

International Research Institute for Controversial Histories (iRICH)

President

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Our Statement

The International Research Institute for Controversial Histories (iRICH), which was established on November 1, 2018, became a general incorporated association with the official appellation of “General Incorporated Association International Research Institute for Controversial Histories,” as of April 1, 2022. We would like to make a statement on this occasion.

The aim of our institute was stipulated as “this incorporated association aims to protect the honor and dignity of Japan and the Japanese people through international controversies over historical issues” in Article 3 of our Agreement. The new version of Article 3 of our “Statute” states: “This incorporated association aims mainly to conduct historical research, publish results and disseminate the correct understanding of Japan both domestically and internationally.” Words have changed, but our mission to challenge international controversies, including our activities related to the United Nations, which unfortunately have been insufficient so far, is the same as ever.

As of the historical studies, we must emphasize that presently, historical studies in the world tend to deviate from the scientific methodology and have become something very different.

To argue this point further, we must ask what science is. Science refers to arguments based on objective facts. Natural science, social science and human science are all sciences because they are arguments based on facts.

Study of history belongs to human science and deals with the past, which can be defined as interpretation of what happened in the past. By interpreting it, based on facts, past events can be recognized and understood.

However, in many recent cases emerging around the world, historical studies adhere to low standards or do not meet scientific criteria at all.

A typical example of this trend is the comfort women issue. We have been dealing directly with this issue. The essence of the comfort women issue is that during World War II, there were “military comfort women” used by the Japanese Army who were allegedly abducted by Japanese officials . The issue started with the book *My War Crime—Forced Abduction of Koreans* (published by San-Ichi Shobo Publishing Inc in 1983.) written by a Japanese man named Yoshida Seiji. In the book, Yoshida created a false story vividly depicting a hunt for comfort women in the Korean island of Jeju. Thus, the book made comfort women a big political issue. With mismanagement on the part of the Japanese Government in dealing with the issue from the very start, the problem led to the present situation of comfort women statues being built all over the world. There were neither “military comfort women” nor “forced abduction.” Those were professional comfort women working without coercion, which has been perfectly proven by both Korean and Japanese scholars. The Japanese leading paper, which had reported extensively on Yoshida Seiji’s fictitious story, admitted that its reporting about the comfort women issue was false and cancelled its related articles in 2014.

Under such scholarly circumstances, Professor Ramseyer of Harvard University posted a scholarly essay, "Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War," on the International Review of Law and Economics’ website, in which he clearly stated that comfort women were engaged in sexual services under contract, definitively proving that there was no “forced abduction.” The summary of this essay appeared in the magazine “Japan Forward” in January 2021. Upon this, many critics from South Korea, the United States, Europe and Japan, calling themselves scholars, issued a statement asking Professor Ramseyer to withdraw his essay. The number of scholars who joined in the statement demanding the removal of Professor Ramseyer’s essay amounted to 3,665 as of May 11, 2021.

This is an act digressing far from the standards of the scientific study and can no longer be called a study. Those self-proclaimed scholars simply asked for withdrawal of the essay, and did not refer to any facts, neither did they try to refute his arguments. This was not a study concerned with facts. It was not a study by any standards.

Historical studies, as science, do not aim to insult or incite hatred toward a specific country or people. The request to withdraw the essay aims to hurl insults and provoke hatred as undercurrent and diverts from the scientific scholarly objectives.

Interpretation matters in the study of history. When it comes to interpreting cases related to a certain

country or people, it is necessary to compare them with cases of other countries or people, to demonstrate a fair and conscientious approach to the study.

We, the researchers of the International Research Institute for Controversial Histories, on this occasion of our becoming a general incorporated association, will look far and wide across the world, make further efforts to continue our study as science, based on facts, and contribute to the promotion of world peace and development of the world for the international citizens.

We extend our heart-felt gratitude to those who have supported us and sincerely hope that all of you will continue to encourage us as you did before