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Comfort Women in the Battle over History

The battle over history started by South Korea and China continues to get worse. Is there any prospect of Japan mounting a counterattack?

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The “Narrow Road to the Interior”¹ in Japan-South Korea relations seems, all of a sudden, to have turned into a frozen road. Some have apparently observed that the two countries have entered an ice age. At any rate, given that the South Korean President has gone so far as to publicly declare that “The dynamic of (Japan) being the aggressor and (Korea) being the victim will never change, even after the passage of a thousand years,” it stands to reason that there is also no prospect of the ice melting, right?

Although the matter should have been left as it was since there are no vital interests at stake, the Abe Administration has invited President Park Geun-hye to an unconditional summit, but she refuses to budge.

As recently as the second half of 2014, Tokyo Governor Masuzoe Yoichi, former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro and Chairman of the South Korea-Japan Parliamentarians’ League Nukaga Fukushima somehow gained an audience with the President, and although they tried to bring about a summit, Park did nothing but retreat, telling them that “(in past summits), if anything, relations got worse,” and calling for “measures to wholly restore honor to these comfort women victims” or for a “courageous decision.”



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¹ Reference to *Oku no hosomichi*, a major work of haibun by the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō.



It's not as though there's a shortage of other concerns...like compensation for Korean-origin workers conscripted during the war, or the indictment of the chief of the Sankei Shimbun's Seoul bureau and the ban on him leaving South Korea, for instance(*The South Korean government lifted the ban in April). However, Park seems intent on refusing to participate in a summit as long as the comfort women issue remains unresolved. However, the Japan side is at a loss because it fails to grasp the concrete demands of the South Korean side. Japan has ended up being begged "whether wisdom has been shown" as a consequence of a promise made by former Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko to former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak at a summit three years ago that Japan would exercise wisdom from a humanitarian perspective.

Although it would make sense for demands to be issued from the "victim side" to begin with, the South Korean Government, has probably judged that it has no choice but to make the Japan side, i.e. the "aggressor," show wisdom and to assess this display of wisdom.

The demands of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (Korean Council), which is considered to have the last word when it comes to this assessment, are apparently that Japan acknowledges the fact that there was sexual slavery at comfort stations, that an official apology and compensation is made through the resolution of the Japanese Diet, and that Japan bans public figures from making incorrect statements and that records are made in school textbooks. (See the paper by Wada Haruki in the *Sekai* 2014 September edition).

The Japanese Government paid sixty former comfort women "atonement money" of 5 million yen per person (of which 3 million was disbursed by the government) accompanied by a letter of apology from the Prime Minister through the semi-governmental Asian Women's Fund, while taking the position that issues of claims between Japan and South Korea have been settled completely and finally under the Japan-South Korea Basic Treaty of 1965. The Korean Council instructed the comfort women under its control not to accept the money, but the number of women (known as "harumoni") who followed these instructions is unclear.

In any case, only around 50 of the 200 or so registered as comfort women are still alive today and, now in their eighties, they have been so generously treated that they are more than materially well-off, with a lump sum of around 3.5 million yen from the South Korean Government, a monthly stipend, free medical care and donations from all quarters. The sixty women who were paid "atonement money" from Japan as well are even better off.



The editorials in the *Asahi Shimbun* propose as always that “We urge the government to develop more ideas and efforts to realize new measures for former comfort women” and “it is obvious that efforts should be focused on how to provide relief to victims” (30 December 2014), but it makes no concrete proposals on the method of providing relief. It is impossible to tell whether this is rhetoric for appearance’s sake, or whether it is saying let’s stop paying more and more compensation and develop an apology which reaches the hearts of the victims.

Assuming it means the latter, the image of *Asahi Shimbun* President Kimura Tadakazu — before his resignation — and other directors deeply bowing their heads and apologizing over their clumsy handling of reports about comfort women is still fresh in my memory. But whether it’s because people are getting accustomed to scenes from apology press conferences, no-one said they felt the apology was sincere. I hear that it has been proposed among the Japanese and South Korean authorities directly in charge that the Japanese Ambassador visit Nanum House, where former comfort women live as a group, to apologize, but I’d advise against it. This is because there have been previous cases where even South Korean researchers who have written criticism about the comfort women issue that didn’t go down well have been summoned to Nanum House, coerced into making an apology, and made to perform *dogeza* (sit down on the ground). Even if the Ambassador does pay a visit, he will only add to the number of futile apologies, and the apology is likely to prompt the next demand for cash compensation.

Providing Relief to the “Comfort Women of the Empire”

One person who was made to appear at Nanum House is Park Yu-ha (Professor in the Department of Japanese Language and Literature, Sejong University). She received the Osaragi Jiro Prize for her book “For Reconciliation” published in 2006, but her book “Comfort Women of the Empire” published in August 2013 (and published in Japanese by *Asahi Shimbun* Publications in November of the following year) provoked a fierce backlash in South Korea, and she had three civil and criminal lawsuits seeking damages for slander and an injunction blocking publication brought against her by the director of Nanum House and nine former comfort women. The amount claimed in the lawsuits is as much as 27 million yen.

I also heard that a demonstration march holding up placards saying things like “Arrest her!” and “Sack her!”



pushed its way to the university where she worked. With the left-wing *Hankyoreh* newspaper writing that “(she) was the advocate of Japan’s right wing,” it didn’t look like she was going to win the support of the South Korean media, and the *Asahi Shimbun* that published her book and the left wing human rights faction also feigned ignorance. Even so, the professor has made clear in her blog that she has no intention of straying from her principles. However, at the end of 2014, the investigation for the prosecution was still ongoing, and the possibility that this will result in her arrest cannot be ruled out.

So what part of Professor Park Yu-ha’s discourse presented in “Comfort Women of the Empire” and “For Reconciliation” angered South Korea’s anti-Japan faction? Knowing that this will be arbitrary, let me try picking out bit by bit the parts that were a problem.

“...parents who sold their daughters, human traffickers that sold and dragged away young girls, neighbors who stood by, and the owners of brothels who managed girls...”

“...although the criminal entities who should be blamed are the traffickers, they have never confessed and were never held responsible...”

“...the acts of violence against the women were mainly inflicted by the traffickers...”

“...the resentment of the comfort women was also directed towards the traffickers, but given that there is a comfort woman (Kim Koon Ja) who says she hates her father (who sold her) more than the Japanese military... it is clear that there are people who should take responsibility inside South Korea...”

“...the action taken by the Korean Council was neither appropriate nor right...”

“...even today they continue to create demand for comfort women for the U.S. military...”

“...heedless of their own shameful history, they are being hypocritical in demanding compensation for comfort women from Japan...”

“...the only reason the U.S. House of Representatives sided with South Korea (in the 2007 resolution) is that South Korea did not point out the U.S. comfort station issue...”



I can only take my hat off to the Professor Park Yu-ha's power of observation for depicting without affectation the real image and vital points of the comfort women issue, but I can also see why this caused such a fierce backlash.

For campaign bodies like the Korean Council which have built up a campaign on the assumption that comfort women were "forcibly recruited" by the Japanese army, any mention of parents selling their children or unscrupulous traffickers was an "inconvenient fact" that has been regarded as a taboo. Not to mention, if the comfort women of the Korean army and the American army were called sex slaves, the grounds for the fight against Japan might well crumble.

But Professor Park Yu-ha also used her head to throw the anti-Japan forces off-track and introduced a completely new concept that "comfort women were a form of sexual exploitation stemming from imperialism." Though slightly difficult to understand, she also writes that "Japan bears responsibility in the sense that it created demand (for comfort women) by causing its armies to set up camp in other countries and waging war for a prolonged period of time."

She sought to rebuff criticism by not exempting Japan from responsibility but at the same time Western imperialist states including the United States were made equally guilty. Let's see it as a type of "government responsibility theory" that is connected at a fundamental level with the gist of the arguments of both Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Sugiura Nobuyuki (Executive Editor of the *Asahi*) who, in the special review printed in the *Asahi shimbun* on August 5/6 last year, reduced the essence of the comfort women issue to a "violation of the human rights of women."

This is like asserting that a nation should bear responsibility for the various problems occurring under its government, right down to trifles like failing to catch a thief. In my view, it is a matter of the utmost urgency to somehow provide relief for the cruel sexual crimes and sexual abuses that are rampant all over the world, especially in countries in Africa and the Middle East, but it seems to me that all of these are outside the scope of their interest. The reason why the reality which requires a hard fight is looked away and distant past which involves parties who are nearly dying out is dug up is that it can easily be used as a weapon in the battle over history. However, the banner of "violation of the human rights of women" is also a double-edged sword.



In an assessment comparing the degree of damage inflicted by each country, South Korea, which has been shown through whistle-blowing by women to have mobilized comfort women for the use of the Korean army and the U.S. army and to have committed sexual crimes on a large-scale during the Vietnam War, may well be ranked top.

Battleground Moves to U.S. Soil

However, in global information warfare, the tactic is to put your own affairs on the shelf and blame everyone else. Having warned Japan that failure to take action would have a boomerang effect, South Korea made the first move, mobilizing all organizations with Korean and Chinese Americans and stepping up propaganda efforts to divert the interest of international public opinion to the comfort women of the former Japanese military, and achieving more success than anticipated.

Against the backdrop of generous funding, election-linked lobbying and a promotion tour by the comfort women, statues of comfort women were erected one after another throughout the United States, including Glendale in California, with a plaque next to them saying “I was a sex slave of the Japanese military. More than 200,000 Asian (and Dutch) women were coerced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army during World War II.”

In response to such moves, the Japanese Foreign Ministry adopted a passive stance from beginning to end. When people came asking about the situation, Japanese foreign diplomatic missions apparently dealt with them by saying “Japan has apologized many times including the Kono Statement and the Murayama Statement. If you wish to read the apology, please visit the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s website,” but this had the opposite effect, as people took it to mean that Japan must have done something bad to keep on apologizing.

It was a volunteer group of Japanese living in the United States who stood up, unable to stand it any longer. The Global Alliance for Historical Truth (GAHT) formed by Mera Koichi, who lives in Los Angeles (former professor at the University of Southern California) appealed to the federal circuit, saying that “the erection of the statues interferes with foreign policy and a city like Glendale within the state of California does not have any authority to interfere in foreign affairs.” However, the lawsuit ended up being dismissed in August 2014.



Nadeshiko-action (Japanese Women for Justice and Peace; President: Yamamoto Yumiko) and the Rompa Project (President: Fujii Mitsuhiro) have begun opposition campaigns against the erection of comfort women statues mainly on the U.S. East Coast, permanent exhibitions about comfort women at holocaust memorial museums, and textbooks published by McGraw-Hill Education stating that “The army presented the comfort women to the troops as a gift from the emperor.”

A number of Americans, albeit only a few, have also come out in support of such campaigns by Japanese living in the United States. Tony Marano, aka “Texas Daddy,” attended a Glendale City Council meeting and told councillors not to bring the Japan-Korea War which has nothing to do with the United States onto U.S. soil, arguing that they should also erect a statue for comfort women used by the U.S. military alongside the statue for the comfort women used by the Japanese military. But a petition for the removal of the comfort women statues bearing almost 130,000 signatures ended up being thrown out by the White House, which says “local governments, not the federal government, have jurisdiction.”

Michael Yon (a journalist) ironically says that “a comfort woman is nothing more than a prostitute” and that if Korean men allowed their women to be kidnapped and did not raise a finger in resistance, then they should admit that they were world’s biggest cowards, and he proposes the view that “the ones that are fanning the flames of this issue in the U.S. are the Chinese” (Paper by Michael Yon in the February 2015 issue of *The Liberty*). It is the existence of the IWG Report that Yon focuses on to corroborate this view.

The IWG Report refers to the final report submitted to the U.S. Congress in April 2007 by an Interagency Working Group commissioned pursuant to the Japanese Imperial Government Disclosure Act of 2000. Even though there are as many as 140,000 pages documenting Japanese war crimes and “the organized slavery of comfort women” was identified as a priority, dozens of incidents of prisoner abuse and murder of civilians were found, but there were no documents related to the comfort women issue.

In the preamble, Steven Garfinkel, Chair of the Interagency Working Group, made little comments, saying that the outcome was disappointing for the “Anti-Japan Alliance.” Yon concludes from such proceedings that the battle over history being fought in the United States is a plot by China which is trying to separate the United States, Korea, and Japan.



The U.S. Federal Government has declared that the U.S. - Japan Security Treaty applies to the dispute between Japan and China surrounding the Senkaku Islands, but it has not changed its stance of wanting Japan as the former colonial power to soothe South Korea as appropriate.

Indeed, the United States is a country that is, by nature, sensitive to women's human rights, laying it open to lobbying by South Korea and UN NGOs, and it is even said that Secretary of State Hilary Clinton told the State Department to use the term "sex slaves" not "comfort women."

There have been no cases where leading government officials have said this publicly, but State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said in a daily press briefing in July last year that "(the comfort woman issue) is a serious violation of human rights... we encourage Japan to work in an amicable way to improve relations with its neighbors (South Korea)," and, on January 5 this year, touched on Prime Minister Abe's forthcoming statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and said that "there have been statements issued already," implicitly asking that Abe's statement would not paint over the view of history presented in the Murayama Statement and the Kono Statement.

The mass media including the *New York Times* is also generally hard on Japan regarding history issue but there are also signs that the direction of the wind is about to change, with the *Washington Post* publishing a critical editorial in August 2014 saying that flattering to Korean Americans are going to extremes.

The main battleground in the battle over history, symbolized by the comfort women issue, looks to be shifting to U.S. soil. This is partly due to moves by the Japanese left-wing human rights faction, which has washed its hands of the Japanese media and is aiming to recover lost ground by shifting the focus to the United States and the UN.

According to information I received from an acquaintance in Los Angeles, attorney-at-law Totsuka Etsuro, who boasts in his writing that he proposed to the UN Commission on Human Rights that it use the term "sex slaves" not "comfort women" and tenaciously succeeded in persuading them, gave an intense lecture to students at UCLA (the University of California, Los Angeles). He then teamed up with Japanese American Koyama Emi from Oregon and apparently plans to tour universities throughout the United States.

Koyama is a woman in her thirties, born in Japan but raised in the United States, who last summer set up the Japan-U.S. Feminist Network for Decolonization (FeND)



. She also holds the title of President of the Intersex Initiative.

She calls herself a “multi-issue social justice activist synthesizing feminist,” but, in her most recent article entitled “Debunking the Japanese ‘Comfort Women’ Deniers,” she singles out Mera, Yamamoto, Marano and Yon for criticism.

She then delivers a morale-boosting speech, telling her readers not to pin hopes on pathetic amateurish Japanophile foreigners, as Japan, duped by them, will just isolate itself from the rest of the world.

The situation has turned into a melee in which you can’t tell friend from foe, so to speak, but I think it wise to avoid war on multiple fronts and to focus on South Korea. Various ideas spring to mind, like a fundraising campaign to provide relief to the comfort women of the U.S. military and supporting activities for Professor Park Yu-ha.

Viewpoints Overlooked in the Comfort Women Debate

It is perhaps also necessary to assess the essence of the comfort women issue and to retrace due process going back twenty or so years. This will require tenacious efforts to separate the short-term from the medium-to-long term, to repeatedly enlighten world opinion, to remove baseless misconceptions and misunderstandings, and to seek the restoration of honor. However, even people’s recognition of the facts noticeably tends to become vague with the alternation of generations. I find it worrying that amongst the younger generation there are few Japanese researchers who focus on this problem and that, even those who do, do not “feel it in their bones.” Let me give an example.

In an interview printed in the *Asahi shimbun* on 30 December 2014, Kumagai Naoko (Assistant Professor at the International University of Japan), who is also the author of the good book “The Comfort Women Issue” (Chikuma Shinsho), made the following comments.

“It is to *convey with consistency feelings of apology* to the victims who sustained unhealable physical and emotional scars at the comfort stations attended by the former Japanese military”. (Omitted)

It is important that Japan and South Korea cooperate with each other and urgently *uncover the truth*, including the events which led to the women being in the comfort stations and actual conditions at the comfort stations. Many



of the wartime records are considered to have been *destroyed*, but many which have yet to be carefully examined are said to still exist within government offices. I also propose that the Prime Minister shows leadership and has the relevant government offices conduct investigations.” (Italics done by Hata.)

The article bore the heading “Facts need to be uncovered as quickly as possible” but, after reading through the article, I was under the illusion that it was from around 1992. In other words, that it is the repetition of the story about a major incident which has only just occurred, calling for urgency at a stage when the full picture is not yet fully understood. According to a paper submitted by Hayashi Kaori, who was a member of the *Asahi shimbun*’s third-party panel, the number of newspaper articles about comfort women featured in the four national newspapers in Japan amounted to around 22,000 over a thirty-year period, peaking in 1992 when, in the one-year period alone, there were as many as 1,600 articles. If my memory serves me correctly, excluding simple news stories, most of the commentaries in editorials and columns were proposals based on recognition similar to that of Ms. Kumagai.

Back then, hundreds of victims throughout Asia came out, but apologies also flooded out in similar numbers. Now there are around fifty surviving victims in South Korea (the number in other regions is unknown) and few, if any, have not received an apology and all ways of expressing an apology have been exhausted.

Asking for the truth to be uncovered is also a type of begging for something which doesn’t exist. Attempts to further verify the life stories of the comfort women are pointless, and exhaustive searches to track down documents and books have already been carried out, for instance, in 1992, the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan’s War Responsibility, mobilized students and volunteers to go through the entire collection of the National Diet Library and inspect thousands of war records containing references to comfort women.

Indeed, since documents relating to the comfort women were not treated as confidential either during or after the war, there was no reason to deliberately conceal or destroy them. The left-wing human rights faction, which is praying for proof that the women were forcibly recruited to somehow be found, is nonetheless hanging in there, saying in frustration that “evidence may still be found.”

For that matter, the comfort stations were under the exclusive jurisdiction of the outposts, there were also no records in war diaries or combat reports made to the higher command team or central command and, since the



comfort women were not in military employ, lists of all the comfort women were also not prepared. Even if you searched for proof, it would be impossible to find. The government agencies concerned are weary of the whole affair, having been made to conduct investigations many times in the 1990s. Even if Japan tried again, it would probably be the IWG Report repeated all over again.

But I believe that the work of going back to our original intentions in the style of Ms. Kumagai and re-analyzing existing data is necessary. This is likely to be an absurdly big job, but, for reference, I would like to shift the perspective a little and list up several blind spots which have been overlooked or ignored over the past twenty years or so.

1. Absence of third-party witnesses corroborating the life stories of the comfort women

The testimonies of nineteen former comfort women published in 1993 by the Korean Council, with the preamble that it was being published with confidence, had absolutely no corroborating evidence from their relatives, friends, neighbors or other eye witnesses or related parties, perhaps because, according to investigator An Byeong-jik, Professor Emeritus at Seoul National University, who “backed off from the movement,” “it was decided from the start to try to gather testimony to the effect that the women had been forcefully recruited.”

For example, Kim Yun Sim testifies that “When I was 13, I was playing jump rope with two friends. Then a truck came and I was taken away by patrolmen and soldiers.” Incidentally, Lee Yong Soo also speaks about an identical experience of being taken away while playing jump rope at age 12. If this is true, then there must be a number of eye witnesses such as the friends or people in the neighborhood, but there is no trace of any attempt to corroborate the stories.

There are also quite a few accounts which make no sense. Lee Yong Soo, who testified in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2007, apparently brought the audience to tears, saying that on a ship sailing for Taiwan, there was bombing and her ship received a direct hit but, even in this commotion, she was raped on board the ship by a Japanese soldier and lost her virginity. “In Taiwan, the owner would hit us repeatedly, and even between the bombing, the men would set up make-shift tents anywhere, on dry fields or in paddies, and they would make us serve them.”



In my opinion, life stories previously in circulation were mainly revised by the likes of the Korean Council and, during promotion tours, they appear to be revised according to the audience's reaction. Some people have witnessed scenes where those giving testimony have been told that today we'll go with scenario B.

Even so, the accounts of the comfort women had an absolutely stupefying effect. Prime Minister Miyazawa apologized as many as eight times to the South Korean President, for their "immeasurable pain and suffering beyond description" (1992). The Kono Statement (1993) also says that "They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere. ... The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women." There is also still no change in the tendency for the media to simply accept their claims virtually unconditionally or even to side with them. Perhaps as a result of this, the work of searching for the traffickers who presumably know the truth and getting their testimony has yet to begin.

And although even for the issuance of atomic bomb victims record books, there is fairly strict examination such as a demand for a third party's testimony, the Asian Women's Fund pays "atonement money" without examination.

2. Lack of subjects in sentences

Although, the "who" and "by whom" part is missing in accounts of "being forcibly recruited" or "fooled" (fraudulent employment), the phenomenon that has gone unremarked. There are virtually no cases in which the actual names of the mayors, patrolmen and soldiers who are said to have been involved have been specified.

Since there's no way the "sex slaves" can't remember the names of the comfort station operators, the only conceivable explanation is that their names were deleted at the editing stage to prevent a third-party corroborative investigation.

3. Lack of interest in Japanese comfort women

In my book *Ianfu to senjo no sei* (The comfort women and sex on the battlefield) (Shincho-Sensho, 1999), I estimated that there were around 20,000 comfort women in total. I estimated that around 40% of these were Japanese, 30%



were Chinese in China theatre or Burmese in Burma, 20% were Korean, and 10% were other races, and I determined that more than 90% came back alive.

However, in the end, not even one of the Japanese comfort women, who were the biggest in number, has come out. The former soldiers admired them as Yamato nadeshiko, meaning the “personification of an idealized Japanese woman,” but this has created the illusion that the “victims” were only foreign women.

Around 1992, when the comfort women issue exploded, I advised reporters who were frantically chasing information that if they used their branch office network they would find Japanese comfort women, but they hesitated at the thought of Japanese women and none of the reporters took my advice.

4. Lack of interest in Korean soldiers

At the end of the war, the Japanese army had 116,000 Korean-origin soldiers and 126,000 Korean-origin civilians in military employ, including volunteers and conscript soldiers, and a considerable number of these also frequented comfort stations.

However, while there are many statements and records of former Japanese soldiers for retracing relations with Korean comfort women, hardly any accounts of Korean-origin soldiers have been presented. I have heard that Korean men are not bothered by relations between people of the same race, but they emotionally cannot tolerate that women were made to serve Japanese men.

5. Sensitivity about violations of women’s human rights but lack of interest in violations of men’s human rights

Over the last twenty years or so, the left-wing human rights faction in Japan has switched the focus of the comfort women issue from “forceful recruitment” to “coerciveness in a broad sense” to “sexual slavery” to “women’s human rights.” The tone of the argument of *Asahi Shimbun* has also more or less followed this trend, but Committee member Hayashi Kaori was apparently dissatisfied that women’s human rights were hardly raised in the discussions of the *Asahi Shimbun*’s third-party panel. She published a minority view that was clearly different from the panel



report of 22 December 2014 in the *Asahi* dated the following day.

Hayashi states that “I was the only woman on the panel and there was also no expert on women’s human rights” and then goes on to say that there was also hardly any sign that *Asahi* reporters shared the awareness of the problem... that is, women’s human rights. The semantic ambiguity aside, it is strange that they show no sign of any awareness of a problem as regards making a comparison with men.

The comfort women received a high level of income, dozens of times higher than the soldiers and more than three times higher than military nurses. In terms of age, young pilots were around 15 years old and nurses headed for the battlefield aged 17.

Most tragic of all were the 800,000 army soldiers who went to the southern battlefields. After being called up with akagami (red-papers), and beaten and bullied by the internal duty squad, around 80% of them were killed in the war. Of these, 60% starved to death in a broad sense. On the other hand, since the women worked in noncombat areas and were quickly drawn back when the war situation worsened, more than 90% came back alive. (See *Nihon rikukaigun no seitaigaku* (Ecology of the former Japanese Army and Navy) (Chuko Sensho, 2014).

The military tribunals of the victorious allied powers tried cases in order of importance, from forced prostitution to rape, rape and murder, and mass slaughter, and the “complaints” of the comfort women were not taken into consideration. Just when I felt that bringing this problem back up again these days was likely to prompt calls for an investigation into violations of men’s human rights, I read that former *Asahi* reporter Uemura Takashi, who declared “I am not the reporter who fabricates,” is bringing a libel suit “to defend my human rights.” (*Asahi shimbun*, January 10).

I do not argue against protecting the human rights of women in the present or in the near future. We must do all we can to eradicate atrocious and outrageous acts, like, for example, when Boko Haram Islamic extremists force kidnapped young girls of about 10 to carry bombs and blow them up with remote controlled devices. I want to see an end to this constant obsessing over past events instead of focusing on present issues.



Hata Ikuhiko was born in Yamaguchi in 1932. He graduated from the law faculty of the University of Tokyo and received his PhD in Political Science from the same institution. He has worked as Chief Historian of the Office of Historical Studies of the Japanese Ministry of Finance, visiting professor at Princeton University, and history professor at Chiba University and at Nihon University. His works include *Shōwashi no nazo wo ou* (Inside Japan's Showa years, 1920s to 1940s) (Bungei Shunju, 1993), *Ianfu to senjo no sei* (The comfort women and sex on the battlefield) (Shincho-Sensho, 1999), *Inbo shikan* (Conspiracy theory) (Shincho-Shinsho, 2012), *Mei to an no nomonhan senshi* (Nomonhan battle of the light and dark) (PHP Kenkyujo, 2014) and *Nihon rikukaigun no seitaigaku* (Ecology of the former Japanese Army and Navy) (Chuko Sensho, 2014), *Hirohito, The Showa Emperor in War and Peace* (Global Oriental, 2007).