

Metamorphosis of the Korean 'Comfort Women': How Did *Han* 恨 Turn into the Cosmopolitan Morality?

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This paper is aimed at showing how the 'comfort women' victim-survivors transform into cosmopolitan activists through Beck's three lenses of emancipatory catastrophism: violation of sacred norms, anthropological shock, and social catharsis. First, the anthropological shock of the comfort women was so great that three traumas or han 恨 were found: the trauma of being a comfort woman, of being cut off from the family and hometown, and of not being able to live a normal life as a woman. The shock for the general public came 50 years later, which caused the emergence of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (KCWD). Second, social catharsis, i.e., the paradigm shift and cosmopolitan sympathy, was possible through the 'meaning work' by KCWD. In conclusion, the anthropological shock has a hidden emancipatory effect for the 'comfort women' and their life can be seen as the metamorphosis found in a butterfly transforming from a caterpillar through a cocoon to a butterfly.

Keywords: 'comfort women', han 恨, cosmopolitan morality, emancipatory catastrophism, anthropological shock, metamorphosis

Introduction

It is widely known that estimably around 200,000 ‘comfort women’ most of whom were Koreans, were drafted or dragged against their will to ‘comfort stations’ in foreign countries such as China, Manchuria, Singapore, Japan, etc. between the ages of 12 to 16, and went through indescribable sexual slavery, violence and pain during the Second World War. Collected volumes of testimonies show this clearly (Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan 1993, 1997, 1999; KCWD and Testimony Team 2001) McDougall, the Special Rapporteur to the UN Sub commission on Human Rights called it “systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict” (McDougall 1998), and Patricia Sellers, who was the special prosecutor of the 2000 Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery (hereafter 2000 Women’s Tribunal) held in Tokyo in December, 2000¹, called it “crimes against humanity” and said that the comfort women suffered from “spiritual death” (Shim 2001).

However, surprisingly, some of them overcame the sufferings, misery, and pain and were reborn as human rights activists after the report and the testimony (Yun 2012; Lee 2013). Yun Mee-Hyang, the representative of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (hereafter KCWD), said in an interview that they have changed “from comfort women to human rights activists,” and that “they participated not only in the Wednesday demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy but also offered solidarity with many others who were suffering such as the military camp town women, workers on strike, and those elderly people who had suffered prison life under the reunification movement. Later they came to know that there are still many women who get raped and killed in Africa, Asia, and throughout the world (Yun 2012). Some comfort women like Kim Bok-Dong and Gil Won-ok, thought out an idea like the “Butterfly Fund” to help and network with sexual violence victims in other countries. Kim Gun-

¹ The 2000 Women’s Tribunal was a mock tribunal organized by Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET Japan).^[1] Its purpose was to gather testimony from victims, and then to try groups and individuals for rape or sexual slavery, i.e., forcing women to sexually service Japanese soldiers.^[2] The group met on December 8, 2000, and was adjourned on December 12, 2000. On December 4, 2001, the groups’s final statement was issued in The Hague. More than 1000 paragraphs and 200 pages long, the judgment discussed the factual findings of the Tribunal, and law applicable to the case. Not all of the accused were convicted, but the late Emperor Showa was, because, as the leader of the country, he was ultimately responsible for the sex-slave policy (Chung 2001; Shim 2001).

Ja who contributed all the money she had to help children of families without parents is another example.²

Thus enormous transformation had happened to them: from innocent girls through 'the comfort women' victim-survivors, to human rights activists (Yun 2012; Lee 2013). How can we explain and characterize the massive change which the comfort women underwent? The objective of this paper is to show how the comfort women victim-survivors transform into activists, and how the '*han*' 恨³ of the 'comfort women' turned into cosmopolitan morality. I will do this through the theory of emancipatory catastrophism and by following the transformation of their life-course, not just focusing on their time as the 'comfort women' during the war.

To find out how did this transformation occurred, I ask the following questions. 1) What are the effects of the experiences of violence and pain? 2) How did the cosmopolitan turn occur? What is the result of such a transformation? Is it cosmopolitan in nature? And 3) what is the characteristic of the transformation?

In order to answer these questions, I would like to utilize Ulrich Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis. While I will explain the theory in the next section, briefly speaking it is about the positive side-effects of the bads (Beck 2015). Put into empirical proposition, it can be stated as follows: The more deeply shocked by a disaster destroying the norm of human survival and justice, the greater energy for cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity (Han 2015). I will approach the issue of the comfort women's life with this perspective. Based on this perspective I will claim that the transformation of the comfort women is not a change, but a metamorphosis

² Kim Gun-Ja said that she 'wanted to help the poor boys and girls who do not have parents so that they would not get into the same difficulties she went through'. In fact, she donated the 50 million Won (US\$48,000) she received from the government to a newly established foundation named The Citizens' Solidarity for Democracy and Participation which supports orphans in 2000 (*Munhwa daily*, 30 August 2000, quoted from Shim 2009). Later she kept on donating all her money (total amount of 260 million Won, about US \$ 220,000) (Choi, 2017)

³ '*Han*' 恨 is a theorized culture-bound syndrome that can lead to medical conditions such as dyspnea, heart palpitation, and dizziness. *Han* denotes a collective feeling of oppression and isolation in the face of insurmountable odds, the overcoming of which is beyond the nation's own capabilities. It connotes aspects of lament and unavenged injustice. The *minjung* theologian Suh Nam-dong describes *han* as a "feeling of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against one, a feeling of acute pain in one's guts and bowels, making the whole body writhe and squirm, and an obstinate urge to take revenge and to right the wrong—all these combined." Yoo, Boo-wong (1988). *Korean Pentecostalism: Its History and Theology*. New York: Verlag Peter Lang, p. 221.

like the metamorphosis of the butterfly⁴. Also I would like to define the morality they had reached after the testimony as a cosmopolitan morality.

The study on the transformation of the victim-survivors to actors is important in several aspects. First, it is important because such studies will show how actors or agencies of social transformation emerge, how the transformation occurs, and what the meaning of such a transformation is. Thus such a study focuses on the behavior and thinking of the actors rather than the social structures and institutions and historical situations, and thus can focus on the action-theoretical aspects of the transformation.

Second, this study, as an application of Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis, can contribute to the development of a theory of social transformation. In the west there had been studies on the positive side-effects of bads, as can be seen in the studies on the Holocaust memory leading to the establishment of human rights regime (Levy and Sznajder 2006, 2010; Levy 2015). Likewise, I hope this study on the comfort women issues can provide an exemplary research on the positive side-effects of the bads in East Asia.

Third, this study can bring a widening of the research topics on the study of the comfort women. With regard to comfort women issues, there have been lots of debates and studies. However, most of them paid attention to some part of their lives, mostly on the 'comfort women' stage, and the socio-political and historical background and situations during that time (Chung 1997) or on legal issues (Yang et al, 2016). Thus they dealt with the issue of how they were dragged to the comfort stations, what they had gone through there, why they were dragged, and who are responsible, etc. And very little attention was paid to their life after the return and after the testimony (Lee 2014; Shim 2000; Shim 2009). Thus there are almost no studies on the transformation of their whole life along their life-course. This study attempts to fill the gap by illuminating the transformation of their life-course, revealing the characteristics and the mechanism of the transformation.

Here it becomes necessary to briefly explain what is cosmopolitan morality, and what is the theory of emancipatory catastrophism.

⁴ It is really coincidental that the KCWD and the former comfort women called the fund Butterfly fund, since a butterfly is the best example of metamorphosis. Beck uses butterfly for his book *Metamorphosis of the World* (2016). Thus it is quite justified to use Beck's theory of metamorphosis for the transformation of the comfort women.

Conceptual and Theoretical Background

The Concept of Cosmopolitanism

The term “cosmopolitan” is different from the “global” or “transnational” (Han, Shim and Park 2016). The meaning of cosmopolitanism, according to Beck who shows the most committed scholarship on cosmopolitanism, is “the internalization of the other” (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 418). Internalization refers to others no longer being external but rather becoming a part of self. Here, one does not impose any external viewpoint to the other but, instead, methodologically takes other’s point of view. Therefore, Beck argues that cosmopolitanism “connects individuals, groups and societies in new ways, thereby changing the very position and function of self and the other” (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 418). Committed to pursue a genuinely reciprocal understanding, recognition, and appropriation of the other, cosmopolitanism calls for “an active, deliberative and reflexive opening of individuals, groups and societies to other ideas, preferences, rules and cultural practices” (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 418).

For Beck, imposing a single world order was considered hegemonic at best and ethnocentric at worst. Rather, political and sociological cosmopolitanism rests upon these fundamental foundations: “acknowledging the otherness of those who are culturally different,” “acknowledging the otherness of the future,” “acknowledging the otherness of nature,” “acknowledging the otherness of the object,” “acknowledging the otherness of other rationalities” (Beck 2005, pp. 222-224).

Delanty is more specific. He defines cosmopolitanism in terms of four capacities for ‘immanent transcendence.’ (Delanty 2009, pp. 75-88) The first transcendence is self-discovery mediated by encountering with the other. Self is seen not as fixed, but rather transformable as a social and cultural construction. Second, cosmopolitan imagination moves further to see the other from the value and perspective they hold and accommodate the other as a dialogic partner. The third level is not simply learning from the other but transforming one’s own cultures and standpoints. This may be done through open and inclusive multicultural dialogue. Fourth, the capacity for transcending differences and diversities toward “a shared or common culture” is important (Delanty 2009, p. 87). As one moves from the first to the fourth dimension of transcendence, he argues that “cosmopolitan capacities can become progressively stronger.” This might be useful for empirical observation and analysis.

Then we can summarize the two characteristics of cosmopolitan sympathy as follows: It is, first, non-ethnic morality going beyond the national borders and nationalism, and the second, opening up to, accepting, and taking care of the excluded others⁵.

Beck's Theory of Emancipatory Catastrophism and Metamorphosis

Beck proposed a theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis (Beck 2015, 2017). What Beck calls metamorphosis (*Verwandlung*) is a double process unfolding. The two processes include the production and distribution of goods on the one hand and the production and distribution of bads on the other. "First, there is the process of modernization, which is about progress. It is targeted at innovation and the production and distribution of goods. Second, there is the process of the production and the distribution of bads" (Beck 2015, p. 78). According to Beck, "both processes unfold and push in opposite directions, but they are interlocked". The point is that this interlinkage is not produced through the failure of the process of modernization or through crises but through its very success. Beck says that "the more successful it is, the more bads are produced. The more the production of bads are overlooked and dismissed as collateral damage of the process of modernization, the greater and more powerful the bads become" (Beck 2015, p. 78).

Thus metamorphosis is not social change, not evolution, not revolution, not crisis, not war. According to Beck, "it is a mode of changing the mode of change. It signifies the age of side effects. It challenges the way of being in the world, thinking about the world and imagining and doing politics". And it calls for "a scientific revolution from 'methodological nationalism' to 'methodological cosmopolitanism'". The metamorphosis of the world is about "the hidden emancipatory side effect of global risk" (Beck 2015, p. 78).

Then what is emancipatory catastrophism? Emancipatory catastrophism, according to Beck, is not about the negative side effects of goods but the positive side effects of bads. They are producing normative horizons of

⁵ This second characteristics is something unique to cosmopolitan sympathy, and different from the so called 'global' perspective. "They have been preoccupied, first, with squaring the circle of abstract universalism by emphasizing respect for the particularity of human diversity. In the second place, they have sought to expand the circumference of the circle to include (if not to favor) those for whom cosmopolitanism is not a lifestyle choice, but the tragic involuntary condition of the refugee or otherwise dispossessed." Beck and Grande, 2012 *Cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitization*, Published Online: 29 FEB 2012, DOI: 10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog113, Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

common goods. The driving force here is global risk. Global risk may be destructive nationally ('working institutions fail') but creating opportunities globally ('new normative horizons' and the emergence of unwritten but imperative norms) (Beck 2015, pp. 77-78). Beck emphasized that in the cosmopolitan turn the common sense of problem, the historical rationality, is constituted and transformed by global risk (Beck 2015, p. 85). And what keeps the cosmopolitized fragmented generation together is "the reflexivity and reflection produced by global risk". This reflexivity and reflection in the face of global risk, i.e. in the face of the existential threat to humanity, stands for what Mannheim calls 'entelechy' (Beck 2015, p. 85), which can be translated as social catharsis or paradigm shift, the essence of emancipatory catastrophism.

Furthermore, as Han (2015) pointed out, Beck made a decisive attempt to move into the action-theoretical arena by addressing Hurricane Katrina, which swept the coast of Louisiana, USA in August 2005. In this context, he suggested three conceptual lenses: sacred (unwritten) norms of human survival, anthropological shock, and social catharsis (Beck 2015, p. 79). Han (2015, p. 117) formulated an empirical proposition from this: 'the more deeply shocked by a disaster destroying the norm of human survival and justice, the greater energy for cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity'. In other words, it can be said that anthropological shock is a driving force, pushing toward social catharsis changing the negative energy into a positive one, while social catharsis is a positive factor for action and movements. Han claims that in this way Beck defends 'an empirical analysis of the normative horizon of the self-critical world risk society' which differs from all normative approaches in terms of conviction and value judgment.

However, anthropological shock does not automatically turn into social catharsis or cosmopolitan sympathy. Some "meaning work" is needed to bring forth the social catharsis, the paradigm change. According to Kurasawa (2007) "The social catharsis, however, must not be misunderstood as something that automatically happens and is inherently caused by the event as such. It is the product of carrier groups engaging successfully in 'cultural work', in 'meaning-work', in transformative work of activists in witnessing the (distant) suffering of others" (Kurasawa 2007). It could be interpreted as 'meaning work' which Beck mentioned. According to Beck (2015, p. 81) "This meaning-work was to provide answers to the following questions: what is the nature of the threat? Is it death, health, economic breakdown, moral devastation? Who are the victims? How do they relate to the publics involved? Who is made responsible? And last but not least, what should the

TABLE 1
OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF EMANCIPATORY
CATASTROPHISM AND METAMORPHOSIS

Theoretical Concept	Operationalized Variables
Violation of Sacred Norms	Global risk or Catastrophe (eg. Hurricane Katrina, Sexual slavery, Fukushima accident)
Anthropological Shock	Perception of Catastrophes or global risk
Social Catharsis	Paradigm Shift, “No More,” Criticism on government risk management, Cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity, (e.g. Change in evaluation and/or need for national and international countermeasures)
Actions/movements	Actions by Risk Actors based on Cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity

global community and individuals, communities and organizations, wherever they are now, be doing in response?”. This meaning work can work as a pull factor which can turn the anthropological shock into social catharsis.

To apply this theory to empirical data, I tried to operationalize the conceptual scheme as follows (table 1).

The concepts of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis, even though they are very enlightening and eye-opening, are neither sufficiently clear-cut nor systematic as an analytic explanatory scheme. This may fit well to the case of Hurricane Katrina (Beck 2015, pp. 79-80), but perhaps not to the case of comfort women, my case of analysis. Thus this paper wants to systematize the driving force of emancipatory catastrophism as consisting of the push and pull factors and apply this analytic scheme to the concrete case of the transformation of the comfort women which involved both the catastrophic push factor and an emancipatory pull factor for the “comfort women”. I have already tried to apply this theory to the case of transnational marriage in Korea (Shim 2015).

Analytical Framework

Applying Beck’s theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis, my analytical framework for the transformation of the comfort women is as follows: the life-course of the comfort women can be seen as a metamorphosis or *talbaggum* which can be seen in the case of a butterfly metamorphosing from ‘caterpillar’ through ‘cocoon’ to ‘butterfly’. It can be

considered so since their metamorphosis happened not as an intended social change, but as unintended transformation or metamorphosis as a side-effect of having been a 'comfort woman'. It is indeed very coincidental, surprising and suggestive, as the comfort women themselves called the fund they established as "butterfly fund", even though they did not know anything about Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis.

More specifically, their experience of violent rape and sexual slavery at the comfort stations by the Japanese military can be seen as the violation of the sacred norms. They were dragged to sexual slavery at the age of teenagers, stamped on by the Japanese soldiers, their lives left to the mercy of the Japanese military. Even though they were outraged and resisted the violence, there were no ways to get out of it. They were not considered as human beings, just tools, and were treated, according to interviewee Hwang Kum-Ju, "worse than beasts." Furthermore, some of them were brainwashed that they were the patriots of the Japanese military, causing confusion about their identity. Thus metaphorically speaking, their life as 'comfort women' victims can be considered as 'caterpillar' period.

This kind of violation of sacred norms or catastrophe brings forth an anthropological shock. In the case of the comfort women the violation of the sacred norms occurred quite a long time ago, and we can assume the anthropological shock for the 'comfort women' occurred at the time of the experiences. However, the anthropological shock among the general public was delayed, since the 'comfort women' kept silent for fifty years and the general public did not have any information about the catastrophe. Thus there was a gap between the anthropological shock of the comfort women and the general public. The life of the 'comfort women' during this silence with *han* after their return to Korea can be seen as the 'cocoon' period.

The fifty years' silence could be broken only with active meaning work by KCWD. Through the meaning work social catharsis or a paradigm shift occurred. They think that it should occur 'no more' and thus their way of being, of thinking, and of acting are also changed. In particular, cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity arose. Their life as cosmopolitan activists after their testimony can be seen as the 'butterfly' period. I tried to grasp the above argument in the following figure 1.

Then *how* did the transformation of the comfort women from victim-survivor to cosmopolitan activists occur if we apply Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism? More specifically, 1) What is the effect of violation of the sacred norms or the catastrophe (sexual slavery) and the anthropological shock? Does the perception of catastrophe (sexual slavery)

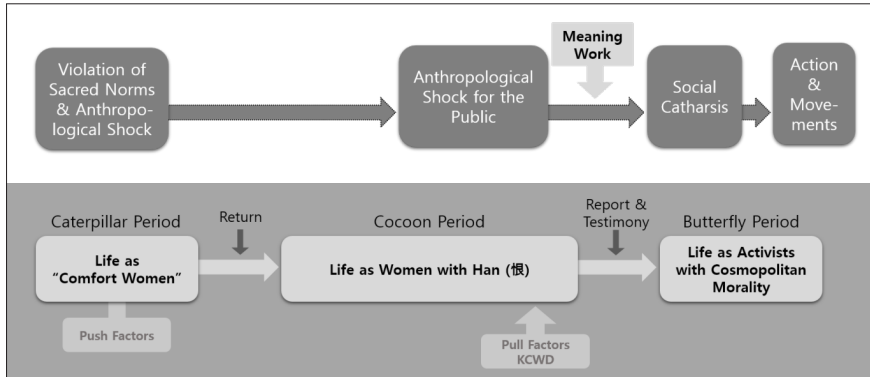


FIG. 1.—Explanatory Model

work as push factors for social catharsis or cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity? And 2) How did the social catharsis or paradigm change or cosmopolitan sympathy occur? Does the ‘meaning work’ work as pull factors for cosmopolitan sympathy and solidarity?

I would like to explain this by extending Beck’s theory of emancipatory catastrophism and by utilizing push and pull factors which I have developed together with my colleague (Han and Shim 2010; Shim and Han 2010; Shim, 2015). For this, I characterize the transformation which had happened to the comfort women from Beck’s theory: transformation from innocent girls through ‘the comfort women’ survivors to human rights activists (Yun 2012; Lee 2013). The data I used is from some of my own interviews conducted in 1999-2000 and other interviews in the collected testimonies, the newspapers and/or other papers.⁶

Anthropological Shock as Push Factors: Three Traumas or *Han*

As push factors, I will discuss the anthropological shock⁷ as a push factor

⁶ My interviews in 1999-2000 were done to prepare for the 2000 Women’s Tribunal. Among those ‘comfort women’ quoted in this paper the following were interviewed by me: Hwang Kum-Ju, Mun Pil-Gi, Kim Eun-Rye, Choi, Kim Gun-Ja, Mun Ok-Ju. The other comfort women quoted are from other sources.

⁷ The anthropological shock occurs with the violation of sacred norms. The violation of sacred norms in the case of the “comfort women” can be characterized as atrocities suffered by “comfort women” under the Japanese military sexual slavery. I do not have enough space to discuss it. I hope the following quotation from Shim (2000; 2009) will be of some help. “Japan started building

based on Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism. The anthropological shocks for the comfort women turned out to be so great that it became a *han* in their heart. These are the traumas of being a comfort woman, of being cut off from the family and hometown, and of not being able to live a normal life as a woman. The violation of sacred norms in the case of the "comfort women" can be characterized as atrocities suffered by "comfort women" under the Japanese military sexual slavery. However, those will not be discussed here. It will be enough to say that it can be called "systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict" (McDougall 1998), and "crimes against humanity" and "spiritual death" by Patricia Sellers, who was the special prosecutor of the 2000 Women's Tribunal held in Tokyo in December, 2000 (Shim 2001).

The Trauma of Having Been a 'Comfort Woman'

One is the trauma of having been a "comfort woman". For the women who were forced to become comfort women, their trauma had a massive impact on the whole of their lives after they returned, and their whole lives can be considered as nothing but the aftermath—physical, mental and social—of these experiences. Some comfort women retrospectively said that "it was not a place for human beings. It was a slaughter house" (Lee Ok-Seon). Other comfort women said, 'It was like being raped every day. It was not the life of a human being. The Japanese treated their dogs better than they treated us.' Hwang Kum Joo, one of the victims, recalled how she and other teenage girls from their village in the southern Korean Peninsula were put on trains and told they would be given manufacturing jobs like hundreds of thousands of men drafted into forced labor (New York Times, 23 February 1992, quoted

'comfort stations' in the mid-1930s, and from 1937 (the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War) to 1945 (the end of World War II) 100,000 to 200,000 women were eventually lured or forcibly taken to Japanese battlefronts across Asia, including China, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands (McDougall 1998). Eighty per cent of these women were from Korea, and most of them teenagers (New York Times, 27 January 1992, quoted from Shim 2009, p. 139). Confined to small rooms under surveillance, the women were forced to have sex with 20–30 soldiers a day, the men being 'processed' through the 'comfort stations' day and night often at 15-minute intervals. Venereal disease was rampant, and thousands of the women died, including many who were apparently killed by soldiers (New York Times, 27 January 1992, quoted from Shim, 2009, p. 139). Patricia Sellers, who was the prosecutor of the 2000 Women's Tribunal held in Tokyo in December, 2000, called it "crimes against humanity" and the comfort women suffered from "spiritual death" (Shim, 2001a, p. 151). And the final judgment of the 2000 Women's Tribunal at the Hague in 2001 found the Japanese Emperor guilty and ordered compensation for the victims" (Shim 2002). For more details, please refer to the KCWD (1993, 1997, 1999; Testimony Team 2001), McDougall (1998), Shim (2009), etc.

from Shim 2009, pp. 139-140). Instead, the women—as young as 12 years old—were kept like animals in filthy barracks, where Hwang reported they had to serve up to 50 men a day. Women who contracted venereal disease were shot or simply left to die. Anyone resisting the advances of the men was beaten, she has said. ‘Young women in their 30s come and ask me, “Why did you go?” How could anyone ask me that? How could anyone be willing to go into such indescribable conditions?’ (New York Times, 23 February 1992, quoted from Shim 2009, p. 140).

The fact that many women victims did not return, gave up on returning or committed suicide before returning, demonstrates that they were aware of what was awaiting them at home⁸. Those who did return nearly never told the truth about their experiences to anybody. All this demonstrates the intensity of the pain they went through during the return, in the first months after their return and during the long years afterwards. The social pressure they felt prompted many women not to tell their stories, not even to their families, but rather to keep complete silence. In fact, none of the six women I interviewed had told anybody about their experiences until they went public or reported to the victims’ organization nearly 50 years later.

The Trauma of Being Cut off from the Hometown and Family

In order to return to Korea, these women had to overcome huge difficulties. However, return to the home country did not mean that problems were resolved; on the contrary, more difficulties were waiting for them. Post-war Korean society was still agricultural and very traditional. Families and hometowns were the basis of life, and it was difficult even to imagine that a young woman could live alone in a city that was not her hometown. Nonetheless, many comfort women decided not to return to their

⁸ Probably the women victims themselves were not aware of it, but during interviews, they all expressed in one way or the other that upon returning to Korea they had been frightened by coming back to ‘real life’. Their lives on Japanese army bases in foreign countries had been a sort of ‘moratorium’ from their normal lives, far away from social relations and expectations in Korea, not to mention a deviation from the expected course of their development and lives. Furthermore, they had been living in a context in which normal social ethics and values had been suspended. When they realized that they were going back to their previous lives and relationships, they probably felt fear and anxiety. Even though the life in the comfort stations was painful and humiliating, there were no family members, friends or neighbors to witness their situation or judge them morally. However, on coming back they became conscious of the moral judgment of their families and communities, and this certainly was an enormous burden (Shim 2009, p. 144). Many of them said that they had bad dreams at night and some of them confessed they have a sleep walking problem (Mun Pil-Gi).

hometowns: their lives were uprooted and their family ties dissolved. In other words, they could not live normal lives as women in post-war Korea.

Among the six women I discussed in my previous paper (Shim 2009, p. 141), four (Hwang Kum-Ju, Kim Eun-Rye, Choi, and Kim Gun-Ja) did not go back, and only two returned to their hometowns.⁹ Even those two among the interviewees who went back to their hometowns did not stay there but drifted around. One interviewee gave as a reason that she could not stand her family's pressure to get married to someone who did not know about her past (Mun Pil-Gi). Another was afraid that she might encounter those men whom she had met at the 'comfort stations' (Mun Ok-Ju). Thus, all these women became uprooted—sooner or later, voluntarily or involuntarily—and were cut off from their familial and social networks (Shim 2009, p. 143).

For those who were cut off from their families or who could not talk about their experiences even after returning to their hometowns, their families could hardly provide any support. Nonetheless, the returned comfort women missed family life and familial emotional bonds dearly. One woman (Hwang Kum-Ju) brought up abandoned children during the Korean War, when it was difficult for even adults to survive on their own. Another one (Mun Pil-Gi) adopted a niece's son when he was three years old, eventually relying on him as her own child (Shim 2009, p. 143). Considering the economic hardship they suffered from, these cases show how much they yearned for a family life.

The torment of being cut off from home and family is also shown in a former comfort woman's belated letter to her mother. Gil Won-Ok wrote as follows: "Mommy, I want to go back home. I could overcome the hardships, thinking of you, even when dozens of Japanese soldiers attacked me a day. I wanted to talk to you to my heart's content about those days when I was forcibly deprived of my body over and over again and cried over and over again. I felt that all my pain and torment would be cured, if I could just cry in your arms. However, mommy, I am lost now. The road back to home is closed..." (Yun 2016, p. 254).

⁹ What kept them from going back to where they had come from? First, some did not want to go back because their close family members no longer lived there. Second, those whose hometown was in North Korea could not go back even if they wanted to, because most of them arrived in Pusan, at the southern end of Korea. Most importantly though, many did not want to go back because they were afraid of encountering someone who might know about their wartime past (Shim 2009, p. 143).

The Trauma of Not Being Able to Live a Normal Life as a Woman

In the post-war period in Korea it was still considered natural that most women should get married, have children and look after their families and households (and women's socio-economic participation in larger society was accordingly highly restricted). However, most of the comfort women victims did not or could not marry and/or did not or could not have children, as was expected from 'normal women'. Three of the six interviewees did not get married (Hwang Kum-Ju, Mun Pil-Gi, Kim Gun-Ja). Of the other three, one married an unusually old man (Kim Eun-Rye), one lived with a man who already had a wife (Choi) and one married a widower who had a large number of children to take care of (Mun Ok-Ju). Only two of them had children of their own (Kim Eun-Rye and Choi) (Shim 2009, p. 143).

Thus, to these women it was their greatest *han* and torment not to have lives like other 'normal women' as one of the interviewees said (Mun Pil-Gi). The issue regarding whether marriage is a good thing in a patriarchal society was totally irrelevant for the former comfort women during the post-war period. As a result, their intimate relationships, marriages and family life could not be considered as 'normal'.

In sum, the shock and trauma the 'comfort women' underwent were enormous and could be considered as factors pushing toward another catastrophe. However, many of the comfort women overcame the shock and trauma and became cosmopolitan actors. It was possible through social catharsis.

The Shock of the Fifty-Years' Silence for the General Public as Push Factor

The plight of the 'comfort women' who were forced to become sexual slaves for Japanese troops during World War II remained hidden for about fifty years and surfaced as a public issue only in 1991. The Korean comfort women had remained silent for fifty years before they came forward to testify on the war atrocities they had suffered. Hwang Kum Joo, a survivor who was 69 years old in 1992, said that she still finds it difficult to talk about her experiences: 'There's still a feeling of humiliation in talking about it' (New York Times, 23 February 1992, quoted from Shim 2009, p. 136).

The general public who did not have any information about the comfort women by then were shocked to know about it. They were horrified to find out that neither the Japanese government nor the Japanese people wanted to face the issue, that they destroyed most of the files related to war atrocities

and forcible drafting, and that they focused on having been the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nakasaki, abandoning the more painful path of reflecting on their own conduct (Yoshimi 1992). They were also shocked to find out that Korean government and people were embarrassed and shameful to talk about the issue, being a patriarchal society with a strong tradition of women's chastity until the testimonies. However, with media organizations focusing on the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor and with the formation of the KCWD, some of the surviving Korean comfort women decided that this was the moment to press for their case. This provided a turning point for the women's movement to start help the comfort women victims.

Social Catharsis or Cosmopolitan Sympathy

As mentioned above, anthropological shock is a strong push factor, but it does not automatically turn into social catharsis or cosmopolitan sympathy. Some "meaning work" pulling toward social catharsis is needed to bring forth the paradigm change and the cosmopolitan sympathy. Here I will discuss 1) meaning work by KCWD, 2) paradigm shift, and 3) cosmopolitan sympathy to show how the social catharsis or cosmopolitan sympathy arose. First as to the meaning work, I will discuss the carriers and the content of the meaning work for the comfort women issues.

Meaning Work by the KCWD as Pull Factor: Carriers and Content

With the knowledge of the existence of the 'comfort women,' the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (KCWD) was organized. The KCWD, as an umbrella organization of many women's movement organizations, advocates the cause and rights of comfort women victims, targeting the Japanese government and people as well as the Korean government. Their activities include, first, making comfort women issues social issues and raising awareness of their plight in Korean society, and second, advocating their cause against the Japanese Government. Their activities include legal advocacy and raising public support, demands for revealing the truth and seeking restitution of damages. The KCWD has also established international networks with other Asian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and reached out to international humanitarian organizations (Shim 2009, p. 151).¹⁰ Probably it can be considered as a

¹⁰ In 1992, the KCWD submitted seven demands to the Japanese government: (1) to reveal the

“cosmopolitan coalition of actors” Beck mentioned (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 435).

Together with the KCWD the *Jeongshindae*挺身隊 Studies Association (JSA) was also organized. It was founded in order to accumulate relevant data, collect comfort women’s testimonies and conduct and publish research about their issues. The Association has published collected testimonies of the victims, which have been vital to revealing the war atrocities committed by Japan and to rewriting history. The Association first focused on revealing the truth with the aim of punishing those responsible and ensuring restitution for the victims. Their work was grounded in historical research and a more nationalist discourse. However, some of them have engaged in feminist discourses. The development of women’s studies and feminist discourses also helped the comfort women finally to find words to express themselves and to recover their self-esteem and dignity (Shim 2009, p. 152).

At the time when the reality of the comfort women was known, there arose various discourses on the issues. At first, activists in various social movements, mass media¹¹, and intellectual communities mobilized a unified national sentiment against Japan’s immorality, utilizing the dichotomous divisions of “us vs. them,” “comrade vs. enemy,” “victim vs. offender,” and “good vs. bad.” “To disclose one truth,” “thorough apology,” “compensation,” “national pride/shame,” “our chaste girls forcibly drafted to sexual slavery,” and “innocent victims” were the most commonly employed phrases in South Korean media editorials and activist articles (Lee 2014, p. 81). Many feminists have criticized Korean and Japanese nationalistic paradigms. Since the mid-1990s, Korean feminists, confronted with Korean and Japanese nationalism, have sought to produce alternative narratives about “comfort women” from feminist perspectives (Chung 1999, 2003; Yang 1997, 1998). The KCWD tried to redefine the comfort women issues in line with the JSA and feminist discourses. The discourse of the KCWD was something “navigating in

truth regarding comfort women; (2) to concede the facts; (3) a formal apology; (4) legal restitution and compensation for the victims; (5) criminal prosecution and punishment of those responsible; (6) a rewriting of history textbooks and schoolbooks; and (7) a monument for the victims and an archive for relevant documents

¹¹ The cause of the comfort women received wide publicity in the international press and emerged as an important international issue when three former comfort women, including Kim Hak-Soon, filed a lawsuit for restitution of damages at the Tokyo District Court in 1991. This lawsuit was advocated and supported by the KCWD. Their work with the media in extensively covering the issue was also decisive in putting it on the national and international agenda. Thus, legal advocacy as a core task of this social movement helped to make comfort women a social issue and establish a public discourse about the fate of the women.

between nationalism and feminism” (Lee 2014).

The women’s movement, feminist discourses and the media all put pressure on the Korean Government. Finally, the so-called Special Act to Support Comfort Women Victims passed through the Korean Parliament in 1992, providing for a support system at the government level. The Department of Health and Welfare received the reports of the comfort women victims, and after screening and examination procedures had been established, official registration was started and a financial support system established for the victims. In 1993 the Ministry of Health and Welfare began to pay one-time subsidies as well as monthly pensions to the women. After the enactment of the Support Act, the number of former comfort women who revealed their identities and reported increased steadily, reaching 155 in January 1998 and 199 in April 2000 (Shim 2009, p. 153) and 239 by 2012 (Choi 2017). Thus the meaning work for the comfort women has been mainly influenced by two factors: the spread of nationalist and feminist discourses as a result of the activities of KCWD; and the establishment of the Special Act to Support Comfort Women Victims¹². However, the latter was made possible only with the efforts of the KCWD.

‘No More’ or Paradigm Change: Redefinition of the Situation and Change of Identity

Thanks to the meaning work by the KCWD, the media, etc., social catharsis of ‘no more’ or paradigm change began to emerge in such aspects as the redefinition of the situation and Copernican change of identity. The redefinition of the situation, involves: 1) the nature of the threat, 2) who are the victims, 3) who is responsible, and 4) what the global communities should work to restore the honor and integrity of the comfort women. It is a sudden, radical shift of the definition of the situation. Suddenly everything has changed.

More specifically, as to the nature of the threat, a new definition is provided. That is, it is not prostitution, but “sexual slavery”: It was a “systematic rape center” run by Japanese military: It is a “crime against humanity”. KCWD certainly did a lot of this meaning work to persuade the comfort women to make public testimonies through dialogues, seminars and

¹² However, the government went to the other direction by suddenly agreeing with the Japanese government without consulting with the comfort women victims in December, 2015 (Yang et al 2016).

rallies. And the first testimony also had a big impact on other comfort women to redefine the situation.

For example, Hwang Kum-Ju recounted that she watched Kim Han-Soon testifying on television and this made her register as a 'comfort woman' victim, and Mun Pil-gi recalled how she saw a poster calling for comfort women victims to come forward and also heard other women's testimonies on television and this also made her register as a 'comfort woman' victim (Shim 2009, p. 149). Kim Bok-dong also watched the testimony on television and decided to come forward (Kim 2016). Though not a Korean comfort woman, A Filipino victim said that she was shocked to hear a woman on the radio on 30 June 1992 about the comfort women and could never forget those words: "Please do not be ashamed of yourself. Having been sexually enslaved is not your fault. It is the Japanese military that bears responsibility. Please stand up and fight for your rights. (Henson 1995, p. 168, quoted from Kimura 2016, p. 196). This made her report, and testify.

As to who are the victims and who is made responsible, there also a redefinition is provided. That it is not you alone, but there are many like you. Not just Koreans, but Chinese, Taiwanese, and many others from other countries. That it is not your fault and Japanese military is responsible for it. Thus for Kang Duk-Kyung, it was not Kim Hak-sun's testimony but rather the Japanese government's denial, that led her to testify.

The comfort women issue kept coming after. And I thought to myself, I experienced that: I was there. But I felt embarrassed bringing up these things now. I felt very mixed. Then I heard what the Japanese were doing. I found out they were denying what had really happened. Hearing this, I could not remain silent since I am a witness to all that happened. That's when I first approached the TV station (Kang Duk-kyung, Pandora 1996: 47, quoted from Kimura 2016, p. 210).

As to how do they relate to the publics involved, the KCWD asked them to report and make testimonies. And as to what should the global communities, individuals, organizations be doing in response, the KCWD also tried to provide answers through international solidarity. As carriers of the meaning work, we can name several institutions such as the KCWD, media, and the government. However, among them, KCWD has been doing the pioneering, leading and the most active role in the meaning work.

Not only the definition of the situation, but the identity was also transformed. They began to realize that it was not their fault that they became

comfort women, but that they were caught in between the geopolitical international relations and war. They no longer considered themselves as the prostitutes or a 'sewage pipe' as the Japanese military called them, but as comfort women—survivors cruelly raped and exploited. Thus they began to be transformed into another person different from their past being. The fact that the number of those comfort women who would report and testify increased, shows that their identity has transformed.

The best evidence is that they no longer considered themselves as shameful. They no longer considered it is their fault. Thus they no longer had to hide themselves, no longer had to live a life with *han*. Thus it was possible for them to pursue a different life as an activist. Thus they participated in the public testimonies, the Wednesday demonstrations, and testimony tours in other countries.

For example, one former comfort woman said that "I could overcome the past pain and stand in front of you in a dignified manner, thanks to the women (KCWD member) who came with me. And your responses who are listening to my testimony also make me dignified." Lee Yong-Su said, when she was asked in a testimony meeting at an American college "where did such courage come from?". (Yun 2016, p. 160) Another former comfort woman (Gil Won-Ok) said that "I go around for a testimony here and there in Korea and elsewhere. I do not show any emotion of shame, even if I was ashamed before. It is because I know now that I am not ashamed any more. It was really hard when I was worried that people might find out the fact that I was a comfort woman, and hiding and concealing it. At that time even those who were living with me did not know anything about it" (Yun 2016, p. 160).

Thus they became activists, participated in the Wednesday rallies, participated in the 2000 Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, and even established the "*Nabi* (butterfly) fund." And their morality and activity are very cosmopolitan.

Cosmopolitan Sympathy: Four Capacities of "Internalization of the Other"

How cosmopolitan is their morality and activity? In the above quoting Beck and Grande (2010), I have pointed out the cosmopolitanism is "internalization of the other," and opening up to, accepting and taking care of the excluded others. Also I also pointed out more specific capacities for "immanent transcendence" (Delanty 2009, p. 87). Let us see whether the former comfort women have these four capacities. They are: 1) self-discovery mediated by encountering with the other, 2) accommodating the other as a

dialogic partner, 3) transformation of one's own cultures and standpoints through open and inclusive multicultural dialogue, and 4) the capacity for transcending differences and diversities toward "a shared or common culture" (Delanty 2009, p. 87). As one moves from the first to the fourth dimension of transcendence, he argues that "cosmopolitan capacities can become progressively stronger." I think these capacities can be seen 1) in the testimonies, 2) in Wednesday rallies, 3) in 2000 Women's International War Crimes Tribunals, and 4) in the *Nabi (butterfly)* fund respectively.

First, self-discovery through encounter with others among the comfort women can be seen in the testimonies. It turned out that testimonies became the basis of overcoming the trauma and *han* and the basis for turning toward cosmopolitan morality. The comfort women could meet other people, particularly activists working at the KCWD through testimonies, and through this encounter discover themselves. For example, Kim Bok-dong¹³ said:

It still hurts to remember the past and tell the painful stories of my experience in public. Every night, I cannot sleep well because I am haunted by my horrible experiences. ...By presenting my testimony, I regain my sense of self and feel supported and connected with other women. ...By attending seminars around the world, talking about my experiences, and meeting various people, I have come to recognize that there are many people who suffered like I did. Though I have many supporters, including the *Jeongdaehyeop (KCWD)* and ordinary people of all ages, nationalities, and genders, many do not have anyone to help them...Please do the right thing, not just for me but also for other women who have suffered from violence and severe discrimination the world over, as well as the next generation. (Interview with Kim Bok-dong, July 2013; quoted from Lee 2014, p. 86)

By listening to the experiences of others, "comfort women" recognize their shared agony, pain, and past as women. By narrating their own stories, they begin to heal and feel connected to others and society. By narrating their traumatic experiences, victims can acquire a unified sense of self that has long been fragmented by shame and pain" (Kimura 2008, pp. 14-15). The acts of reporting and testifying seem to be turning points in the lives of many comfort women victims; many have spoken of beginning a new life and

¹³ For the story of Kim Bok-dong, see Kim (2015), Kim (2016), and Yun (2012, 2016).

forming a new identity. Some have even decided to dedicate themselves to the restoration of the collective memories of the victimization of the comfort women. They have become actively involved in this process and enthusiastic about this work. One of the interviewees (Hwang Kum-Ju) made explicit reference to her own preoccupation and obsession with testifying and with the testimony process (Shim 2009, p. 155).

Second, seeing the other from the value and perspective they hold and accommodating the other as a dialogic partner can be seen in Wednesday rallies, which started in 1992 and are now 25 years old (Yun 2016) and took place weekly in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, in an effort to increase public awareness and to demand legal and historical justice from the Japanese government. Before, the 'comfort women' shunned people, but now they want to be together with others, accommodating them as they are and as a dialogic partner. They not only accommodate the activists working at the KCWD, but also others they see for the first time.

Every Wednesday this "peace road"¹⁴ is full of students from elementary school, middle and high schools, and universities throughout the country. Some read the letters they have written, others shout, "I love you, *halmeoni*¹⁵," "I respect you, *halmeoni*." One girl student burst into tears, as soon as she began to talk, and said, "You have been doing these Wednesday rallies for such a long time, but it is the first time that I participated. I am so sorry." At these times the *halmeonis* would held them tight and said, "no problem. Don't cry. Thank you for coming today." (Yun 2016, p. 176).

Third, transforming one's own cultures and standpoint may be seen in the 2000 Women's Tribunal. Even though the KCWD began expanding its international networks and some of the comfort women travelled to other countries for testimonies, it probably was the 2000 Women's Tribunal held in Tokyo in December 2000, which made the activists sensitive to differences in gender, race, ethnicity, and language. There they could meet many other people, other comfort women victims from other countries, other sexual violence victims, women from East Asia, South Asia, and from Bosnia, the Netherlands, i.e., the West.¹⁶ They watched and listened to the testimonies of

¹⁴ The 'peace road' indicates the road in front of Japanese Embassy, where the KCWD and the comfort women gather for Wednesday rallies.

¹⁵ *Halmeoni* is a Korean for grandmother. It is also used when one refers to an old woman tenderly.

¹⁶ The impressive thing, I think, was the cosmopolitan solidarity of the organizers, particularly, a

other victims from other countries, how they differ in making testimonies. They also watched other people such as the prosecutor and judges who volunteered for the job. Particularly watching other western victims testify—they were very specific in describing the sexual violence, different from the Korean comfort women—probably made them feel the cultural difference, made much influence on them and, made them think over the way they testify (Shim 2001).

However, it is not so clear so far. They still need more and deeper international experience. I have heard that the comfort women did something for the victims in Korea, Congo and Vietnam, but not for the Japanese victims so far, such as the atom-bomb victims of Japan. I searched but could not find any such news except that a church held a prayer meeting for both the comfort women and the atom-bomb victims. So it seems that the comfort women show *both* nationalist *and* cosmopolitan morality.

Fourth, transcending difference toward a shared culture can be seen in the “*Nabi* Butterfly Fund.” After the 2000 Women’s Tribunal held in Tokyo in 2000, and the Final Judgment held in the Hague, Netherland in 2001, lots of debates and discussion occurred and probably changed their way of thinking. And in 2012 some of the comfort women wanted to establish the *Nabi* (Butterfly) Fund for the victims of sexual violence in Korea and other countries. For example, Kim Bok-dong, one of the former comfort women donated her money to help women victimized by sex crimes in other countries such as Congo and Vietnam (Lee 2013). They not only overcame their suffering but also tried to ease others’ pain.

Kim Bok-Dong, together with Gil Won-Ok,¹⁷ declared that ‘we will donate all the money the Japanese will give us as reparation to those women who suffer from war just like us’ (Lee 2013). Thus the KCWD established the “Butterfly Fund” in order to accomplish their objective and began to provide support in the form of \$500 per month to a victim support group in Congo from July, 2012. This support will be expanded in the future. “When the Japanese government pays reparation, this fund will fly high as emancipatory butterfly to many women war victims with the name of the *halmeoni*.” And it was established on International Women’s Day in March 2012 (Lee 2014, p.

Japanese civil society leader, Matsui Yayori, a co-representative of the 2000 Women’s Tribunal, who passionately participated in the organization of the 2000 Women’s Tribunal. This looked even more outstanding because there were demonstrations against the tribunal by the extreme right-wing organizations just outside the convention center in Tokyo. The comfort women probably learned something out of this experience.

¹⁷ For the story of Gil Won-ok, see Kim (2017) and Yun (2016).

85)¹⁸.

They tried to make networks not only with the various sexual victims in the Korean society, but also with those in other parts of the world. Thus they helped the sexual violence victims in Congo and in Vietnam. Thus the *Nabi* fund is very cosmopolitan in nature, not only because it tries to reach out for the sexual violence victims in Korea and other countries and rethink over their own nation as a perpetrator, but also because it tries to reach out toward a shared culture transcending difference.

In sum, it can be said that some of the comfort women such as Kim Bok-Dong and Gil Won-Ok have cosmopolitan sympathy since they show these four capacities, and even the highest capacity toward a shared culture.

Summary and Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to show how the comfort women survivors transform into activists, how the '*han*' of the 'comfort women' turned into cosmopolitan morality by following the transformation of their life-course. In this regard I asked the following questions.: 1) What are the effects of the experiences of violence and pain? How serious was the anthropological shock? 2) How did the cosmopolitan turn occur? What is the result of such transformation? Is it cosmopolitan in nature? And 3) what is the characteristic of the transformation? In order to answer these questions, I utilized Ulrich Beck's theory of emancipatory catastrophism and metamorphosis, using three conceptual lenses of violation of sacred norms, anthropological shock, and social catharsis or cosmopolitan sympathy, extending anthropological shock as push factors and meaning work as pull factors. The data I used for empirical analysis include the interviews I conducted, collected testimonies, and other interviews and materials.

The findings are as follows: first, the anthropological shock of the

¹⁸ On the *Nabi* fund, KCWD said as follows: "We have established the "*Nabi* Butterfly Fund," which financially aids victims of sexual violence from the Congo and Vietnam wars and their families. The dream of the "*Nabi* Butterfly Fund" is to change war to peace and give hope to the victims of wartime sexual violence through support and solidarity. The fluttering butterfly stirs its wings with all its power to fly high free from discrimination, subjugation, and violence. Our dream is that *halmeonis*, "comfort women," and all other women will spread their wings wide and fly freely like the butterfly. Through this fund's activities, the Korean Council wants to stop violence against women in armed conflicts, promote a firm solidarity among us and our friends, set history right, heal the wounds of the victims, and uphold truth and justice." (KCWD 2013, quoted from Lee 2014, p. 85).

comfort women was so great that three traumas or *han* 恨 were found: the trauma of being a comfort woman, of being cut off from the family and hometown, and of not being able to live a normal life as a woman. The shock for the general public came 50 years later, which caused the emergence of the KCWD. Second, social catharsis, i.e., the paradigm shift and cosmopolitan sympathy, was possible through the meaning work by KCWD, and third, that many of the comfort women, despite their terrible war atrocities, underwent not apocalyptic catastrophism, but emancipatory catastrophism, showing that the anthropological shock has a hidden emancipatory effect for the 'comfort women.'

In conclusion, it can be said that the anthropological shock has a hidden emancipatory effect for the 'comfort women' and that the transformation of the comfort women from victim-survivor to cosmopolitan activists can be considered as metamorphosis as Beck has described found in a butterfly metamorphosing from caterpillar through cocoon to butterfly.

Here a question arises for future empirical research. The first is: when and how does an emancipatory catastrophism arise? How serious should the violation of the sacred norms be and how serious the anthropological shock be for an emancipatory catastrophism to occur? There should be some kind of mechanism working here. Beck mentions global risk as push factors, but this does not seem to be enough. In order to explain the possibility of a choice of an individual, it seems that we need not only the structural-objective dimension pushing them, but also cultural-discursive dimension pulling them toward an action. Thus we need more empirical studies for this in the future.

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