

September 4, 2015

### *50 Japanese Academics' Rebuttal of the 20 American Historians' Statement*

Generally speaking, it is better that governments do not intervene in the writing of history textbooks. However, if clear, factual mistakes are found in textbooks, and if those mistakes have extremely negative effects on the dignity of a given country and its nationals, then it is natural that such a country's government requests revisions of the errors. We think McGraw-Hill's textbook is just such a case. In their March 17, 2015 booklet "Requesting Corrections of Factual Errors in McGraw-Hill Textbook," 19 Japanese historians identified 8 apparent factual errors within 26 lines in merely 2 paragraphs concerning the issue of the Comfort Women, and then requested that the textbook's publisher, McGraw-Hill, correct these errors. If the US government was in the same situation, it presumably would have taken issue with the publisher and author of such an error-laden textbook, in an incomparably fiercer manner.

The title of the Statement of the 20 American Historians published in the March 2015 issue of the American Historical Association's (AHA) magazine *Perspectives on History* is "Standing with Historians of Japan". However, even Professor YOSHIMI Yoshiaki, whom the 20 American Historians hold in high regards in their Statement, could identify multiple factual errors in the McGraw-Hill textbook, if he were asked to do so. We are afraid that, in point of fact, the 20 American historians would never be able to find a single Japanese academician with whom they could stand. It would be as if they were standing with Japanese ghosts.

Both the author of the McGraw-Hill textbook and the authors and co-signers of the 20 American Historians' statement never mentioned the IWG (Interagency Working Group) Report of April 2007, which stated that they could not find any documentation to show that the Japanese government's committed war crimes with respect to the Comfort Women during the Second World War. This report was the result of very thorough research by the US National Archives and Record Administration (NARA). NARA identified 142,000 pages of Japanese-related classified documents held by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), CIA, FBI and US Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) and others, and this research task took 7 years and cost 30 million dollars. If the author of the McGraw-Hill textbook and the 20 American historians did not know about the IWG Report, then they should be censured for performing an inadequate study; if

they did know about the IWG Report, but ignored it, then their impartiality as academicians should be seriously questioned.

In the McGraw-Hill textbook, there are phrases such as “the army presented the women to the troops as a gift from the Emperor” and “At the end of the war, soldiers massacred large numbers of comfort women to cover up the operation.” These accounts are completely without supporting historical evidence. Writers of fiction have license to create alternative realities using their imaginations, but history textbooks written by serious scholars should contain nothing but demonstrable truths. Furthermore, we have to say that the credibility of the McGraw-Hill textbook as a whole should be seriously questioned as 8 errors of fact in only 26 lines, mentioned earlier, on the Comfort Women were found in the textbook. Given how many mistakes were in just these two paragraphs, one would seriously wonder about the quality of the other parts of the textbook. This is a problem that affects the prestige of American historians as a whole. American historians need to make an effort to check the appropriateness of American history textbooks in America, across the board, rather than point fingers at the Japanese government when it tries to call attention to these errors of fact. The efforts of American historians will determine whether or not future generations of Americans will have the correct historical view, which will be extremely important for the US as well as for the rest of the world.

\* This is a rebuttal by Japanese academics of the statement by 20 American historians published in the March 2015 issue of *Perspectives on History*, the magazine of the American Historical Association (AHA).

#### Signatories

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\*9 initiators of the rebuttal

September 4, 2015 (Friday)

Japan National Press Club

## THE RATIONALE OF THE JAPANESE REBUTTAL

**ITO Takashi**  
**Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo**

My name is ITO Takashi; I am one of the initiators of the Japanese rebuttal.

“Standing with Historians of Japan,” a statement signed by 19 American historians (another signature was added later, for a total of 20) published in the March 2015 issue of *Perspectives on History*, the Magazine of the American Historical Association (AHA), focuses on the comfort women and the controversies surrounding them. I was appalled when I read the offending portions of the McGraw-Hill history textbook (as translated by Professor FUJIOKA Nobukatsu). These accounts have absolutely no basis in fact. I am in complete agreement with Professor HATA Ikuhiko and others who have censured the textbook accounts in their booklet “Requesting Correction of Factual Errors in McGraw-Hill Textbook” dated March 17, 2015. Today I would like to consider the stance taken by the American scholars and educators who produced “Standing with Historians of Japan.” As I see it, that stance gives rise to four serious problems, which I shall proceed to enumerate.

First, both the “Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan” dated May 5, 2015 (and signed by 187 specialists in Japanese studies) and the aforementioned “Standing with Historians of Japan” issued in the beginning of March claim support for, or solidarity with, Japanese historians. Their authors may very well believe that Japan’s historians harbor the same opinions as they do.

Here I detect a political agenda. The American historians maintain that the Abe administration is intent on suppressing freedom of speech both in Japan and abroad. Therefore they wish to collaborate with Japanese historians in an effort to put a stop to that suppression. But is the Abe administration guilty of anything remotely resembling the suppression of free speech? It seems to me that the truth is the exact opposite. I call your attention to the statement delivered by Prime Minister Abe on August 14, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. It seems to me that the content of Mr. Abe’s speech was quite different from what it would have been, had he not been cornered by the news media.

I have also noticed that the majority of historians in the US today favor a leftist ideology. This trend is particularly prominent among specialists in Japanese studies. It saddens me to add that the quality of the research done by these specialists in Japanese studies is far inferior to that produced by scholars during the era when Professor Edwin O. Reischauer was active.

When the authors of “Standing with Historians of Japan” and “Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan” mention “Japanese historians,” to whom are they referring? Perhaps they envision a collaboration with members of The Historical Science Society of Japan and other left-wing Japanese historians. Perhaps such historians are the mainstream now, but I know of many historians who, like myself, do not share their opinions. There are also many scholars who, though they may specialize in disciplines other than history, have opinions that differ from those embraced by The Historical Science Society of Japan and assertively express those opinions. Historians are not the only scholars qualified to express their views on history.

Second, the authors of “Standing with Historians of Japan” accuse the Japanese government of interference and attempts to “censor history” because its representatives sought to correct grave errors in American history textbooks. Their accusation is misplaced. The Japanese government does not have the authority to censor American history textbooks.

Third, the Americans’ refusal to acknowledge their erroneous interpretations of historical fact, even in the face of indisputable evidence (no matter how many times their errors are pointed out to them) is disgraceful. One wonders if they really examined the accounts in those textbooks. They refuse to engage in a constructive debate. When we present evidence that contradicts their conclusions, they ignore it. Their stance is, needless to say, unscientific, as is that of McGraw-Hill Education in New York in its outright refusal to correct errors.

Fourth, these American historians don’t seem to have much interest in providing future generations of Americans with a proper history education. When multiple factual errors in history textbooks are pointed out to them, instead of attempting to analyze or verify them, they rail against the Japanese government. And they call themselves educators!

Some say that we cannot acquire a clear picture of any given era of history at least until 100 years have elapsed. Since we are 70 years past the end of World War II, it is likely — no, it is almost certain — that new evidence will emerge in the years to come. Incidentally, this year marks the 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, but we still lack a coherent historical evaluation of that conflict.

These same Americans are quick to call us revisionists. But isn’t it always important for open-minded scholars to be open to revisions when they are appropriate? Those who cry “revisionism” are unscientific; they do not behave like intellectuals. Perhaps it’s time for us to return the favor and label them the “bigoted old guard.”

September 4, 2015

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following is a description of the events that brought us to the current situation, in chronological order. It all began on November 3, 2014 with a front-page article in the *Sankei Shimbun* about *Traditions and Encounters*, a high school history textbook issued by the US publisher McGraw-Hill Education. The article revealed that passages in the textbook about the “comfort women” contain significant factual errors.

During the month of November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (specifically, the Regional Policy Division of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau) instructed the Japanese Consulate General in New York to request that the textbook publisher, McGraw-Hill Education, correct the errors. The ministry also asked the Consulate General in Honolulu to contact Herbert Ziegler, associate professor of history at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and the author of the offending passages.

Those actions prompted the publication of “Standing with Historians of Japan” in early March 2015 in *Perspectives on History*, an AHA (American Historical Association) periodical. Signed by 19 American historians (an additional signature brought the total to 20), the statement denounces the Japanese government for interfering with the content of a US textbook.

Nineteen Japanese historians, led by former Nippon University Professor HATA Ikuhiko, published a pamphlet on March 17 entitled “Requesting Correction of Factual Errors in McGraw-Hill Textbook”, which identifies the many factual errors in the textbook’s passages concerning comfort women. The passages in question occupy only two paragraphs and a total of 26 lines, but Professor Hata and his colleagues found eight factual errors in them. They described those errors at a press conference held at the FCCJ (Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan) on the afternoon of March 17. Many representatives of the foreign news media, including the *Washington Post*, attended and reported on the event.

Then, on May 5, the “Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan” came to our attention. This statement, signed by 187 American scholars (most of them specialists in Japanese studies), urges Prime Minister ABE Shinzo to “act boldly” to remedy erroneous historical perceptions. It is likely that the statement was prepared with an eye to the speech Mr. Abe was scheduled to deliver in August (the actual date, August 14, was determined by Cabinet decision) in connection with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. By May 19 the total number of signatures had risen by 270, for a total of about 460.

Most disappointingly, McGraw-Hill Education refused a request for an interview from the *Sankei Shimbun* on May 14. In a written response, the company stated that it would not make any corrections whatsoever, regardless of the circumstances, to its history textbooks as reported in the *Sankei Shimbun*, May 16 edition.

On August 6 the Japanese response to the “Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan” was presented at the FCCJ. Entitled “Japanese Scholars’ Response to Statement on Comfort Women Issued by American Scholars,” it was signed by 110 Japanese scholars.

However, since no Japanese response to “Standing with Historians of Japan” in the beginning of March has appeared, we have decided to prepare and publicize our rebuttal with signatures by many Japanese scholars.



■ Attachment 1 : American Historical Association (AHA) , *Perspectives on History*, March 2015

'20 American Historians' Statement'

Standing with Historians of Japan

As historians, we express our dismay at recent attempts by the Japanese government to suppress statements in history textbooks both in Japan and elsewhere about the euphemistically named "comfort women" who suffered under a brutal system of sexual exploitation in the service of the Japanese imperial army during World War II.

Historians continue to debate whether the numbers of women exploited were in the tens of thousands or the hundreds of thousands and what precise role the military played in their procurement. Yet the careful research of historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki in Japanese government archives and the testimonials of survivors throughout Asia have rendered beyond dispute the essential features of a system that amounted to state-sponsored sexual slavery. Many of the women were conscripted against their will and taken to stations at the front where they had no freedom of movement. Survivors have described being raped by officers and beaten for attempting to escape.

As part of its effort to promote patriotic education, the present administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is vocally questioning the established history of the comfort women and seeking to eliminate references to them in school textbooks. Some conservative Japanese politicians have deployed legalistic arguments in order to deny state responsibilities, while others have slandered the survivors. Rightwing extremists threaten and intimidate journalists and scholars involved in documenting the system and the stories of its victims.

We recognize that the Japanese government is not alone in seeking to narrate history in its own interest. In the United States, state and local boards of education have sought to rewrite school textbooks to obscure accounts of African American slavery or to eliminate "unpatriotic" references to the Vietnam War, for example. In 2014, Russia passed a law criminalizing dissemination of what the government deems false information about Soviet activities during World War II. This year, on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, a Turkish citizen can be sent to jail for asserting that the government bears responsibility. The Japanese government, however, is now directly targeting the work of historians both at home and abroad.

On November 7, 2014, Japan's Foreign Ministry instructed its New York Consulate General to ask McGraw-Hill publishers to correct the depiction of the comfort women in its world history textbook *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*,

coauthored by historians Herbert Ziegler and Jerry Bentley.

On January 15, 2015, the *Wall Street Journal* reported a meeting that took place last December between Japanese diplomats and McGraw-Hill representatives. The publisher refused the Japanese government's request for erasure of two paragraphs, stating that scholars had established the historical facts about the comfort women.

On January 29, 2015, the *New York Times* further reported that Prime Minister directly targeted the textbook during a parliamentary session, stating that he "was shocked" to learn that his government had "failed to correct the things [it] should have."

We support the publisher and agree with author Herbert Ziegler that no government should have the right to censor history. We stand with the many historians in Japan and elsewhere who have worked to bring to light the facts about this and other atrocities of World War II.

We practice and produce history to learn from the past. We therefore oppose the efforts of states or special interests to pressure publishers or historians to alter the results of their research for political purposes.

*Jeremy Adelman* Princeton University  
*W. Jelani Cobb* University of Connecticut  
*Alexis Dudden* University of Connecticut  
*Sabine Fruhstuck* University of California, Santa Barbara  
*Carol Gluck* Columbia University  
*Sheldon Garon* Princeton University  
*Mark Healey* University of Connecticut  
*Miriam Kingsberg* University of Colorado  
*Nikolay Koposov* Georgia Institute of Technology  
*Peter Kuznick* American University  
*Patric Manning* University of Pittsburgh  
*Devin Pendas* Boston College  
*Mark Selden* Cornell University  
*Franziska Seraphim* Boston College  
*Stefan Tanaka* University of California, San Diego  
*Julia Adeney Thomas* Notre Dame University  
*Jeffrey Wasserstrom* University of California, Irvine  
*Theodore Jun Yoo* University of Hawaii  
*Herbert Ziegler* University of Hawaii

*Editor's Note: This letter originated from an informal meeting held at the AHA Annual Meeting on January 2, 2015 in New York City*

J.H.Bentley and Herbert F.Ziegler; *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, McGraw-Hill, 2011, 5th. edition, p.853.

**Comfort Women** Women's experiences in war were not always ennobling or empowering. The Japanese army forcibly recruited, conscripted, and dragooned as many as two hundred thousand women age fourteen to twenty to serve in military brothels, called "comfort houses" or "consolation centers." The army presented the women to the troops as a gift from the emperor, and the women came from Japanese colonies such as Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria and from occupied territories in the Philippines and elsewhere in southeast Asia. The majority of the women came from Korea and China.

Once forced into this imperial prostitution service, the "comfort women" catered to between twenty and thirty men each day. Stationed in war zones, the women often confronted the same risks as soldiers, and many became casualties of war. Others were killed by Japanese soldiers, especially if they tried to escape or contracted venereal diseases. At the end of the war, soldiers massacred large numbers of comfort women to cover up the operation. The impetus behind the establishment of comfort houses for Japanese soldiers came from the horrors of Nanjing, where the mass rape of Chinese women had taken place. In trying to avoid such atrocities, the Japanese army created another horror of war. Comfort women who survived the war experienced deep shame and hid their past or faced shunning by their families. They found little comfort or peace after the war.

## Requesting Correction of Factual Errors in McGraw-Hill Textbook

March 17, 2015

By 19 Japanese Historians

### PREFACE

On February 11, 2015, Sankei Newspaper reported that last November and December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (“MOFA”) requested to McGraw-Hill and Prof. Ziegler of University of Hawaii who is the author of an article relating to comfort women in the world history textbook for American high schools published by McGraw-Hill, to correct inaccurate expressions in the book. The Daily Toa (Korea) and the Washington Post also reported the similar write-up on February 7<sup>th</sup> and February 10<sup>th</sup> respectively in their newspapers.

After an annual general meeting of the American Historical Association took place on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 19 historians led by Prof. Alexis Dudden of the University of Connecticut made a joint statement to protect the publisher and the author from “censorship” by the Japanese government, and the statement, entitled as “Standing with Historians of Japan” represented by Prof. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, was published in the monthly journal of *Perspectives on History* issued on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Refer to Attachment 1)

While we were not informed of the content of the request made by the MOFA, we studied the article on “Comfort Women” in page 853 of Version Five McGraw-Hill textbook, *Traditions and Encounters*, and we found many inappropriate expressions. Among other things, by focusing on the following eight points from (1) to (8) which were factual errors, we advise McGraw-Hill to correct them spontaneously.

### TEXT

The article relating to Comfort Women in the textbook published by McGraw-Hill and the book reference are quoted below. The points (1) to (8) are underlined as inaccurate expressions in the quoted article.

J.H. Bentley and Herbert F. Ziegler, *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, McGraw-Hill, 2011, p.853.

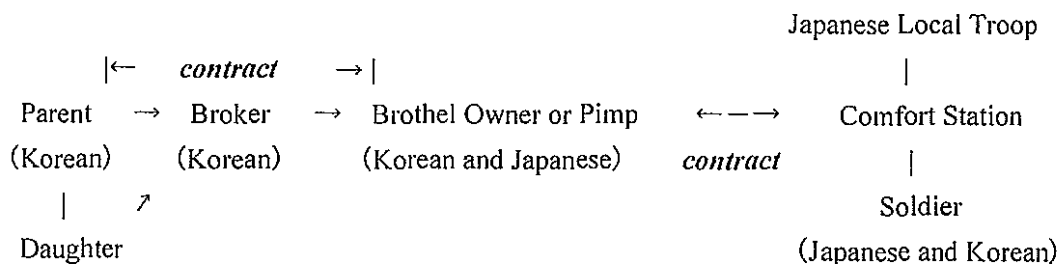
**Comfort Women** Women's experiences in war were not always ennobling or empowering. The Japanese army (1) forcibly recruited, conscripted, and dragooned (2) as many as two hundred thousand women (3) age fourteen to twenty to serve in military brothels, called "comfort houses" or "consolation centers". The army presented the women to the troops (4) as a gift from the emperor, and the women came from Japanese colonies such as Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria and from occupied territories in the Philippines and elsewhere in southeast Asia. The (5) majority of the women came from Korea and China.

Once forced into this imperial prostitution service, the "comfort women" catered to (6) between twenty and thirty men each day. Stationed in war zones, the women often confronted (7) the same risks as soldiers, and many became casualties of war. Others were killed by Japanese soldiers, especially if they tried to escape or contracted venereal diseases. At the end of the war, soldiers (8) massacred large numbers of comfort women to cover up the operation. The impetus behind the establishment of comfort houses for Japanese soldiers came from the horrors of Nanjing, where the mass rape of Chinese women had taken place. In trying to avoid such atrocities, the Japanese army created another horror of war. Comfort women who survived the war experienced deep shame and hid their past or faced shunning by their families. They found little comfort or peace after the war.

COMMENT

(1) **forcibly recruited, conscripted:** The group of 19 historians made a statement where only the real name of Yoshimi Yoshiaki was quoted. He wrote in his book, "Cases of women being deceived and led off are much more common among those rounded up in Korea". (Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, p.103, Columbia University Press, 2000)

Yoshimi said in a discussion broadcast on TV in Japan that there was no evidence of forced recruitments in Korea. When comfort women were recruited in the Korean Peninsula, many people involved in recruiting were Koreans, and the relations between those who were involved can be explained in the following diagram.



(2) as many as two hundred thousand women: This figure is too large. Hata Ikuhiko estimates it to be around 20,000 as is shown in (5) below. Yoshimi wrote "at least around 50,000" (*Rekishi-gaku kenkyuu*, No. 849, 2008, p.4). Also refer to the comment on (6)

(3) age fourteen to twenty: According to the research cards of 20 comfort women (11 Japanese, 6 Koreans, 3 Taiwanese) who were captured by the US Forces in the Philippines in 1945, 19 persons were over 20 years old. (US National Archives, RG 389-PMG) The word "twenty", therefore, should be corrected to "twenties".

(4) as a gift from the emperor: This is too impolite expression for a school textbook, which defames the national head.

(5) majority of the women came from Korea and China: In Hata's estimation, the total number of comfort women was around 20,000 in which Japanese amounted to around 8,000 as the single largest number, followed by Koreans amounting to around 4,000 half the Japanese. Chinese and others amounted to around 8,000.

(6) between twenty and thirty men each day: The numbers in 2) and 6) are greatly inflated, thereby self-contradicting. If (2) as many as two hundred thousand women had catered to (6) between twenty and thirty men each day, Japanese soldiers could have had sexual intercourses with them 4 million to 6 million times a day. The number of Japanese army men abroad was around 1 million in 1943. According to the textbook, all of them could have visited the comfort stations 4 to 6 times a day, meaning they had neither enough time to be engaged in combat nor for daily life activities.

(7) the same risks as soldiers: Comfort women and nurses worked in rear and relatively safe places which were distant from the front lines. The Japanese Army could not afford to allocate soldiers to guard comfort women in the front lines.

(8) massacred large numbers of comfort women: Is there evidence to prove that it happened? If the massacres of comfort women had occurred, the Tokyo Tribunals or BC class trials could have argued such an incident. However, there is no record. Without evidence of what, where and when on such statement, any textbook should not write it. Hata estimated that the death rate of comfort women was almost same as the one of the nurses (26,295 person) of the Japanese Red Cross Society. (*Comfort Women and Battle Zone Sex*, p.406, Shincho-sha, 1999)

## 19 Japanese Historians:

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	*	
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<i>OH, Sonfa</i>	吳 善花	<i>Takushoku University</i>
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(In alphabetical order)