

## **Title: “The Issue of ‘Comfort Women’ and Historical Revisionism and in Japan”**

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■Date and Time: March 24, 2006 (Fri.) 4:30pm

### **●Summary and Objective**

This presentation aims to explore the ways in which sexuality, gender and colonialism are conceptualised in memory politics on "comfort women" in historical revisionism in Japan. The issue of comfort women has been a site of contestation for historical revisionists in Japan. Since 1970, however, and mainly in the 1990s, studies on the issue of comfort women have revived and sustained remembrance of the issue. In contrast, there have been works by Japanese neo-nationalists or revisionists, which attempt to erase this issue from public memory. For example Fujioka Nobukatsu, Nakamura Akira, Hôzaka Masayasu, Nishioka Tsutomu, and Kusaka Kimihito, Watanabe Shôichi, Nakamura Akira, Okazaki Hisahiko, Nishio Kanji, Sakamoto Takao, and a cartoonist Kobayashi Yoshinori have been involved in this discussion. They criticise the “masochistic view” which portrays Japan as evil or criminal.

These apologists have argued about those themes:

- the terminology “comfort women”,
- the use of force in the recruitment procedure and involvement of the Japanese state or military,
- credibility of narratives of former comfort women,
- universality of the existence of military brothels,
- identifying the women as prostitutes,
- presentism and,
- inappropriateness of teaching the issue of comfort women for middle school students.

I shall investigate their assertions in terms of

- positivism,
- biological determinism of masculine sexuality,
- rhetoric of woman as a necessary evil,
- dichotomy of the fallen and the respective,
- constructing the comfort women as ‘maternal comforters’ and simultaneously as sub-human ‘whores’,
- masculinisation and feminisation of the Japanese soldiers in everyday practices in the military during WWII.

The questions posed and addressed in this paper are

- How is the issue of comfort women represented in the discourse of historical revisionism in Japan?
- How is sexuality contextualised?
- How is prostitution constructed?
- How are the narratives of comfort women considered?
- How is the comfort women system legitimised in ‘revisionist’ historiography in Japan?