

Man-mei Ah Ma

From a poor family, the three-year-old Man-mei Ah Ma was given by her parents to her paternal uncle as an adopted daughter. Her adopted parents adored her. Since she was little, she climbed the mountains with her adopted mother, picking tea leaves to help out. She learned to distinguish different grades of tea. When she was seventeen, people told her that cafeterias on Hainan Island were recruiting staff, offering higher wages than Taiwan. To help her family in dire straits, the filial pious Man-mei decided to leave Hsinchu with other girls. Fearing that her adopted parents would worry about her so far away, she lied to them. She arrived in Hainan Island. The woman in charge of the comfort station ordered the young and beautiful Man-mei to receive guest at any time. She was in so much pain that she didn't wish to live any more. Alone and abused daily by the Japanese soldiers, she had no one to confide in. Then she started smoking and she had been smoking for sixty years.

Hsiu-mei Ah Ma

I was deceived by the Japanese soldiers and became a military comfort woman in 1940. Before we boarded the warship at Kaohsiung Harbor, the Japanese military doctor ordered us to undress for physical check-up. There were ten or more young girls on that shipment. None dared to defy the order. We kept trembling and followed the order. It happened over sixty years ago, but it is still vivid in my mind. . . As we got off the ship, people told me that place was called Canton. It was a battlefield, the sound of canons everywhere, full of Japanese soldiers at the harbor. Masses of Japanese soldiers were shouting "Wan-sui! Wan-sui!" ("Long Live!") Later, I was taken to a building over ten-story high. I've never seen this kind of building before. The elevator was out of order and there was no electricity. There were many rooms, all totally dark. One person to one room. It was always foggy outside the window. There were many soldiers. No matter how much I feared, I was assaulted by twenty or thirty Japanese soldiers daily. I was in so much pain I'd rather die. Whenever I didn't go along or when they were drunk, they drew their samurai sword and threatened me. They said they were patriotic soldiers and should be well served.

Shen Chung Ah Ma

Under the Japanese control, we had to obey the Japanese to avoid trouble in the mountains. In December 1942, I was seventeen-year-old. A Japanese policeman ordered me to cook and do laundry at the Japanese military barracks. After a month, a soldier in charge of aboriginal women ordered us to stay in the barracks at night. A maid during the day, my "night duty" was sex slavery. I was so young that I didn't know intercourse would result in pregnancy. Even during my pregnancy, I was still raped. Only when I started having massive bleeding did I realize there was something wrong. I was taken to the hospital and finally saw that I was having a miscarriage. This nightmare repeated itself until my young life was totally ruined. In the mountains, the tribal aborigines did not know of Japan's defeat in August 1945. We didn't know that we were no longer in the clutches of the Japanese. We still obeyed the Japanese soldiers. They were very depressed because of the defeat and took out their anger on us. They drank and danced with over twenty girls. And right on the tatami, they ganged raped us. I don't remember what they looked like, but their names were Yoshimoto, Yamamoto, Wukamotoe. To aborigines, losing virginity is very serious. I dare not share my story with my people. A fellow victim, Lei Chung-fang, often went with me into the mountains to cry. I've been married four times, but each marriage ended badly because of the haunting past. I am all alone with the nightmare that has been with me for half a century. I often feel that my life had ended on the day I became a sexual slave.

Fang-mei Ah Ma

“It was dark in the cave. I couldn’t see his face. He touched me and then held me tightly. I tried to extricate myself, but I didn’t have enough strength. I could only cry and scream. He ripped off all my clothes and forced me to the ground. Then. . . he raped me in great haste. My vagina was ripped open.” During the mental health workshop, Fang-mei Ah Ma confronted her nightmare from the past. She had to stop a few times, and the staff felt pained. Fang-mei was only 13 that year. She only recently began to menstruate, and she was savagely assaulted. Soon after engagement, her fiancé was conscripted and transferred overseas. The most unfortunate thing was the fact that Fang-mei was forced into sexual slavery. Not far from Fang-mei’s home was the Japanese barracks. She had to do the laundry for the Japanese soldiers, cooked, and served them as a sex slave at night. She couldn’t go home until late at night. She was even afraid that her tribesmen would find out. At sunset, this aboriginal girl would begin to fear and agonize. She cried every night and these dehumanizing days lasted until Japan’s defeat. She never shared this shame with her husband. Not until he was on his deathbed did she confess her pain that had been with her for over sixty years. She sought his forgiveness. Having listened carefully, he consoled her: “Who was blameless? In the chaos of the war, I was conscripted and couldn’t stay behind to protect you. It’s not just your responsibility.” Fang-mei Ah Ma then felt relieved. She converted to Christianity after her marriage. Through faith, she felt more at peace.