

THE ANATOMY OF A FALSEHOOD

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Another “transgressor” emerges

The *Asahi Shimbun* has finally capitulated, conceding that Yoshida Seiji’s confession was a hoax. The newspaper’s announcement prompted predictions that anti-Japanese, left-wing media representatives would unearth another “transgressor,” trot him out, and proclaim that Yoshida Seiji wasn’t the only one. It would be a mistake to laugh off such speculation.

On October 20, 2014, while in Tokyo on a fact-finding mission, I received an important piece of information from Alfred Johnson, with whom I was traveling, with whom I was working with.

He told me that the *Asia Pacific Journal* had carried an article about testimony given by Matsumoto Masayoshi. The 92-year-old resident of Sagami-hara City (Kanagawa prefecture) is a former Christian minister who served as a medical corpsman in China during World War II. A video of the interview has been posted to the Internet. In it Matsumoto urges Japan to acknowledge that it violated the human rights of comfort women.

The author of the article is David McNeill, an Irish journalist who is a leading member of the FCCJ (Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan). McNeill has consistently written articles that are anti-Japanese in nature. This one begins as follows.

“If we don’t face our past, we’re bound to repeat the same mistakes.”
Japanese wartime medical orderly reports on army’s role in maintaining
“comfort women” system.

According to Matsumoto, when Japanese troops raided a village, they would capture any women who were unable to escape, take them back to their barracks, and rape them. He also provided descriptions of his physical examinations of the women.

Most of the article is devoted to attacks on Prime Minister Abe, his administration, Diet representatives, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, and on those in favor of revising or retracting the Kono Statement of 1993. As McNeill is wont to do, he brands these entities, as well as anyone critical of the *Asahi Shimbun*, nationalists, ultranationalists, and revisionists.

McNeill maintains that even though Yoshida’s confession has been discredited, there is a great deal of evidence proving that the Japanese military “organized and managed a system of sexual slavery.”

He adds that Matsumoto told him, “Korean women were used like public toilets, with soldiers lining up to rape them.” When a reader commented that the video contained no such statement, McNeill replied that Matsumoto had made comments to that effect in a Reuters interview.

I checked the interview in question. Here is what Matsumoto said:

(S)oldiers lining up for sex would unfasten their leg wrappings and lower their trousers so as to waste no time when their turns came. *It was like they were going to the toilet.*

The IWG Report

My colleague and I suspected that the facts had been distorted in McNeill’s article, and began to doubt the credibility of Matsumoto’s testimony. We began investigating Matsumoto Masayoshi and David McNeill, with the assistance of Michael Yon, an American journalist.

Michael Yon is a freelance reporter known for his war coverage. He has earned the respect of military personnel, politicians, and media representatives. He has taken an interest in the comfort-women controversy, which involves Japan, Korea, and the US.

Japanese readers learned about him through an article by Komori Yoshihisa, which appeared in the November 1 edition of the *Sankei Shimbun*. I would like to correct some of the errors in that article.

First of all, Michael has never been on assignment in either Korea or Singapore. His investigation of the comfort-women controversy was conducted in the US, Thailand, and Japan. Yon was planning to extend his inquiry to Korea and China after the Japanese segment had been completed, but for various reasons, he canceled those plans.

Moreover, it was Alfred Johnson who visited the US National Archives, not Michael. You must register to do research there, and Michael didn’t register because he didn’t go there. These are minor errors, but I have taken this opportunity to point them out here, lest they diminish the integrity of Michael’s article.

In fact, Alfred discovered a very interesting report at the US National Archives. The report was issued by the IWG (Interagency Working Group), which, with \$30,000,000 in funding and the cooperation of historians, the FBI, CIA, OSS and other organizations, conducted a seven-year investigation (2000-2007) seeking evidence of Japanese war crimes in connection with comfort women. This particular group was established in 1999 with the intention of scrutinizing Nazi war crimes. But in 2000 its focus shifted to Japan’s comfort-women system. Its current full name is the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group.

Fight against anti-Japanese campaign requires American cooperation

The report came out in April 2007, at the same time the report prepared by Larry Nicksch of the CRS (Congressional Research Service), part of the Library of Congress, was published. Nicksch's report served as the basis for US House of Representatives Resolution 121. Ding must have wanted to use the results of the IWG investigation for the resolution.

But contrary to the expectations of Ding and the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia, no records were found that attested to war crimes committed by the Japanese military against comfort women. The final IWG report contained an almost apologetic statement to that effect by Steven Garfinkel.

The spread of the comfort-women controversy to the US, and the resulting appearance of monuments to the comfort women in that nation's regional cities are very disturbing. We cannot combat this anti-Japanese campaign effectively without American support.

Having lived in the US for 10 years, I have learned that the comfort-women controversy is perceived as a historical problem in Japan, but in the US it revolves around women's rights and human rights.

We can hope that Americans will understand if we continue to present fact after historical fact proving our position. But anti-Japanese activists in the US claim that it doesn't matter whether or not women were abducted by the Japanese military and compelled to serve as prostitutes. They believe that no woman would voluntarily be a prostitute to a military. Therefore, the human rights of those women were violated even if they were well paid prostitutes.

Historical fact is certainly of the utmost importance, particularly primary resources (records kept by people who were involved in the events in question) to the debate. The point I wish to make here is that this controversy is not simply a matter of facts and perceptions. It is now a geopolitical problem, complicated by emotional issues such as women's rights and human rights.

The Japanese are by no stretch of the imagination adept at waging information or publicity warfare. This particular battle cannot be won unless we are conscious of the points at issue and of cultural differences. I know of at least one case in which several men, public figures did not pay attention to those factors. Armed only with historical fact and righteous indignation, they stood before the camera and spoke their pieces. Their appeal backfired because Americans perceived them as irascible; they didn't think such Japanese men could ever understand the emotional scars borne by women who served as military prostitutes.

Even when we state the facts (the comfort women were prostitutes, for instance), the listener's impression is quite different when a man is speaking. It is important to remember that the Chinese and Koreans have chosen the US as their battleground, not

Japan. We can't win without American cooperation. I am so grateful for the assistance of Michael Yon, Alfred Johnson, and many other Americans.

Interviewing Matsumoto

Let us return to Matsumoto Masayoshi.

My investigation led me to *Shimbun Akahata*, the organ of the JCP (Japan Communist Party), which had carried several articles written by Matsumoto. There is more than one anti-Japanese organization that denounces Japan, ostensibly for its record on women's rights and human rights. Many of their members are supporters of the JCP. For instance, behind the comfort-women controversy that has reared its head in the US are the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and the aforementioned Global Alliance.

Over the years the Chinese have intensified their criticism of Japan. The Koreans maintain that 200,000 Korean women were abducted and compelled to serve as comfort women. The Chinese have now come out with a claim that there were 400,000 comfort women, half of whom were Chinese. Even worse, these claims have successfully drawn the attention of the American media. Articles about Matsumoto have been reproduced in Korean and Chinese magazines.

Two days after I read McNeill's article, I visited the Christian church in Sagami-hara City where Matsumoto was once pastor. Michael and Alfred had accompanied me there, but I decided to visit the church alone.

Even though I had arrived unannounced, the current pastor invited me into the sanctuary, and filled me in on Matsumoto and the church.

Apparently Matsumoto had been invited to speak before a variety of groups. One of them was the Association of Returnees from China, whose members were interned by the PRC after World War II. It is now known as Continuing the Miracle of Fushun Society.

I asked the pastor, "Was Mr. Matsumoto interned in China?"

"No, he wasn't. The association invited him to speak, but he isn't a member."

"Mr. Matsumoto wrote articles for *Shimbun Akahata*. Is he a member of the JCP?"

"The newspaper carried his articles, but he's not a Communist Party member."

"I understand that he's opposed to the emperor system."

"That's correct. He thinks the Emperor should have been held responsible for the war."

Our conversation lasted nearly an hour. The pastor was kind enough to give me contact information for Matsumoto's daughter. Apparently she has taken charge of all communications with her father due to his advanced age.

I telephoned her right away and requested an interview. I knew that such a sudden request might be refused. But the daughter agreed to meet with me, a total stranger accompanied by foreign journalists, though she did seem puzzled.

We waited for Matsumoto at the ticket gate in the train station nearest his home, as instructed. He appeared amid a misty drizzle. He had a dauntless expression on his face, and though he was slight in stature, his gait was steady. His lips were pressed together tightly, as if to tell me that he would not tolerate dishonesty or injustice. Perhaps Matsumoto wouldn't appreciate that description, but he had the bearing of a Japanese soldier from the World War II era.

"I'm very pleased to meet you. My name is Kennedy. I read your article in the *Japan Times* and would like to ask you some questions."

"Where did you read it?"

"In the online edition of the *Japan Times*. A journalist named David McNeill interviewed you."

"I don't know him. What's his name?"

"David McNeill."

"No, it doesn't sound familiar."

Matsumoto was sure-footed, but seemed to be hard of hearing. He had difficulty understanding the questions I asked on the crowded street in front of the station. I introduced Michael and Alfred, and we decided to join him and his daughter, who had accompanied him, in a nearby coffee shop.

We sat down at a table and began the interview. I obtained Matsumoto's permission to make a video recording of our conversation so we wouldn't lose any of his important testimony. The two Americans conducted the interview; I served as the interpreter, sitting beside Mr. Matsumoto.

Michael began the interview on a respectful note.

"Sir, thank you for allowing us to interview you."

He then asked Mr. Matsumoto about his time in the military.

Yoshida Seiji is a liar

Matsumoto's memory seemed to be intact; his statements were consistent. He had served as a medical corpsman in a unit stationed in Yu county, Shanxi province. He told us we could find details about his unit's movements and his years of service, pointing to an outline of one of his lectures.

He spoke clearly and crisply, but his hearing was poor. In order to communicate I had to move closer to him, raise my voice, and speak slowly.

I began to wonder how a foreign reporter like McNeill had managed to conduct an interview with him. It couldn't possibly have gone smoothly. I decided to ask questions about the suspicions that had been gnawing at me.

"Mr. Matsumoto, did you meet with David McNeill?"

"I don't know him."

His response was clear and immediate. We weren't on a crowded street anymore, but in a quiet coffee shop. Matsumoto seemed to hear and understand my questions.

I showed him McNeill's article, but he didn't seem to have seen it before.

"So that's it? I don't remember it at all."

His daughter broke in.

"When did that person meet my father?"

She looked worried. Matsumoto watching his daughter looking confused, broke in laughing, and changed the subject: "This is my daughter. I depend on her for a lot of things."

Anti-Japanese groups have called Matsumoto the "second Yoshida Seiji." I wondered what he thought about that.

"Mr. Matsumoto, do you know who Yoshida Seiji is?"

As soon as I mentioned Yoshida's name, Matsumoto's face tightened, and he replied angrily, "Yoshida Seiji is a liar. He lied."

He seemed to be angry at Yoshida. Perhaps Matsumoto was angry because people might think all testimony was false since Yoshida had been exposed as a liar. I didn't dare ask my next question: How do you feel about being called "the second Yoshida?"

Instead I asked, “Have you ever met Yoshida Seiji?” Matsumoto replied that no, he had not.

No abuse of comfort women

As a medical corpsman in a war zone, Matsumoto monitored the health of the comfort women, and examined them.

He explained that according to the system in place at the time, women were signed up for the Women’s Volunteer Corps, taken away, and then forced to become comfort women.

Matsumoto is mistaken on this point. It is common knowledge that the Women’s Volunteer Corps had absolutely no connection with the comfort women. Not one case in which a corps member was forced to become a comfort woman has been reported.

He spoke about the total number of comfort women, but we wanted to confine the discussion to the women connected with his unit (six or seven). When we asked him to describe them, he replied, with conviction and without hesitation, “Before they were comfort women, they were prostitutes.”

Any reference to the comfort women as prostitutes is certain to meet with criticism, even in Japan, and you would be risking your life to make such a statement in Korea. Chinese, Koreans, and the left-wing media hail Matsumoto as one of the few conscientious Japanese with the courage to expose Japan’s crimes. And here we have this same man referring to the comfort women as prostitutes on numerous occasions, in no uncertain terms.

Matsumoto doesn’t believe that the women turned to prostitution because they wanted to, but because they had no choice. But when I asked him about remuneration, he said, “Yes, I believe they were paid. I don’t know how much of the money made its way to them, though.”

Then he told us that the comfort women had been abducted from their homes and raped, as though he had witnessed such events.

If Japanese soldiers entered Chinese homes, took away the women and raped them, they were certainly guilty of war crimes. Korean former comfort women have said they were raped again and again by Japanese troops. It is understandable that, as a Christian, Matsumoto would have considered such behavior intolerable. But was it true?

Michael asked him, “How did you examine comfort women who had been subjected to abuse or violence?”

The answer was unexpected.

“That never happened.”

“So comfort women were not abused, then?”

“That’s correct. They did what they were told, so there was no need for soldiers to resort to violence.”

At this point, I couldn’t help interrupting.

“According to this article, Japanese troops abused the comfort women. You’re saying that didn’t happen?”

“The comfort women did what they were told. The soldiers didn’t need to use force.”

As he spoke, Matsumoto looked as though he thought he was stating the obvious.

Never witnessed a war crime

“Why were the comfort women so obedient?” I asked.

“They would have been killed if they disobeyed. They obeyed out of fear.”

“Did you ever witness the killing of a comfort woman who disobeyed orders?”

“No.”

“Then how did you know that they would be killed if they didn’t obey?”

“I learned about that from some books I read.”

It had become obvious that Matsumoto is confusing his personal experiences with information gleaned from books. I received a print version of one of his lectures. It mentions a pamphlet issued by the Association of Returnees from China, and a book entitled *Visiting the Site of the Nanking Massacre* by Fujiwara Akira, Hora Tomio, and Honda Katsuichi.

“Earlier you said that Chinese women were dragged out of their homes and raped. Did you witness anything like that?”

“No.”

“You never witnessed a war crime.”

“Never.”

We could no longer understand why the anti-Japanese media of China and Korea, and David McNeill, a member of the FCCJ, who holds a Ph.D. degree, would advertise Matsumoto as a witness to Japanese war crimes.

Of course Matsumoto was in a war zone, but his only knowledge of war crimes was obtained from books. Information acquired from books does not a witness make.

Matsumoto was aware that he was relating information that he had read. But how many witnesses, whether they be comfort women or former Japanese soldiers, can describe Japanese war crimes based on *accurate* recollections?

Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, an American psychologist, has written in great detail about the unreliability of eyewitness memory. She has found that people tend to recall scenes they have read about in books or seen on film as their own experiences. Memory is constantly activated along with a variety of emotions and events. It is not like a recording, but a Wikipedia entry that is continually revised. It is even more unreliable when events that occurred long ago are involved.

Apparently false memories are created by dreams, hypnosis, the imagination, and false information. Loftus examined 300 sex crimes, cases in which the alleged perpetrator was later exonerated after DNA testing. She found that in 75% of the cases, the perpetrator had been charged on the basis of the victim's testimony alone.

Matsumoto often says that he views himself as a war criminal. What nags at his conscience is his having distributed condoms to soldiers, an act that makes him feel as though he was encouraging them to have sex. Conversely, however, the comfort women did not contract sexually transmitted diseases because Matsumoto provided their customers with condoms. I really wanted to reassure him — to tell him he wasn't guilty of war crimes.

In any case, what we learned from Matsumoto by speaking to him directly was that unlike the statements made in McNeill's article, Matsumoto was not a war criminal, nor was he a witness to war crimes. Quite the opposite — he was sought after by local Chinese, who would come to his unit seeking medical treatment.

One incident he remembers well was the time a Chinese family appeared and asked Matsumoto to go to their home.

When he got there an old man, already dressed in burial clothing, was lying on his bed. Matsumoto didn't know whether medicine would cure him, but decided to give him some. The family stopped him, saying, "He's going to die anyway, so please don't bother." Matsumoto recalls becoming aware of the differences between the two cultures at that time.

Another incident he remembers occurred when a woman with a bullet wound in her side came to him asking for treatment. Matsumoto didn't think she'd survive, but gave her

first aid and disinfected her wound. Two months later she reappeared and announced that the wound had healed. He was astonished by her recovery.

Guilty conscience produces exaggeration

Now I'd like to cite an excerpt from one of Matsumoto's lectures.

What happened to my comrades? Those who remained were incorporated into Gen. Yan Xishan's army to fight the southward-advancing Eighth Route Army (part of the Chinese Red Army). About 550 of them were killed in action. Seven hundred were taken prisoner and interned at the Taiyuan War Criminals Management Center.

A man I'll call S, who was responsible for all our misfortunes, had recruited Japanese soldiers to serve under Gen. Yan. As a reward, not only did he escape war-crime charges, but he also had a great deal of power because he was an advisor to Gen. Yan Xishan. Right before Taiyuan fell, he fled to Japan by plane. He claimed that we, the soldiers he abandoned in Shanxi province, had asked to be discharged from military service in China.

For that reason, the deaths of the men who were killed during the battle with the Eight Route Army served absolutely no purpose. Those who survived served their terms at the Taiyuan War Criminals Management Center and then returned to Japan, where they were considered deserters.

Unable to resign themselves to this terrible fate, the men formed the Association of Returnees from China and filed suit against the Japanese government, but the judicial authorities refused to consider their case.

There was another detention center for suspected war criminals in Fushun. That one incarcerated persons having some connection with the former Manzhouguo (State of Manchuria). The detainees were treated humanely by the Chinese Communist Party, and were transformed from brutes to honorable human beings.

After they returned to Japan, they made efforts to improve relations between Japan and China. The association was disbanded due to the advanced age of its members. Their work was taken on by the people who now operate the Continuing the Miracle of Fushun Society, which I mentioned at the beginning of my lecture.

(Matsumoto stated that approximately 700 men were incarcerated at the Taiyuan War Criminals Management Center. However, other sources give the number of detainees as 140.)

Matsumoto is clearly dissatisfied with the way repatriated soldiers were treated by the Japanese government after World War II. It is true that GHQ policy excluded all former

members of the Japanese military from public office between 1945 and 1952. Since we cannot ask Mr. S, the villain in Matsumoto's account, for his testimony, we must remind readers that they are reading only Matsumoto's point of view.

Again, Matsumoto does not belong to Continuing the Miracle of Fushun Society, though he has been invited to speak to the group. Since he was employed by Mitsui Mining, he landed at Sasebo in Kyushu on March 15, 1946. He was spared the cruel fate that awaited his comrades, and it is very likely that his feelings of guilt colored his personal experiences to the point of exaggeration.

I don't believe his statement about humane treatment from the CCP for a moment. Perhaps the prisoners were given enough to eat, but the part about being transformed into honorable men by confessing to crimes sounds suspiciously like brainwashing. I have no intention of censuring former Japanese soldiers who were imprisoned and eventually returned home, even if they are now denouncing Japan's war crimes. My understanding is that their views are the result of brainwashing they underwent in China, which still controls their minds. I still want to thank them for serving their country and wish them a peaceful old age.

Voices of irresponsibility

At the same time, I feel compelled to point out the folly of using former Japanese military personnel to censure the Japanese government (currently the Abe administration).

Former Japanese soldiers who make the rounds of the public-speaking circuit revealing their war crimes are absolutely not "conscientious Japanese," as the Chinese and Koreans describe them.

Former Nazi soldiers are well aware of the enormity of their crimes. They live quietly, making every attempt to hide their Nazi pasts. Not one of these Germans goes around giving speeches about his involvement in slaughtering Jews and demanding restitution from the current government to the victims.

If former Japanese soldiers confessing to war crimes are what they claim to be, i.e., perpetrators of war crimes, then they are the ones who should be censured.

When World War II ended, more than 1,000 Japanese accused of B- or C-class war crimes were punished, many of them executed. But now we have modern-day self-proclaimed war criminals (who kept silent while others were being punished) demanding apologies from the Japanese government (and Prime Minister Abe) for crimes that *they* committed? Are they really not aware of their own idiocy until someone points it out?

There is no statute of limitations for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Therefore, those who fear that Japan will repeat past mistakes should ensure that the criminals among former Japanese soldiers are brought before the United Nations, for instance, and

tried for their crimes. We must not lionize them. If their relatives, friends, and neighbors are shielding them, they are breaking the law.

Otherwise, the parade of people coming forward and claiming that they killed Chinese, or abducted comfort women, and demanding that the Japanese government apologize, will never end.

[PHOTO CAPTION]

p. 241: Matsumoto Masayoshi's "confession" as it appeared in *Shimbun Akahata* (Sunday, August 18, 2013 edition)