The Politics of Memory

*Nation, Individual and Self**

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JAPAN'S "HISTORICAL REVISIONISTS"

The Japanese political world has splintered to pieces in the aftermath of the cold war. The same splintering has occurred among intellectuals as well, as one distorted claim invites another, until one hasn't a clue who is conservative and who is progressive. The present focus of the confusion is the so-called comfort women problem. Holocaust revisionism has created scandals in the past in Japan as elsewhere, but this time the fire has ignited on our own doorstep. With the emergence of a Japanese version of historical revisionism, the comfort women issue has become a litmus test of attitudes about war responsibility and the construction of public memory.

Fujioka Nobukatsu, of the so-called Liberalist History Research Group, stands at the eye of the typhoon. This "liberalism" has nothing to do with any traditional liberalism. The liberation they claim to advocate is from the "biased historical perspectives of both left and right"; what they call the "Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal perspective" of the left and the "affirmation of the Greater East Asian War" on the right. Actually, this sort of critique belongs entirely to common sense—one hardly needs to hear it from Professor Fujioka. Everyone knows that the Tokyo Trials were victor's justice. As for "affirmation of the Greater East Asian War," that issue was declared bankrupt years ago. To come along now and pose these two as extremes, and then make it appear that you

possess "the truth" merely by standing somewhere in between, is the stock formula of the so-called "debate method" in which Fujioka purports to specialize. [...]

Along with "Tokyo Trials History," Fujioka's group makes a scapegoat of what he calls "Comintern History," asserting that in the East-West division of the cold war years, Japan was forced by both camps to accept a "masochistic history." Blatant nationalism and superpower consciousness underlie this thinking. The logic has three stages: (1) The Western powers are guilty of the same evils but they are not apologizing; (2) Japan was an empire standing shoulder to shoulder with the Western powers; (3) therefore, what's wrong with Japan's behaving in the same manner as the Western powers?

Since Fujioka and the revisionists have directed their attacks at former comfort women and their defenders, let us begin by filling in some of the historical context surrounding this system of exploitation. "Comfort stations" were established after the Nanking massacre in 1937 and soon became widespread, first throughout China and then over the whole battlefront in Asia. What first excited the concern of the Japanese military was the frequent rapes committed by soldiers, which enraged the Chinese and accordingly made the occupation more difficult. Rape was illegal even under military code, and in theory rapists were punishable. The combination of the patriarchal assumption that male sexuality is uncontrollable and concern about military hygiene prompted officials to establish comfort stations under military control and forbid soldiers to visit local brothels. Apart from the reduction in overt cases of rape, and greater control over the spread of venereal disease, the comfort stations also reduced fraternization with enemy nationals, which might compromise military security.

Korean women were the favorite recruits for this sexual service, as they best met the military's requirements: they were "imperial subjects," since Korea had been made part of the Japanese empire in 1910, and they were young women without experience in brothels, therefore "hygienic"—military slang even dubbed them "sanitary public toilets." Estimates of the number of women taken vary from 80,000 to 200,000. Japanese women were also recruited, but these women came mostly from brothels, so that for "hygienic" reasons, Korean women were preferred. Still, a racial hierarchy remained between them; Japanese comfort women

served officers, Korean women were assigned to lower-ranked soldiers. The fees charged varied on similar lines. As Japan's military advanced south, sexual slavery was introduced in Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, including Dutch women living in Indonesia under Japanese occupation.

In the final days of the war, these women were killed or simply abandoned in the retreat. Most of them died. Even among survivors, few returned to their native places, since they were ashamed of their past and feared being rejected by their families. Some who managed to go home found themselves sterile. The few who married and had children never mentioned their own "shameful" past even to their closest kin. Japanese aggression had succeeded in muting its victims.

We can summarize the arguments made by the liberalist campaign against the inclusion of the comfort women in school textbooks in four points.

First, they assert that no positive sources exist supporting claims that the comfort women were forced labor. At a glance, this appears to be simply the orthodox stance of positivist historiography, privileging documentary sources. But this position is no different from that of the neo-Nazis who claim that the Holocaust did not occur on the grounds that there are no documents signed by Hitler ordering the extermination of the Jews. The danger of exclusive reliance on documentary sources with regard to these problems should be plain to anyone, since it is well known that the great majority of potentially damaging official documents were destroyed in anticipation of the Allied occupation.

Their second point follows from the first: that is, from the point of view of positivist history, the trustworthiness of the victims' testimony is doubtful. The peculiar characteristic of the comfort women issue is that it acquired the appearance of a victimless crime, although everyone knew of its existence, because the victims themselves were silent. The comfort women system succeeded in keeping the women who had been made comfort women silent. Yet, when those victims finally began to testify, their victimhood itself was denied on the grounds that verbal testimony is untrustworthy as historical evidence.

The Group's third assertion is that it is inappropriate to teach junior high school children the dark side of relations between the sexes. But who is really made uncomfortable by this, the teachers or the students?

I suspect this argument merely masks a cowardly attempt to avoid reality by projecting adults' discomfiture onto children. True, many teachers today, unable to cope adequately with their own sexuality, probably share this discomfiture and sympathize unreflectively with the Group's position.

The logic of this criticism assumes that Japanese middle-schoolers are sexual innocents. It is hypocrisy to assume children's innocence when they are exposed daily to the deluge of sexual information that the Japanese media today provide. Sex is just one of many forms that relations between human beings can take. It can be both good and evil. It is illogical for history textbooks to teach the darkest aspects of human history—war and atrocities—and not the dark side of sexual relations.[1] Moreover, middle-schoolers are not far from the average age of the legal prostitutes of prewar Japan or prostitutes in present-day southeast Asia. Sixteen was the peak in the careers of Edo-period prostitutes, and most of the prostitutes in southeast Asia today are girls in their teens. What kind of pedagogical effect results from averting the eyes of Japanese schoolchildren from these facts? We should instead be reexamining the myth of innocence into which the modern educational system has shut teenagers, making their own bodies "off limits" to them.

The fourth point, which is the Textbook Reform Group's most crucial assertion, concerns the recovery of national pride. It's high time we abandoned "masochistic history" and developed an official history that allows us to be proud of our own country, they assert. But what kind of an official history is this, and for whom? Speaking of an official history means constructing a national past based on a single orthodoxy, suppressing the diversity and conflict that exists among people. [...]

Naturally, many people have produced opposing discourses to the verbal violence of the Liberalists. Wide participation in the debate has precipitated what was recently dubbed a "civil war over memory." Since different news and opinion sources have adopted particular advocates from one side of the debate or the other, it also has the character of a media war.

Yet, I am unable to restrain my frustration as I read the rebuttals. This is because too many conscientious progressive historians share a fundamental historical awareness with the members of the "Textbook

Reform Group." The most central question that the comfort women problem has thrust upon us is left out in their arguments.

A "serious" historian today is another name for a positivist. In the tradition of this "serious" history, the slogans of liberalist history's opponents are "don't twist historical truth" and "don't permit historical fabrication."[2] For example, an organization called "Struggle With Prostitution" has sent a letter of protest to the Liberalists. The announcement of this protest appeared in *Women's News* with the heading "Admit the Facts of History Honestly!" This kind of history assumes that historical facts are unvarying, as if they had corporeal existence, like material things.

I see the comfort women issue as tied to this basic question of historical methodology: are the "facts" of history such simple, unvarying things that they look the same regardless of who views them? Of course, this applies not only to the comfort women issue. Since the so-called "linguistic turn," the social sciences, including history, have all had to strike out anew from a point of profound epistemological doubt about what constitutes "objective fact." Yet no other incident better exemplifies this problem than the emergence from silence of the comfort women. The mere "fact" of the comfort women's existence was known to everyone. It wasn't even hidden. What has changed is the way that that fact is perceived. By failing to assess the enormous paradigm shift that has taken place here, positivist historiography has overlooked the most essential point in this controversy.

Beyond positivist history

At present, the debates appear to be primarily over standards of proof with regard to whether there were forced abductions and whether official documents prove the involvement of the Japanese army. The arguments offered by the Liberalists are so one-sided and sloppy that people opposed to them seem to hold the belief that such insignificant adversaries will have to concede defeat when faced with detailed empirical history. As a result, the tendency has been to preserve unquestioningly the premises of postwar historiography. One almost has the sense that after the death of the big ideologies, historiography is retreating to a

querulous positivism. Yet there is a micropolitics underneath the seemingly unpolitical gestures of historians.

My intention here is not to debate with the liberalist history camp. Nor do I think an argument that actually engages theirs is possible. But the debate encompasses wider contemporary audiences. We cannot afford to leave the debate over Japanese historical revisionism on the plane of "facts" and "proof."

Positivism asserts that (1) historical facts are identical in the eyes of all viewers; (2) facts must be supported by testimony, documents or material evidence; and (3) there is a hierarchy to these three, in which testimony has the least value. Hence, among documents, public documents are of greater value, and documentary evidence like the Rabe diary recording the Rape of Nanking is considered unreliable because it is "private."[3]

Members of the "Textbook Reform Group" tirelessly repeat the article of faith that no documentary evidence exists to prove the forced abduction of comfort women. Cornered by cartoonist Kobayashi Yoshinori in a televised "debate," historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki, the most energetic contributor to the excavation of historical materials relating to the comfort women issue, was forced to admit that there "were no" documentary materials officially proving that the Japanese army was involved. From the positivist position, Yoshimi had no choice but to make this concession. Kobayashi argues that the 1938 Home Ministry documents that Yoshimi discovered in 1993 in the Defense Agency archive—the discovery which resulted in Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei's official apology—actually demonstrate "a positive intervention" on the part of the army. It has virtually become the consensus that while Yoshimi's documents provided circumstantial evidence of the incidence of forced labor, they did not "prove" the fact itself of forced abduction by the army.

Television journalist Sakurai Yoshiko has argued that if there are no government records documenting the incidence of forced abduction, it cannot be proven whether or not it occurred in fact, and it is not appropriate to include unproven statements in textbooks. Historians appear silenced before the irrefutability of this logic. This is the trap they find themselves in as long as they share a logic that privileges documentary sources above all else.

If the Japanese government's guilt can't be proven with written records, what are the victims to do? Is there nothing to be done but wait for the documents to appear? Will documents that establish proof of the crime actually emerge? Nothing suggests that the army took the comfort women system to be a grave war crime making disposal of documentary evidence particularly urgent. Documents relating to the comfort women were probably merely treated like other military documents and destroyed in the wholesale effort to eradicate any record. In response to demands in 1991 for a "pursuit of the truth" regarding Korean forced labor, the then Cabinet secretary Katō Koichi remarked in a news conference, "We can't find documents indicating that government institutions were involved." As proof that officials had not been delinquent in their search, he added, with an air of defiance, "If they can be found, I'd like you to find them." This statement may simply bespeak Katō's confidence that the Japanese army had effectively accomplished its destruction of evidence.

The biggest problem with positivism is that it denies the viability of the victims' own testimony as evidence. When the victims assert "I was kidnapped," "I was raped," they are challenged to present material or documentary evidence. Private notes, diaries, memoirs and oral testimony are considered to have only secondary value because of their vagueness and subjectivity, misunderstanding and lapses of memory. However, the privileged "documentary sources" are just another name for the sources declared orthodox by the authorities, the documents of the dominant side. In a situation where the authorities have an incentive to conceal or legitimate their criminal acts, the subjectivity of these sources must be considered too.

Another aspect of the problem is the question of which side should bear the burden of proof. To take an instance from another context, Japan's relatively progressive Environmental Pollution Act has extended aid to the victims in advance of other countries by shifting the burden of presenting evidence from the victims to the corporation being accused. When the perpetrator is an institution like a large corporation or the military, the victim's position risks being overwhelmed and rendered powerless. The Act reversed traditional judicial logic for such cases. The same could be said of sexual harassment suits. I believe the legal process should be restructured so that the victim of sexual

harassment not be required to prove that there was harassment. The accused harasser should have to present opposing evidence. This is because, from the outset, sexual harassment is a crime committed by a strong party against a weak one. In this situation, it should be plain which side is given the advantage when both parties are assumed to be on an equal footing for legal battle.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE COMFORT WOMEN ISSUE

The case of Senda Kako's book *Comfort Women* (*Jūgun ianfu*, Tokyo, 1973) neatly demonstrates the extent to which present awareness of the issue depends upon a recent paradigm shift in public awareness. Reflecting on the original publication, Senda recently commented that "at the time, combined sales of the first volume and the sequel totaled 500,000 copies, but it failed to become a topic of broad discussion. Unfortunately, it did not attract the interest of modern historians." Senda's book was immediately translated into Korean, but circumstances were similar in Korea. The existence of the comfort women was common knowledge even in Korea, but until the 1980s, no one, not even the participants themselves, understood what had happened as a "crime."

The democratization movement and women's movement in Korea during the 1980s helped bring about this shift. More broadly, behind the women's movement in Korea stood the worldwide emergence of grass-roots women's movements. We in Japan were stunned when Kim Hak Sun first testified in 1991, but two earlier events had prepared the way for her testimony. The first was testimony of sexual torture under the South Korean military dictatorship of the 1980s. Kon In Suk, an activist in the student movement, was the first to identify herself as a victim, asserting that she had experienced sexual torture while in prison. This prepared the way for a shift in views of rape in Korea, from the shame of the victim to the crime of the perpetrator. The second incident that paved the way for former comfort women to come out and announce themselves was the call for testimony on Japanese forced sexual service by Korean volunteer groups, represented by Yun Jon Ok. The testimony of the comfort women would not have been possible without the existence of women's support groups. The court battles may have held

only symbolic significance, but testifying had profound meaning for the women themselves.[4]

Testifying signified the recovery of a suppressed past. However negative the memories were, these women were recovering the wholeness of their selves by identifying their own past as something meaningful. Numerous victims have testified how greatly the memory has tortured them. Already, in the act of testifying, the former comfort women have laid claim to their dignity. Denying that testimony tramples on these women's dignity.

What kept them silent for fifty years? The answer plainly is that the crime continued, in the present tense, for that half-century period. There are probably still numerous women who have not come forward. It goes without saying that patriarchy in Japan and Korea has played the greatest role of all in perpetuating the crime. It is mistaken to say it took them as long as fifty years. Rather, the accusation was only possible after those fifty years. The women's movement in Korea in the 1980s and the global development of feminism formed the necessary background. Yoshimi Yoshiaki himself acknowledges that the documents he uncovered took on significance for him after he heard the statements of victims. Had he discovered them in the 1980s, they might have remained buried even while at his own fingertips.

When former comfort women testified as victims, a forgotten past was recovered for the first time as a distinct, different reality. History was made anew by this act. And, after fifty years, a "retrial" of that history has now become possible. The folly of positivist historians is to think that we can "assess" certain historical facts "just as they are" from a third-party perspective, divorced from the reality of those who experienced it. History is a continuous recomposition of the past in the present. The naive perception of history as a retelling of past facts "as they are" is no longer tenable.

There has been an interesting change in the history of the Holocaust too. The victims did not exist right there for anyone to observe "objectively" as victims. Before the history of the Holocaust could take its present form, the vicissitudes of the postwar era had to intervene. The greatest change came when witnesses called to the stand at the Eichmann trial spoke publicly for the first time, relating their almost unspeakable experiences. Until then, victims of the Holocaust were widely viewed

even in Israel as wanting in courage, having simply followed obediently as they were sent to the gas chambers, unable to protest or revolt. Israelis had shared a tacit view of them as powerless Jews who had idled away their time in Europe until they were taken like lambs to the slaughter. With the statements from the witness stand at Eichmann's trial, an unutterable past, a memory inexpressible in words, emerged for the first time in full force. Such memories, of suffering so great that the very act of recollection is painful, surface as "reality" only through narratives and the presence of ears prepared to hear them. Thus even in the case of the Holocaust, the memory was not merely waiting there in the form of bare and undisputed "facts."

At the time of Japan's colonial invasions, there was nothing in international law preventing imperialist states from invading and colonizing other countries. When slavery was practiced in the American South, there was no law against it. But subsequently, after a change in consciousness brought recognition of what a crime against humanity slavery was, American history was rewritten. Slavery and the genocide of indigenous peoples became indelible smirches on American history. What Anglo-Saxon Americans had understood as a "noble conquest," native Americans remembered as a massacre. Only with the challenge of minorities' opposing realities has American history come to be written from a more diverse perspective. The same could be said of the forced internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. A section of the Smithsonian Museum of American History is devoted to this, where the incident is exhibited as an indefensible act of injustice committed by the US government against some of its own citizens, simply because of their Japanese ancestry. This exhibit would likely never have been realized were it not for the decades of Japanese-American demands for government compensation. Of course, the exhibit still presents an orthodox "national citizens' history."[5] But the point to note is that history museums are not the repositories of dead objects. They are the sites of a living "present," rewritten with altered exhibits each time that history is revised. It is we ourselves, living in the present, who rewrite that history. One could take the recent case of the New Ainu Law as a Japanese example.[6] Here too, we have taken an episode once viewed as a "noble conquest" and rewritten it as barbaric plunder.

Feminism and oral testimony

Women's history in Japan has had a slightly contorted relationship with feminism. This is because Japanese women's history was already established as a field under the influence of historical materialism prior to the emergence of second-wave feminism. Japanese women's historians did not conceal their vexation and animosity toward the women's liberation movement. While the women's liberation movement grew in the seventies and eighties, women's historians did grassroots work uncovering local women's histories and accumulated valuable results, but they passed through the period without a baptism in the theoretical revolutions of contemporary feminism.[7]

From the feminist's perspective, women's history is a direct product of feminism in the field of history. A critique of documentary history lay at the foundation of women's history in the West because women's historians were compelled to start with the overwhelming absence of a "written history" for women. Naturally, there are materials *about* and illustrations *of* women, but these are no more than representations of women by men. What "facts" about women could such representations tell? Historians have finally come to recognize the obvious premise that discourses about women produced by men tell us more about the men themselves than about women.[8] [...]

The most important issue for women's history has been how to make silenced voices speak. This is what led women's historians to oral history and what made oral testimony so precious. Certainly, there are several problems in judging the value of oral sources. There is lapse of memory, or the misremembering of events. There is the problem of inconsistency. There is the selectiveness of memory, both conscious and unconscious. And finally, oral history always depends on recollection, which assigns present meanings, sometimes self-legitimating ones, to the past.

Yet all of the problems inherent in oral history are in fact present in orthodox documentary histories as well. First, the question of forgetting and errors: plenty of official history treats things that happened as if they had not, as in the claims that the Nanking massacre was not a "massacre." The second charge, of inconsistency, can equally be leveled against written histories, many of which are full of self-

contradiction. We should pose the question, rather, what a "consistent history" is. Dialectic materialism was brilliantly consistent. Events were given explanations according to a definitive causality and situated within a tidy teleology. But haven't we come to look with skepticism on this kind of consistent history, suspecting that its consistency relies on the discarding of whatever disagreed with its interpretative schema? Consistent history can in fact be extremely dangerous. As for the selectivity of memory, there is ample room for this in written history too. Why have the acts of the powerful been selected and the experiences of those whom they oppress not? Why is a privileged position granted to political events, while the everyday is treated as unworthy of consideration? Social history and women's history emerged precisely to raise objections to this type of selective memory. Fourth, written history too is always a recollection of the past in the present. We cannot be satisfied with a single account of the history of the French Revolution or the Meiji Restoration. As times and interpretations change, they are always open to the possibility of a new rewriting. History is a continuous retrial.

At a time when historians everywhere are fighting over fundamental methodological questions regarding historical consciousness, what does it mean to share a positivist view of history? And to whose advantage is this positivism? If we return to consider the memory of the comfort women, the danger in sharing a historical perspective that gives their oral histories only secondary importance to documentary sources should be clear. [...]

MULTIVALENT REALITY

Distortions on both sides are evident in the dispute over whether the comfort women system was prostitution or sexual slavery. Liberalist advocates say that it was simply public prostitution and emphasize what they claim to be the "consent" and "choice" of those involved. Pointing to the fact that even within Japan public prostitutes were practically bought and sold and often experienced violence, they rationalize it as a product of the times. Their logic conflates the reasonable process of historical contextualization and the commonplace notion that "you can't judge the past by the standards of the present" to yield an affirmation of

the comfort women system, along with public prostitution *in toto*. Kobayashi puts it baldly when he demands we "forgive the sexual desire of our fathers who fought for the fatherland."

On the other side, there are two arguments: that the comfort women were not public prostitutes and that the system was distinct but an extension of the system of public prostitution. Kawada Fumiko and Kurahashi Masanao have taken the former position, as has Yoshimi. Kurahashi distinguishes two types of comfort station, the privately run ("prostitution type") and the military comfort women type ("slavery type"), and goes so far as to hypothesize that the treatment "was probably" better at the latter. The basis for this supposition is that (1) the military would have treated the comfort women with care as "weapons"; and (2) under the military bureaucratic principle of standardization, they should all have received the same treatment.[9] The testimony of former comfort women, however, has refuted this speculation.

From a different position, support groups in Korea have responded furiously to arguments equating the comfort women with public prostitutes. But lurking behind this response lies a determination to divide comfort women by national borders, and a prejudice against prostitutes. The position that the comfort women were not public prostitutes results in construction of a "model victim": the "Korean woman whose purity was violated in a forced abduction." It is easy to see that this position first of all makes it difficult for the "impure victims," whose cases do not precisely fit that description, to come forward, and second excludes Japanese comfort women. What are the feelings of Japanese-born former comfort women, maintaining silence somewhere even now, as they listen to Korean survivors' testimony? We bear responsibility for their silence too.

On the other side, Japanese women's historians like Suzuki Yūko and Fujime Yuki argue that the comfort women system was indeed an extension of public prostitution at home, but they do so to condemn rather than absolve the two institutions. They indict the sexually discriminatory character of prewar Japan, asserting that it was precisely because of the existence of a slavery-like institution of legal prostitution that a system of military comfort women could be devised and put into effect. In a recent essay, Fujime forcefully criticizes both theories that equate the comfort women with public prostitutes and theories that deny

this equation for sharing a "sexual double standard" that separates the "innocent woman" from the "morally degenerate prostitute."[10]

Even when an argument is built upon legal evidence, historiographic pitfalls lurk in the seemingly sound assertion that events should be understood in the context of the period when they occurred. Maeda Akira has pointed out that Japan had already entered an international agreement on prostitution in 1925, the treaty against the sale of women and the 29th ILO treaty on forced labor in 1930. Therefore, he argues that the comfort women system contravened international conventions that Japan had already signed at the time. "The argument that the exploitation of the 'comfort women' conflicts with present-day notions of human rights invites misunderstanding," Maeda writes. "The human rights standards of the time also denied the comfort women system. This is a minimum normative premise." From here he develops a position emphasizing "focusing on the facts of history."[11] But this position encounters opposition immediately on several fronts.

For one thing, does this mean that the sale of women and forced labor prior to the treaties was not against human rights principles? Second, if the reality within Japan was in contravention of international treaties, why should only the comfort women be singled out as the focus of the problem? Third, while it is common knowledge that international law is always the product of political compromise among the great powers of the era, arguments based on international law are compelled to construct their logic treating the existing international order as a fixed standard for judgment. Accepting the logic of the strong, even if only temporarily, the "realism" of specialists in international law and politics, is apt to devolve into status-quo conservatism.

When the victims are bold enough to break their silence, we have no choice but to embark from their own overwhelming "reality." By "reality," I do not mean here the same thing as "facts." When this great a disparity exists between the experience of the perpetrators and the victims, how can one call the incident a single "fact?" Rather, two "realities" exist. Of course, I know the counterarguments that will be leveled immediately against this approach: shall we tolerate all sorts of histories, including liberalist history? An undecidable battle will ensue over what constitutes "correct history." Doesn't this deny "truth" and lead people to relativist nihilism? Several people who would react this

way come to mind at once. But acknowledging multiple "realities" in place of one irrefutable "truth" does not mean judging which among the various "realities" is "truth." There is still today an almost unbridgeable gap between the "realities" of former soldiers, some of whom relate in nostalgic tones the memory of their "relations" with comfort women, and the reality of the women themselves. This does not mean that the former soldier's "reality" is simply in error. The problem is recognizing that the "reality" of the oppressed, which has been concealed and forced into conformity by the "reality of the dominant," has such an unimaginably different face. It is difficult for people living the dominant reality to acknowledge that there is another reality not visible to them. However, when a victim begins spinning the fragmentary thread of her own narrative, telling a story that announces "my reality was not the kind of thing you think," an alternate history emerges, relativizing the dominant one at a stroke.

How is the victims' "reality" formed? It is composed for the first time by the women's stories themselves. The teller forms her subjectivity as "victim" in the act of telling her story. The term "victim" may not be appropriate in this context. Following the example of other cases of sexual violence, it might be better to speak of them as "survivors," since these women spin their narratives as the labor of confirming their own present existence, not merely as past victims but as people who live through suffering.

Narrative is the joint production of speaker and listener. The speaker is not a speaking machine, reproducing the same narrative over and over. On the contrary, as research in oral history has made clear, people placed in a position of weakness in relation to the listener tend to relate the stories that the listener wants to hear. The site of narration is another laboratory for the exercise of power.[12]

Construction of the "model victim" dictates a particular narrative, a story told as the listener wants to hear it. An innocent virgin is suddenly taken by force, gang-raped and forced into labor as a comfort woman. She tries to escape but is stopped and lives through unbearable suffering. This is the model comfort woman's story. Yet the actual cases of women who became comfort women are diverse. It is difficult to generalize from, for example, cases of women compelled by poverty, sent

by their own parents, forced by local bosses and seduced by the promises of pimps or by other quasi-fraudulent devices.

I encountered evidence of the "model victim" problem in a panel on the comfort women issue at the American Historical Association's annual meeting in January 1997. Korean-American documentary filmmaker Dai Sil Kim-Gibson produced a documentary following the daily lives of Korean women at Nanumu House, a shared home for former comfort women. Gibson related that while listening to these women's stories repeatedly, she noticed that the narrative formula changed according to whom they were addressing. One woman, for example, originally recounted how she had become a comfort woman in an effort to escape an unhappy marriage, forced on her by her parents, to a husband who abused her. Persuaded by the sweet words of the pimp, she followed to escape the husband's abuse. When this woman faced the Japanese media or gave public testimony, she omitted mention of her marriage. This kind of case risks being abused by critics. The Liberalists might seize upon it to support their claims, declaring "You see? That's why you can't trust testimony." But we can view such narratives from a completely different perspective. That is, at the site of narration, the Japanese mass media or "well-intentioned" interviewers, by trying to extract the particular narrative they want to hear, are guilty of a kind of second violence. Even today, power relations are enacted in these interviews. People who know about victims' stories and court testimony in cases of sexual violence will be quite familiar with the experience. Court testimony compels people to narrate their experiences in the most coercive and authoritarian situation. The story of the weak will not be told where the speaker lacks the sense of security and trust that the narrative will be shared by the listener. This is something we should have learned through efforts in women's oral history. Confronted with the question of how the narrative and, accordingly, the victim's "reality" are made, the positivist historian and the well-intentioned support group may inadvertently wind up on the side of the perpetrators.

Overcoming the nation-state

As a Korean American, Kim-Gibson expressed a strong sense of emotional identity with the Korean women she visited at Nanumu House. She asserts that an "objective, neutral" documentary, and by extension an objective history, are impossible. In her conference presentation, she revealed powerfully the anger and tears she shared with the women she interviewed and related feeling as if her own body too had suffered the same violations. But the "we" constructed by this identification was based on a privileging of Korean ethnicity. Although she is of American and not Korean nationality, being of Korean ancestry allows her to identify herself with these women. As a woman of Japan, the nation of the perpetrators, am I forbidden to speak the words, "I shared their anger and tears?" How about a woman who is neither Japanese nor Korean, say, an American?

The problem here is what constitutes the collective identity represented by "we." At the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995, I formed a workshop on the comfort women issue with Puja Kim, who is a Korean resident of Japan. When I stated at this workshop my concern that this issue was in danger of becoming a tool in negotiation over national interests between Japan and South Korea and urged Japanese and Korean feminism to overcome national boundaries, I was confronted by vociferous protest. Kim summarizes one of the responses, from a Korean-American who was in the audience: "Our country was invaded by soldiers from your country. You can't simply ask that we overcome national borders. Claiming that feminism has nothing to do with nationalism is no different from the ethnocentric thinking of Western feminism. Nationalism is an important issue for feminists in Asia." This criticism points to the danger that Japanese feminists seeking support for a transnational feminism from women in countries invaded by Japan may nullify Japan's role as aggressor. Since Beijing, I have taken this criticism as a weighty homework assignment and continued thinking about the subject. [...]

Yet I cannot bring myself to accept the general assertion that the nationalism of oppressed peoples is inherently legitimate. For example, terrorism and heroism in the context of struggles for independence have been the objects of feminist criticism on the basis of the structures of

gender bias they reveal. Even Mahatma Gandhi, whose nonviolent resistance is regarded as a model among national-liberation movements, has been criticized in the postcolonial context for the gender bias inherent in his clever deployment of women's "femininity" as a resource. In nationalism, we create an "us" and a "them" by equating the self and the ethnic group. In the nationalism of both the strong and the weak, this collective identity awaits us as a trap.

In December 1996, students in the Department of Education at Tokyo University, where Fujioka Nobukatsu is affiliated, organized a gathering to hear the testimony of former comfort women. A report of the meeting was published in pamphlet form under the title "From Nanumu House to Young Japanese: Former 'Comfort Women' Today." I was surprised to find the following opinion printed in this pamphlet as the statement of a female student in her twenties:

> Formerly, I myself avoided the issue, clinging to Ueno Chizuko's words "don't confuse the individual and the state." Ueno said "it is a frightening nationalism when a young Japanese suddenly takes up the burden of the Japanese government and starts weeping and apologizing over the comfort women issue." Hmm. I think this means basically to be aware of what the Japanese government did and beware of confusing the individual and the state.... That made me sweep it aside saying, yeah, there's no point in taking such a grovelling stance. I didn't want to touch on it. But that's just a way of escaping. I came to feel strongly that you have to learn history and start acting on your own.

Encountering this kind of response, there are probably people who will pounce on it as material to criticize me, as a case where my words provide an easy excuse to absolve the people of the aggressor nation. Let me explain the instance referred to in this young woman's remarks. A group of Japanese youth sent on a good-will trip to South Korea were participating in a ceremony to acknowledge their visit. As part of the event, they heard the experiences of men who were taken into forced labor and women who were made comfort women. This event appeared on television. Suddenly, a sturdily built Japanese youth stood up and began to weep, saying, "I didn't even know such things had happened.

Please forgive us." The "touching scene" the television program presented of this young man's naive reaction, which almost certainly came spontaneously from pure good intention, instills a terror in me—a terror at seeing that state and self could be identified so easily. We need to find an avenue other than identification with the state for the genuine expression of hurt this young man probably felt.

Here's another example. The April 1997 issue of *Sekai* (The World) ran interviews with several social studies teachers who were members of the Liberalist History Research Group. Among them was a former member of the Zenkyōtō, the student radical alliance of 1968 (identified simply as "former Zenkyōtō male, age 47"). "You know, I liked talking about state and nation back in those days too," remarked this "former Zenkyōtō male." You can see the real story slipping out here. And this was one of the things that divided male student activists from female student activists. Hashimoto Osamu has written that Zenkyōtō men and Zenkyōtō women were completely different species, participating in the struggle out of disparate motives.[13] When "women's lib" was born out of the rubble of the student movement, the "libbers" thrust the battle-ground of the everyday upon these men who talked of "state and nation," these men who wanted to identify themselves with the big story. Fujioka Nobukatsu himself was a member of the communist youth organization. Others like him have flip-flopped from left to right without changing in essence at all.

I'll introduce one last episode. A particular social studies teacher who took up the issue of the comfort women for a class debate turned toward a female pupil of Korean descent and declared to the class, "You should all apologize to her here and now." This was reported by the girl herself, who described the discomfort of the experience. "I don't think that's really the issue..." was her honest reaction. There is no doubt that this teacher was trying to be conscientious. It simply demonstrates the trap—for left or right—of equating the self and the state.

The present intellectual tangle can be traced to the Gulf War. Fujioka acknowledges that he had his change of faith while visiting the United States during the Gulf War. Politician Takaichi Sanae of the Liberal Democratic Party, formerly a representative for the New Renewal Party (*Shinshintō*), was interning as a congressional secretary in the United States Congress in the same period. She was widely condemned

for declaring openly in a Diet committee that "having been born after the war," she bore no responsibility for it. The first volume of Miyazaki Tetsuya's *Our Invasive War* was compiled as a furious response to this statement.[14] At the time of the Gulf War, both Fujioka and Takaichi witnessed from the inside how the United States forcibly imposed the justice of its "Pax Americana," acting as the "world's policeman." His popularity waning, George Bush created the villain Saddam Hussein and choreographed a "just war." Seventy percent of the American people supported his decision. You might say Fujioka and Takaichi observed the formation of superpower nationalism step by step from backstage. Then Japan, stuck in America's trap, was compelled to donate 90 trillion yen, sparking in Fujioka and Takaichi a sense of indignity that led them to conclude that "Japan was the loser in the Gulf War."

Not unlike liberalist history, postwar Japanese historiography was founded on the desire for a "national (people's) history." The call for an "official history we can be proud of" only expresses that desire overtly. Broadly speaking, "Japanese historical revisionism" is precisely that desire to see "national stories" repeatedly reproduced in new guise. The question left to us, then, is how to establish grassroots solidarity while avoiding the traps set by the nation-state. Abstract, universal principles like "world citizen," "individual," and "human being" are the devices usually called into play to overcome the exclusivity of national collective identities. Yet the concept of a universal, cosmopolitan "world citizen" is itself fraught with dangerous attractions. It encourages us to adopt the illusion of individuals freed from all affiliations, as if the burdens of history did not exist.

Clearly we need something neither "nation" nor "individual." How can "I" take responsibility as an "I" without being swayed by either of these poles? "I" am built from the union of gender, nationality, occupation, position, race, culture, ethnicity and countless other relations. Each of us is faced with the question of how to cope with this multilayered "I" and how to form bonds with others. There is no simple answer. But at least by posing the problem this way, we are given some basis to seek criteria for judgment. According to the configuration of relations that makes each of us, the choices we make will be different. Naturally, this leaves open the possibility of mistaken choices. Yet what cannot be accepted by this "specific I"—who is not an "individual"

describable in universalities—is the logic of representativeness, of the mouthpiece.

It is true, just as Puja Kim fears, that when feminist politics crosses national boundaries, the danger exists of imposing an "imperialist feminism" in the name of universal values. Yet it is also true that feminism cannot stay within national borders. The logic of individual suits in the comfort women cases is significant for this crossing of national borders. Since the Japanese government has declared that all compensation was complete with postwar reparations between states, when an individual woman challenges the government, her suit announces: *my* concerns are not spoken for by the state, *my* body and rights are not subordinated to the state. The fight of the former comfort women—their desire to recover their *self*-respect—has the character of a refusal not only of the Japanese state but of the Korean government's speaking in proxy for their rights.

If it is possible to construct the comfort women issue discursively as "a violation of the human rights" of women, then it also becomes possible to claim that being made a murderer for the state as a "soldier" is a violation of a man's "human rights." Do the human rights advocates have that much in their sights? The challenge that the comfort women issue poses is not only about war crimes, it is about war as a crime. Thinking beyond the nation-state leads us by logical necessity to this conclusion. Since the definition of national citizenship is rooted in the obligation of military service, while femininity has been defined by exclusion from battle, the position of "woman" exposes the gaps in the nation-state by demonstrating the absurdity of a "female national citizen." But this is not to say that we must embrace the essentialist premise that "woman" means "pacifist." Denaturalizing and de-essentializing both the nation-state and woman—this is where gender history arrives after gendering the nation-state.

To return to the concrete situation of the comfort women; the responsibility of the state is not "my" responsibility, but conversely, absolving the state of responsibility does not absolve "me." The struggle of the former comfort women is their struggle, and simply supporting them does not make it "my" struggle. Korean women in Korea will have their way of struggling, and Koreans in Japan will have their own. The issue here is one of positionality; where does the "I" speak from? The

reality we are forced to confront by the comfort women, by the shock with which they have overturned dominant versions of reality, presses upon each of us the obligation to identify who this "I" is. The "comfort women issue" is not their problem, it is a problem for every "I."

Translated from Japanese by Jordan Sand

NOTES

* *Translator's note:* Translated and abridged from "Kioku no seijigaku: kokumin, kojin, watashi," *Inpakushon* (Tokyo), no. 103 (June 1997): 154–74. This translation incorporates portions of two other articles by Ueno: "Posuto reisen to 'Nihonban rekishi shūseishugi'" (The post–cold war era and "Japanese historical revisionism"), *Ronza* (Tokyo) 4, no. 3 (Mar. 1998): 62–74; and "Kioku no seijigaku" (The politics of memory), in Ueno, *Nashonarizumu to jendaa* (Nationalism and gender) (Tokyo, 1998), 147–99. I am grateful to the author for her permission to publish this essay and her generous assistance in revising it.

1. It might be noted that the same sort of contradiction is evident in the fact that most Japanese media refrain from using the word "rape." The official reason is that the term is "too strong"; yet "murder" is uttered freely. It should be clear what is suppressed and who benefits when "rape" is replaced by "harassment" or "assault."

2. Both phrases are from the introductions to Suzuki Yūko, *Joseishi o hiraku 3: Onna to sengo gojūnen* (Exploring women's history 3: Women and the fiftieth anniversary of the War) (Tokyo, 1996) and *Joseishi o hiraku 4: Ianfu mondai to sengo sekinin* (Exploring women's history 4: The comfort women problem and postwar responsibility) (Tokyo, 1996).

3. *Translator's note:* John Rabe was head of the Nanking branch of the German electronics firm Siemens in 1937, when the Japanese attacked the city. Rabe created a safety zone for Chinese refugees and is believed to have saved thousands of lives. His diary, published in German as *Der gute Deutsche von Nanking,* records the months of the Nanking massacre. The English translation is John E. Woods, *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe* (New York, 1998).

4. It is taboo in the organizations of supporters to acknowledge that the chances of success in the courts are small. This is considered defeatism. If you're going to fight, you should initiate a fight that has the possibility of victory, and victory won't come if you don't envision it. This logic is natural for a movement.

Yet on the other hand, past experience teaches that in court cases since the war where individual victims have sought compensation for their suffering, they have been turned away at the door on the grounds that the claims "don't fit within domestic law." Where jurisprudence is tailored to the convenience of the authorities, legal battles cannot be "objective" or "neutral." On the contrary, forced to follow the rules of the legal practice, the individual victims are compelled to fight in their adversaries' arena from a position of disadvantage. If one brings the case to court anyway, despite being aware of this handicap, it is more in expectation of the symbolic effect brought about in the space of public discourse by the struggle of words in court than for the sake of a victory.

5. That is, the frame of "national history" is not overcome. The message of the exhibit is that Japanese-Americans were "loyal Americans" just like other citizens. To represent their loyalty to the nation, the image of a Japanese-American G.I. is placed next to the exhibit of daily life in the internment camps.

6. *Translator's note:* the New Ainu Law was proposed in March 1997 and passed in May of the same year. Ainu are an ethnic minority living in Northern Japan. Forced assimilation was official policy under the Hokkaido Former Aborigine Protection Law, established in 1899. Passage of the New Ainu Law nullified the earlier law and for the first time offered state support for the preservation of Ainu culture. Although Ueno is alluding to the law here as evidence of the shift in majority awareness of the Ainu minority, it must also be noted that activists for the Ainu cause have been sharply critical of the law since it makes no reference either to the past suffering inflicted on Ainu people or to the fundamental issue of land rights.

7. As a result, criticism has come from Japanese women's historians that "women's studies," as represented by feminism is merely importing theories from overseas, ignorant of Japan, while Japanese feminists have criticized the women's historians for being left behind by the changes occurring in other fields. For discussion of the convoluted relationship between women's history and feminism in Japan, see Ueno, "Rekishigaku to feminizumu: 'Joseishi' o koete" (Historical studies and feminism: Beyond "women's history"), in Asao Naohiro et al., eds., *Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi bekkan 1: Rekishi ishiki no genzai* (Iwanami Japanese history series, supplement 1: Historical consciousness in the present) (Tokyo, 1996). For essays reflecting the attempt to bring the two fields closer together, see Tabata Yasuko, Ueno Chizuko and Fukutō Sanae, eds., *Jendaa to josei* (Gender and women) (Tokyo, 1997).

8. George Duby and Michelle Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

9. Kawado Fumiko, "'Jūgun ianfu' mondai no rekishi to jijitsu" (History and the facts of the 'comfort women' issue), *Kanagawa daigaku hyōron* 28 (1997):

80–86; Kurahashi Masanao, *Jūgun ianfu mondai no rekishiteki kenkyū* (A historical study of the comfort women issue) (Tokyo, 1994), 50–108.

10. Fujime Yuki, "Joseishi kara mita 'jūgun ianfu' mondai" (The 'comfort women' issue from the perspective of women's history), *Kikan sensō sekinin kenkyū* 18 (Winter 1997): 2–9.

11. Maeda Akira, "Sabetsu to jinken: Kihanteki shikō" (Discrimination and human rights: Normative thinking), *Inpakushon*, no. 102 (Apr. 1997): 12.

12. Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge, 1995).

13. Hashimoto Osamu, *Bokutachi no kindaishi* (Our modern history) (Tokyo, 1988), 17–68.

14. Miyazaki Tetsuya, *Bokura no "shinryaku" sensō* (Our invasive war) (Tokyo, 1995).