the women in the village hid themselves deep in the mountains. The Japanese soldiers looted pigs and chickens, but they didn't stay there for very long. Judging from what he said, the Japanese troops seemed to have launched a "mop-up operation" in the Bai'nitang area, during which they raped Li Lianchun and other Chinese girls. On their way back, the Japanese soldiers stayed at Changqing temporarily and then returned to their Songshan fortress.]

[As Li Lianchun stopped talking, her daughter Gao Yulan, who accompanied Li to the interview, told what happened to Li after she fled into the mountains.]

My mother ran away from that village and fled deep into the mountains in Bingsai, where my father found her and took her to his house. My father was about ten years older than my mother. He was a village doctor and his first wife had died. He was in the mountains gathering medicinal herbs when he saw her hiding under a huge rock. [Li Lianchun's daughter later took the interviewers to that huge rock. It sticks out from a slope, less than two metres above the ground. Vines growing on the slope hang over the front of the rock, forming a space that had become Li Lianchun's shelter.] She was almost dead, eating wild fruits and barely surviving. Too much crying had damaged her eyes, so she was nearly blind. She looked like a beggar, wrapped in ragged clothes with her hair tangled. My father felt very sorry for her. He took her home, gave her food, and then treated her illnesses.

My mother was not the only person to whom my father provided refuge. Before my mother, he had taken in another person from a neighbouring village. That person suffered from dropsy and his entire belly was swollen. He had crawled to my father for help. My father let him stay in his house.

My grandfather and my uncle were both veterinarians. They opposed taking my mother in, but my father insisted. My mother's health gradually improved. She was a very neat and able person, good at both farming and housework. She worked very hard, keeping the house very clean. As time passed, my father fell in love with her. But my grandfather and uncle were against their relationship. My father then moved out of the house; he had no other choice since he wanted to marry her. My father knew about my mother's past, but he didn't mind. He often said, "Your mother has suffered a lot, a lot." [Gao Yulan choked with tears.]

My grandfather lived in Tuanshan-ba in Xia-longdong. My father moved up the mountain to Shang-longdong. To go from my grandfather's house to my father's house he had to climb for about thirty minutes. My father built a

little thatched house on the mountain where they got married. My father treated my mother's illness, first her eye disease and then her venereal disease. My mother said that she had several miscarriages before she gave birth to me.

My father Gao Xixian was truly great. He saved many people's lives. When he married my mother in the mountain hut, he took the person who had dropsy with them. He even thought of adopting him as his son because my mother might not be able to bear children. That person later had his own family and moved out. When my father died, he came to his funeral like a filial son. We still remain very close, like relatives. My father never charged fees when villagers sought medical help from him, so people would bring him things to show their appreciation. He was well liked by all.

My father built the best house in the village for my mother. He once went to visit my mother's hometown. He walked several days to the village, only to find that my mother's elderly relatives had all died. My mother sobbed bitterly. Later she asked me to teach her how to read so that she could travel to her hometown by herself. She learned quite a few characters. She could read some characters, such as those in her name.

My father died in 1971 during the Cultural Revolution. People in the village kept their distance from us after my father died and gossiped about my mother's past. When my mother went to work, people would stay away from her, so she was always alone. She worked in the field day and night. Life was very, very difficult then. I will never forget what my mother said: "No matter how hard our life is, you must attend school. Only learning can save you from being trodden upon."

One day it was raining heavily. My mother came to the school to pick me up. Coming directly from the field, she was barefoot and drenched to the skin. Something punctured her sole and pierced through her foot. Seeing that, I cried, "Mum, I don't want to attend school anymore." People in the village also urged my mum to let me help her work instead of going to school. But my mother would not agree. She wanted my siblings and me to continue school no matter how difficult it was. Therefore, all the children in my family received an education. My mother supported us single-handedly.

Every day I walked fifteen kilometres through the mountains to the school. I left home before dawn and came back in the evening. It was thirty kilometres roundtrip, but the hardship did not stop me. I studied really hard; I wanted to be a good student as my mother expected. I received very good grades and was the only female student who got into the county high school. Later I graduated from the normal school and became a teacher. I was so happy that I could help my mother then. My mum is a great mother. She raised us four children and took good care of my grandfather after my father died. My

grandfather was a hot-tempered man. Although my uncle treated him very well, he could not get along with him, so my grandfather came to live with us. He often got angry with us, too. Once he flew into a temper and broke the door. When my grandfather became angry, he would move his bedding to the mountain and sleep under a cliff. My mother would fix meals for him and we would take them to him in the mountains. My mother said we could not return home without my grandfather, so my sister and I would kneel in front of my grandpa and beg him to go home with us. My mother took very good care of my grandfather in his old age.

My mother wants justice. I hope she is able to fulfill her wish in her remaining years. [Gao Yulan turned to Li Lianchun and urged her to speak: "Mum, tell them what you said at home last time. Don't be afraid." Li Lianchun grasped Chen Lifei's hand and began to speak again.]

My son died a month ago. He had esophageal cancer. He was only thirty-six ... I am so sad ... Too many sad things in my life ... Now I am getting too old and these sad things are fading away from me ... There are a lot of things I want to say, but it's so hard to talk about ... I've suffered my entire life, and I have been poor my whole life, but I have one thing that is priceless to me. That is my body, my dignity. My body is the most valuable thing to me. The damage to it cannot be compensated for with money, no matter how much money they pay. I am not seeking money, and I am not trying to get revenge. I just want to see justice done.

*Li Lianchun died due to illness in January 2004. She was unable to realize her wish to see justice done during her lifetime. In July 2005, Li Lianchun's grandson Aji passed the Guizhou University entrance examination. Chen Lifei and Su Zhiliang sponsored him for high school as well as college, paying his school expenses. Her granddaughter Adan's education was paid for by one of the documentary film production team members from the Shanghai Television Station.*

(Interviewed by Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei in 2001)