

Wartime Sexual Violence and War Responsibility: The “Comfort Women Issue” in Japan

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I. Introduction

In this paper I will examine the aspect of transitional justice by focusing on what is called the “comfort women” issue in Japan from a gender perspective.¹ I will touch upon three points. First, I will discuss the reason why I will refer to the “comfort women” issue as an example of transitional justice, then I will describe the efforts taken towards compensation and reconciliation, and finally, we will examine the future challenges.

It should be noted that the term “comfort women” issue is used by the Japanese government and within academia for historical reasons.

II. “Transitional Justice” and the “Comfort Women” Issue

1. The “Comfort Women” Issue as an Issue of “Unfinished Justice”

In East Asia today, the way “transitional justice”² is discussed varies considerably from country to country. In Korea and Taiwan, for instance, it is discussed as a practical issue related to these countries’ historical paths. In Japan and China, transitional justice is considered to be an issue concerning countries and regions such as Latin America, South Africa, or South-East Asia – in other words: “other people’s affairs”³.

¹ *Miho MITSUNARI* (2016), Possibilities and Challenges in the Study of Wartime Law: Comments from a Gender Perspective, in: Hiroshi ONO/Yichii DEGUCHI/Naoko MATSUMOTO (eds.), *The Wartime Regime and Law Scholars: 1931–1952*, Kokusaiyoin, pp. 145–154 [三成美保「戦時法研究の可能性と課題—ジェンダー視点からのコメント」小野博司・出口雄一・松本尚子編『戦時体制と法学者—1931~1952』国際書院、2016年、145-154頁].

² The Peace Studies Association of Japan (ed.) (2012), *Restoration of Human Rights and Justice in a Time of Regime Transition*, Peace Research, Vol. 38 [日本平和学会編「(特集)体制移行期の人権回復と正義」『平和研究』38号、2012年]; *Yasue MOTIZUKI* (2012), *Transitional Justice: The Pursuit of Justice in the International Community*, Horitsubunkasya [望月康恵『移行期正義——国際社会における正義の追及』法律文化社、2012年].

³ *Naoyuki UMEMORI* (2021), Reconciliation Studies as a Method: The East Asian Basis of Conflict Resolution Studies, in: Toyomi ASANO (ed.), *An Attempt at Reconciliation Studies*: