

Chapter 3: Various Views of History and Agenda to Isolate Ramseyer

Academic agenda setting

Why is Ramseyer alone? In the structurally skewed academic world, wherein truth is primary, one has no choice but to become a “prophet in the wilderness.”

There is only one historical fact of a given event. It is not that many different facts exist. There are, however, diverging opinions that exist in discussing history. Why is this? Don't the opposing sides ever reach consensus through discussion?

There are many perspectives over a historical fact because there are different agenda behind these perspectives.

Agenda setting within a world of mass communication can be described as follows: We cannot make people think of something as good or bad but, by setting an agenda, we can control, to a certain extent, how people view or think of something. That is, the view and agenda play a decisive role in the assessment of facts.

For example, let's say that an agenda is determined regarding whether the Japanese government should compensate Korean comfort women. The agenda leads to a discussion of whether compensation is necessary despite the existence of the "Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea": The High Contracting Parties confirm that the problems concerning property, rights, and interests of the two High Contracting Parties and their peoples (including juridical persons) and the claims between the High Contracting Parties and between their peoples (omitted) have been settled completely and finally.⁽³⁸⁾ Reading this Agreement, compensation is not necessary, after all.

Next, let's decide on an agenda, on whether Korean women were sexually exploited during Japanese colonial rule. In this case, one cannot entirely deny that Korean women were not sexually exploited and so this may be raised as an issue.

Further, because sexual exploitation is a “women's human rights issue,” an additional agenda becomes condemning the Japanese army as human rights violators. If combined

within an unclear historical context, the additional agenda may be seen as an issue that must be grappled with by all women around the world.

That is, one particular theme can spawn multiple objectives depending on the perspective of a historical fact and how an agenda was created. With the presence of different objectives, numerous conclusions can arise following historical fact-finding.

Concerning the comfort women system, perspectives range from evil to benign. There are also those who accept facts as is and of evaluating it as “something that should have turned out otherwise...why not?”

An objective view of history

One example of a benign view of the comfort women system is Hata Ikuhiko's *Comfort Women and Sex in the Battle Zone*.⁽³⁹⁾ This book presents the facts and clarifies events with as much objectivity as possible. It contains almost no preconceived notions such as Japan's war was evil or that the Japanese army itself is evil. The book also does not pass judgement on whether the system was moral or immoral. The author's agenda was to present verifiable facts and that was exactly what was accomplished.

Similar to Hata, Ramseyer does not declare that Japan's war was evil or that the Japanese army was evil. Ramseyer also does not pass judgement on whether licensed/unlicensed prostitution is evil or not. He does not cast moral judgments at all--he sees what happened in the past and develops a legal economic model based on statistical data. He does not express his belief that something should or should not have been done this way or that way. Ramseyer's approach of characterizing the comfort women system is similar to that of Hata's.

One difference from Hata, however, is Ramseyer's legal economic perspective. That is, in terms of legal-economics, Ramseyer demonstrates the logic of the participants of licensed/unlicensed prostitution using game theory. He attempts to explain why there were up-front payments and service contracts, why workers saved and the interaction between workers and their employers. He concludes that mundane logic applied to comfort women.

Tokyo Trial/victor nations' view of history

On the other hand, Yoshimi calls the comfort women system evil. His view is that the comfort women system is not only immoral but also infringes on international as well as domestic laws. His views are actually contrary to the facts, as I will explain later.

Yoshimi's agenda and goal is to make clear that the comfort women system is both legally and morally unacceptable.

Yoshimi's view is the Tokyo Trial view of history. In this respect, his point of view coincides with that of the U.S. and U.S. scholars.

In the Tokyo Trial, or the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the Allies' agenda was to show that Japan waged an evil war and pass judgement based on this agenda. Following the trial, the Allies punished Japanese involved in the war. Meanwhile, the Allies disregarded their own war crimes, such as murdering Japanese military prisoners, indiscriminate fire bombings and the atomic bombings.

War is not conducted by one nation alone: there is always an opponent. Therefore, if war is evil, both sides are evil and both sides should shoulder responsibility.

However, the Allies, or the victor nations, condemned only the defeated nations as evil and pinned responsibility on them. Accordingly, the Tokyo Trial view of history is also the victor nations' view of history. At the same time, the Tokyo Trial view of history is the same as the Pacific War view of history, as the war is called in the U.S. (The Japanese view of history is that the war was the Greater East Asian War, a "holy war for the liberation of Asia".)

Given this perspective, it is easy to understand why the U.S. government has rebuked Japan over the comfort women issue. In the U.S.'s Tokyo Trial/victor nations' view of history, what Japan did during the war, including operation of the comfort women system, was basically evil. While the U.S. sometimes sets aside the Tokyo Trial/victor nations' view of history out of diplomatic consideration, the U.S. has not fundamentally changed their way of thinking.

Many U.S. historians naturally take to the Tokyo Trial/victor nations' view of history. Their agenda is show that Japan waged a wrong and evil war and their goal is to pass

negative judgement on the Japanese people and to justify the outcome of the Tokyo Trial. In other words, the agenda of many U.S. historians is to make clear that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a sneak attack, that Japan waged an evil war and that the U.S., a righteous nation, vanquished Japan. Many U.S. historians have attempted to use the Tokyo Trial/victor nations' view of history to justify indiscriminate bombing of cities and the atomic bombings.

Like the U.S, other victor nations, such as the U.K., U.S.S.R., France, Canada and Australia, basically take the Tokyo Trial view of history. The Tokyo Trial view of history is also a victor nations' view of history, and with that, China and South Korea join in on using the victor nations' view of history. In South Korea, students learn from junior and senior high school textbooks that their country joined the Allies' fight against Japan and won.

Japanese historians and political scientists who have studied or obtained degrees at Western universities naturally end up taking a view that is close to the Tokyo Trial view of history. In this case, the view is called a "masochistic view of history" because Japanese are denouncing their own history and denounce their war and army as evil. Thus, to the Japanese, the Tokyo Trial view of history is a masochistic view of history. As I described in *Nihonjin wa Naze Jigyakuteki ni Nattanoka (Why Do the Japanese Have Masochistic View of History)*, this view of history, also known as the "Pacific War view of history", was adopted by American history and other American studies-related instructors at the University of Tokyo during the occupation period.⁽⁴⁰⁾

“Japanese Imperialism” view of history

The “Japanese Imperialism” view of history claims that it was the Great Empire of Japan itself, rather than the effect war, which carried out territorial expansion, colonial rule and exploitation and oppression of Asian people. Accordingly, the agenda and goal are to state without hesitation that reckless territorial expansion, harsh colonial rule, and exploitation of the people of Asia, including establishment of colonies, was the fault of the Great Empire of Japan. A very good example of this view of history is the use the comfort women system.

The “Japanese Imperialism” view of history assumes shades of communism, attacking British, American and Japanese capitalist imperialism. Historians and political scientists

who take this view of history are often found at former Japanese imperial universities. It is well-known that these people were involved with the Communist Party or similar groups in their student days and thereafter. These people include those who Lee Young-hoon calls, with some sarcasm, “conscientious Japanese.” These Japanese are ashamed of Japanese imperialism and express remorse toward those who were under Japanese colonial rule.

Many South Koreans hold the “Japanese imperialism” view of history, expressed by their use of an abbreviation of “Japanese imperialism” (*nittei*) to refer to prewar Japan. Their view, that they were illegally colonized by the Empire of Japan and suffered institutionalized racism and exploitation, has something in common with that of Japanese scholars who take the “Japanese imperialism” view. In fact, South Koreans favor Japanese scholars at former imperial universities and often invite them to give lectures. Accordingly, many South Koreans are assumed to have both the Tokyo Trial view of history and “Japanese imperialism” view of history.

Of South Korean scholars who take an objective view of history, some are obliged to take this “Japanese imperialism” view of history because, after all, they are South Korean.

Park, who wrote *Comfort Women of the Empire*, and who has a fairly objective view of history, also has the “Japanese imperialism” view. Her agenda and goal are to state how Japanese soldiers and Korean comfort women were “mobilized” within the framework of Japanese imperialism and what difficult barriers lay between Japanese soldiers and Korean comfort women.

Lee Young-hoon, as befitting an economist, takes an objective view of history but he also espouses the “Japanese imperialism” view of history. For example, he points out that the introduction of the Japanese licensed prostitution system, or commercialized prostitution, destroyed traditional Korean society and dishonest recruiters rose in influence.

While Japan meant no harm, if the rulers import a certain social system, it may lead to a tragic impact on traditional society. The documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare* provides a convincing explanation to this issue.⁽⁴¹⁾ Lee points out that if the rulers import certain systems, this could lead to a tragic impact on traditional society.

The feminist view of history

Lastly, I present the feminist view of history. The agenda here is to show that men have historically oppressed, dominated, exploited and discriminated against women. The goal is to document these things, make use of the past in the present and for the future and to eradicate evil practices.

Accordingly, the comfort women system is a perfect target for those who subscribe to the feminist view of history. Firstly, believers do not accept the thinking that prostitution is a contractual provisioning, based on an agreement between two parties, of sexual services. What men do to women is always synonymous with exploitation and violence.

There are many feminist researchers in Japan as well as the West: They tend to be aggressive compared to scholars in other fields and are often involved with activities well beyond academic pursuits.

These feminist researchers often conflate the “comfort women issue” as a “women’s human rights issue.”

Thus sorting out individual agendas in this way facilitates an understanding of how Ramseyer, who discussed prostitution (comfort women system) with an objective view of history, was simultaneously criticized by Japanese scholars and feminists and was pushed into a corner. Ramseyer's current isolation is the result of numerous agenda.

Also, one reason why critics launched one-sided attacks was that they criticized for the sake of criticism. That is, Ramseyer, who takes an objective view of history, recognition of historical facts as nothing more than facts, has an agenda and view. His intended goals were different from his critics and from the beginning, their arguments do not mesh.

Political correctness

Ramseyer is challenging political correctness. For example, he pointed out that there were comfort women who were deceived or threatened by unscrupulous Korean recruiters. He has pointed out in his other papers that many Japanese *yakuza* members were *Zainichi* Koreans, or Koreans with permanent residence in Japan, and *buraku* (discriminated community) people. He has also pointed out that there certainly were Koreans who started riots in the immediate aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923.

Ramseyer critics say that this makes him a racist or hater, but is it true? Is it not that he is simply pointing out historical facts?

It is obvious that if Korean women were deceived into becoming comfort women, it is because of unscrupulous Korean recruiters. At the very least, the Japanese army does not need to deceive women. The Imperial Army had pride and women could be recruited without needing to deceiving them.

I do not know whether there were many *yakuza* members from *buraku* but I found out that there were many Koreans who were when I wrote *Kodama Yoshio - Kyokai no Nihonshi (Kodama Yoshio: Japanese History through a Powerbroker)*. Machii Hisayuki, Kodama's son-in-law and the leader of Tosei-kai, a *yakuza* gang, was a Korean and many members of his gang were naturally *Zainichi* Koreans. At the height of its prosperity, Tosei-kai had power matching that of Yamaguchi-gumi, Japan's biggest criminal organization. *Yakuza* and rightist organizations in opposition to Kodama had many *Zainichi* Korean members as well. People were more afraid of Kodama's *Zainichi* Koreans than of him.

Is pointing out these historical facts politically incorrect? Ramseyer critics would answer this question with "Yes" and have called him a racist and hater and harshly attacked him.

So what do we do about historical facts? Is it possible to study history while ignoring historical facts? The answer to this is "No."

If we do not state that it was unscrupulous Korean recruiters who deceived and threatened Korean women into becoming comfort women, then the conclusion would be that it was the Japanese army that did so. This is, in fact, the story adopted by Ramseyer's critics. It is falsification of historical fact.

Ignoring the fact that there were many *Zainichi* Koreans under Kodama would make it impossible to explain why he played such a major role in the conclusion of the "Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea". Bringing political correctness into the arena of inquiry of the truth is an act of suicide.

During the Allied Occupation, the Press Code forbade Japan to criticize Koreans. Koreans initiated large-scale riots to foment social unrest under the Occupation, which in those days were not reported at all.

The Japanese media subsequently continued to treat *Zainichi* Koreans and South Korea with extreme caution and even refrained from pointing out simple facts. The media's acts today are apparently a holdover from the Occupation Era Press Code.

As a result, South Koreans today refer to Japan as a war criminal, the Japanese as descendants of war criminals, and the Rising Sun flag as the war criminals' flag. The atomic bombings are viewed favorably by South Koreans as they were means of national liberation. These lines of thinking are nothing more than hateful rhetoric. Still, the Japanese media says absolutely nothing.

Even if the South Korean government announces anti-Japanese policies for the sake of anti-Japanese purposes, the Japanese media does nothing more than demand that the Japanese government take appropriate steps. Obviously, there is an implicit Press Code, in that criticism of Japan and the Japanese people is permitted but criticism of South Korea and South Koreans is unacceptable. Needless to say, this has led to misinformation from the *Asahi Shimbun*—in the form of its articles on the comfort women.

Giving way to political correctness like this gives rise to closing the linguistic space and stymieing academic pursuits. They also bring anger and frustration to a great majority of Japanese.

I take an official document-centric view

Incidentally, the view of history I take is an official document-centric view. The agenda is determined based on newly discovered data.

I am originally an official documents specialist rather than a historian. I only make historical facts clear from primary sources and do not hold a definite view. That is, I do not take a view that adheres to any ideology, such as war is evil, the Japanese army is evil and prewar Japan was an imperialist nation and oppressed and exploited people of its colonies and Asia. Nor do I engage in discussions that come to those conclusions.

My goal is to reveal new facts not known earlier by using new data that was previously unknown and to overturn theories previously regarded as established. Depending on the data discovered, I may be seen as a rightist or pro-Japanese, or a leftist or anti-Japanese. Therefore, I avoid bringing in moral judgments.

If the comfort women system was considered immoral, even in the days when it actually existed, I do not decide whether it is evil or not so as long as it did not violate any laws. Neither do I ignore the fact that, while the comfort women's circumstances were harsh, they were making substantial amounts of money and they were not indefinitely detained in battlefields unlike soldiers who were.

Data is everything and I cannot commit to definite views, ideologies or morals.

To an official documents specialist like me, views of history, ideologies and morals are more often than not obstructions. This is because views of history, ideologies and morals tend to induce scholars to accept data that supports his thinking and to ignore data that are not supportive. This reduces the probability of discovery of data that points to new historical facts or overturn established theories.

In addition, newly discovered data may be inconsistent with what was written in the past. Commitment to any particular view of history, ideology or fixed perspective hinders the use of new discoveries for writing papers or books. In fact, scholars who have fallen into this trap will find themselves in a blind alley and end up trying by all means possible to write the same thing over and over again. That is the last thing I want to do.

Notes

(38) Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea (in Japanese)

<https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/JPKR/19650622.T9J.html>

(39) Hata Ikuhiko *Ianfu to Senjo no Sei*, Shincho Sensho, 1999, (*Comfort Women and Sex in the Battle Zone*, Hamilton Books, New York, 2018.)

(40) Arima Tetsuo *Nihonjin wa Naze Jigyakuteki ni Nattanoka (Why Do the Japanese Have Masochistic View of History)* Shincho Shinsho, 2020

(41) Millet es Une Productions, Coop99 and Saga Film, *Darwin's Nightmare*, Darwins Nightmare (subtitulado) - YouTube