

<Book Review>

***Harvard Professor Tells Us the Truth about the Comfort Women Issue* (Subtitle: *Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War*), written by John Mark Ramseyer, translated by Lee Woo-youn and Lew Seok-choon, published by Media Watch Company**

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**The significance of the concurrent publications of Professor Ramseyer's papers
in Japan and South Korea**

The book titled *Harvard Professor Ramseyer's Complete Refutation of Comfort Women Being Sexual Slaves* (hereinafter, *Complete Refutation*), published by Heart Publishers in 2013, contains the professor's papers that completely refuted the theory of comfort women being sexual slaves. It was published on December 13, 2023, in Japan and the publication of the same book translated into the Korean language followed on January 3, 2024. The title of the Korean version of the book is *Harvard Professor Tells Us the Truth about the Comfort Women Issue* with the subtitle *Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War* (hereinafter *The Truth about the Comfort Women Issue*).

The structure and contents of the book are nearly identical to *Complete Refutation* and the only difference is that in the last chapter of the Korean book, a paper entitled "Connection with North Korea", co-authored by Professor Ramseyer and the former Waseda University Professor Arima Tetsuo is added.

The translation into the Korean language of Prof. Ramseyer's papers was done by Mr. Lee woo-youn, researcher at Naksungdae Institute of Economic Research and Mr. Lew Seok-choon of Yonsei University. Mr. Lee woo-youn is one of the authors of the book *Anti-Japanese Ethnicism* published in Korea in 2019 and as an economist, he objectively analyzes the development stages of the Korean economy and highly praises the governance by Japan. From December 2019 onward, he has been single-handedly conducting regular demonstrations asking for "the removal of the comfort woman statue, the suspension of the anti-Japan Wednesday meeting and the dissolution of the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan). He is truly a man of action.

The other translator, Mr. Lew Seok-choon, is a sociology doctor. He studies the period of Japan's rule

of the Korean Peninsula from the perspective of “developmental sociology” while maintaining a balanced and impartial viewpoint. As mentioned later, during his lecture at Yonsei University, he talked about the “truth about the Japanese rule,” and as a result, he was expelled from his teaching job, indicted by the anti-Japan forces and is now fighting his case in the court.

The successful publication at this time of *The Truth about the Comfort Women Issue* owes much to both translators for their passion and sense of duty. The significance of what Ramseyer papers say in refutation of the comfort women-related lies being known to the general Korean public is enormous. The publication of this book will be epoch-making and a significant step toward the complete resolution of the comfort women issue.

Customarily, for decades, the comfort women issue in South Korea has been treated as a “sacred region,” which no one is allowed to deny. If one dares to tell the truth about the comfort women who were in fact prostitutes, one is surely condemned as a traitor for defaming the victimized comfort women and worse still, is completely ostracized socially.

The author and editor of *Anti-Japanese Ethnicism* (Miraesa, 2019), Mr. Rhee Young-hoon, professor emeritus of Seoul University said in 2004, “Military comfort women were professional prostitutes. What scholar in his right mind would assert that Korean Governor’s Office forcibly mobilized them?” He was perfectly right in saying so. However, he was asked to resign from the professorship by the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. In September of the same year, he was forced to perform a Korean-style humiliating bow-down on the ground to comfort women.

Ms. Park Yu-ha, professor emeritus of Yonsei University, wrote in her book *Comfort Women of the Empire*, published in 2013 (Ppuriwaipari, 2013) the truth that “Japanese soldiers and comfort women were in comradely relationship.” She was sued by former comfort women for libel at the district court, she lost one suit after another, and it took her ten years to finally win the verdict of not guilty at the Supreme Court in April 2024.

Moreover, Mr. Lew Seok-choon, one of the translators of the Ramseyer papers, during his lecture on developmental sociology logically explained that stories regarded as “common sense” in South Korea such as “40% of farmland was robbed by Japan,” “Rice was exploited,” “Young people were forcibly taken and forced into slave-like labor,” and “Women were taken to join Volunteer Corps and made comfort women,” were in fact far from the truth of the Japanese rule. Feeling outrage over his views,

the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance and former comfort women sued Mr. Lew for libel. Mr. Lew Seok-choon partially won in the first trial, but both the plaintiffs and the defendant appealed to the higher court, and the lawsuit is still going on.

When Professor Ramseyer's paper was posted in the English news site of the *Sankei Newspaper* on January 12, 2021, the entire South Korea turned into a mayhem. What a disgrace for Korean people that a Harvard scholar revealed the "truth" of the comfort women issue! Korean public broadcasting KBS, equivalent to Japan's NHK, fiercely attacked this revelation, day after day.

The general Korean public, instigated by the fanatic media, without understanding the contents of the paper written in English, emotionally labelled Professor Ramseyer "Japanese with blue eyes" and bombarded him with all manners of abusive language.

Why, on earth, do such totally unreasonable situations occur in Korea, totally nullifying the freedom of study and damaging human rights?

Essentially, the "history" has been changed arbitrarily in China and Korea every time the government changes and it is impossible there to present the "true history" through examination, investigation and verification. To them, "history" is a means of self-justification, and it is utmost important to make up "history to be" that is convenient to them and push it forward on and on. Let me show a concrete example.

According to Mr. Matsumoto Koji, former Ministry of Industry and Trade official who once served as counselor at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, at a seminar held by "Japan-South Korea Joint Study Society of History Textbook" established in 1991, Professor Yoon Sei-tetsu of Seoul University reportedly said, "Respecting the position of victimized South Korea, if Japan abandons its insistent and stubborn attitudes sticking to the truth and rewrites the textbook, the issue will be solved." Mr. Matsumoto points out that scholars representing South Korea and appearing in front of Japanese mostly have the same way of thinking as the professor.

As made clear so far, in the Korean society, even if a scholar proves something based on historical facts, Koreans would never be persuaded into admitting it if it is different from what they think is right. On top of that, the comfort women issue has been within the "untouchable sacred territory" for long. They become hysterical at the mere mention of the truth and instantly require bowing-down on the ground and apology and resort to lawsuits. Irrationality like the one displayed in the witch hunts of the Middle Ages has found its own way in Korea.

How, then, can we overcome such a situation? The only way would be for those telling the truth to cross the national boundaries and act together hand in hand. In this sense, the concurrent publications and sales of Ramseyer's books *Complete Refutation* and *The Truth about the Comfort Women Issue* in Japan and South Korea were an excellent feat.

Japanese and South Korean scholars on the comfort women issue should continue to deepen the mutual bond and strongly appeal in unison to the peoples of Japan and South Korea and to the world about revealing the true history. Only then, South Korean common sense will become non-common sense and a day will surely come when the Koreans will accept the truth about the comfort women issue.

Of course, that will not be an easy way to take, particularly in South Korea, still dominated by anti-Japan feelings. The publishers must have felt life-threatening fear when they released all Ramseyer papers in a book.

However, if we become daunted to face the fearful conflict, we cannot move forward. The publication of the *Truth about the Comfort Women*, exposing the true nature of comfort women into daylight can become a great breakthrough in solving the comfort women issue.

In concluding this review, I would like to extend my heart-felt respect to Mr. Lee woo-youn and Mr. Lew Seok-choon, who translated this book and to Media Watch Company, the publisher of this book, for their courage and determination.