

May 11, 2020

## **Scholars' Statement: We Question Sophia University's Academic Integrity regarding the Film *Shusenjo***

[titles omitted]

Regarding the film *Shusenjo: the Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue*, directed and produced by Mr. Norman Mikine Dezaki, a former graduate student at Sophia University, we question Sophia University's academic research ethics.

### **Concerning the Acceptance of Interviews by Conservative Commentators**

This is a serious case of fraud and at the same time, grave academic injustice on the part of Sophia University. From May 2016 through February 2017, Mikine Dezaki, who was a student of Graduate School of Global Studies at Sophia University, interviewed eight conservative commentators regarding the Comfort Women Issue, with the goal of completing an assignment for his master's degree. The eight conservative commentators interviewed were: KASE Hideaki (Commentator on Foreign Affairs), Kent Gilbert (Lawyer of the State of California), SAKURAI Yoshiko (President, the Japan Institute for National Fundamentals (JINF)), FUJIOKA Nobukatsu (Former Professor, University of Tokyo), FUJIKI Shunichi (Secretary-General, Texas Daddy Japan Secretariat), Anthony Marano (a.k.a. "Texas Daddy"), YAMAMOTO Yumiko (President, Nadeshiko Action) and SUGITA Mio (Member of the House of Representatives). In asking for an interview, Dezaki stated to each prospective interviewee, "This is an academic research to be submitted to the University and is meant to be completely free from biased journalism." Some of the conservative subjects were interviewed at Sophia University in a classroom setting. All interviewees took Dezaki at his word, wishing to help him fulfill his academic requirement.

### **Interviews Put into a Commercial Film without the Interviewees' Consent**

*Shusenjo* (distributed by Tofu, LLC) was first shown on October 7, 2018 in South Korea at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Busan International Film Festival, and then shown worldwide. In Japan, on April 20, 2019, the film opened in Shibuya, Tokyo and shown for nine consecutive months until January 24, 2020, an exceptionally long run. The film was shown at a number of theaters, although it is stopped due to spreading of COVID-19 for the moment. Thus far, in Japan, the film has opened at more than 65 theaters and at least

19 other public facilities.

In the United States, the film was screened at 16 universities and other institutions in 2019 and to date in 2020. In Europe, this film has been screened in 19 universities and other facilities in Germany, UK, Austria, France, Switzerland, and Italy. The interviewees took it for granted that they were involved in a purely academic project—in the end they were made to look entirely foolish. While initially represented as an academic piece, it is now being displayed worldwide as a commercial venture. Dezaki's film defames his conservative interviewees in the lowest sense of the word.

### **A Horribly Biased Piece of Work**

*Shusenjo* indicates that fraudulent methods were used, in that many, many comfort women were fooled and then abducted by brokers. However, it seems totally ridiculous to cast blame on others for fraud in a film that was fraudulently produced.

We point out that although Dezaki states that *Shusenjo* is a documentary, giving “equal time to both sides”, his film is heavily biased and extremely unfair. To be sure, the words spoken by conservatives in this film were their own words. However, their statements were taken completely out of context.

For example, the film only briefly presents 8 conservative commentators who debunked the tired tales of “sexual slavery” and “forced abduction” of the comfort women. In contrast, 19 those who still cry “sexual slavery” and “forced abduction”, such as NAKANO Koichi (Professor at Sophia University), YOSHIMI Yoshiaki (Professor Emeritus, Chuo University), TOTSUKA Etsuro (Lawyer), UEMURA Takashi (Former Reporter for the *Asahi Newspaper*), and Hisae Kennedy (a Japanese American woman) are fully presented, without rebuttal. Indeed, the contrarians are purposely cut short in the film to be misunderstood. The film from the beginning favors the side that views the comfort women in terms of “sexual slavery” and “forced abduction”. The film cannot be considered an unbiased documentary at all.

### **The Fallacy of “Global Consensus” regarding the So-called Comfort Women”**

According to *Shusenjo*, it is common knowledge that the comfort women were “sex slaves”, that they were “forcibly abducted” to become “sex slaves”. We completely disagree with that.

*The New York Times*, September 18, 2019, printed a very lengthy article regarding *Shusenjo*. At the start the *NYT* chided, “Why, 75 years later, does a small but vocal group of politically influential conservatives still fervently dispute internationally accepted accounts of Japan's wartime atrocities?” This article appeared on the first day

of *Shusenjo* screening tour of 15 US college campuses for three weeks—and this was not a mere coincidence. In other words, *NYT* willingly took upon itself to promote screening campaign of the film *Shusenjo* in the U.S.

Contrary to logic, it is likely that most people failed to accept the *Asahi Newspaper*'s mistakes and lack of integrity despite its retraction of August 2014 related to its fantastic reporting regarding the “comfort women” issue for decades. Those who have the similar way of thinking with Dezaki may understand that the ABE Shinzo administration put pressure on *Asahi Newspaper* to be obliged to make a confession. Those foreigners go too far to say that there is no freedom of speech in Japan. They think that the *Asahi Newspaper* is innocent and forced to become criminal, like being coerced to confess of its fallacy from prosecutors and the police. This is sheer nonsense. However, such a misunderstanding of the facts may have occurred partly because the *Asahi Newspaper* used extremely ambiguous expressions in their English edition so leaving readers with the wrong impression, contrary to the facts.

The fact is that regarding the comfort women, based on a piece of fiction concocted by a person named YOSHIDA Seiji, the *Asahi Newspaper* printed lies for nearly a quarter of a century, starting in 1991, and continued to do unmeasurable damage to the honor of the Japanese people and the state of Japan. It was only in August 2014 that the *Asahi Newspaper* finally admitted to wrongdoing, or rather, they were obliged to retract all of their false stories. If the “international conventional wisdom” regarding comfort women is that of “sex slavery” and “forced abduction,” as *Shusenjo* asserts, we must say that it is totally untrue, based on falsehood. We earnestly want the international community to simply accept the *Asahi Newspaper*'s confession of their grievously mistaken reporting of the comfort women. This is a very important point.

At the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and other human rights treaty-based Committees, not the least attention was paid to the *Asahi Newspaper*'s admission of wrongdoing. Such is the nature of modern, international human rights groups and other confession of the truth about their comfort women reporting. Instead, even today, the Coomaraswamy Report (1996) and the McDougal Report (1998), both of which are not only false but also lacking in academic quality, are still highly regarded and often quoted as fact. Consequently, in the United Nations, the current comfort women story, sexual slaves based on the fabricated story, is still believed as factual.

### **Politically Motivated Propaganda**

The “balance” promised by *Shusenjo* is in the form of eight who are against the conventional “sexual slavery” thinking versus 19 who reassure us that in fact the

Japanese make slaves out of everyone. At the end of the film, Dezaki positively introduced a gathering named “the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery” held in Tokyo on December 2000. This is a mock trial which concluded that the Emperor Showa was “guilty” for the Comfort Women. This gathering was a kind organized by extreme lefts which was supported by only a few Japanese.

There are other objectives that Dezaki would like to accomplish. At the end of the film, he chastises the Japan Conference and the ABE Shinzo Administration, and the Abe Administration’s goal of Constitutional revision. Any person with even a little common sense would find the current film nothing more than propaganda—and should be taken as such, as a sweet pastry does not substitute for serious nourishment.

### **Legal Measures Taken by the Conservatives**

The commentators who naively involved themselves, except for Member of the House SUGITA Mio, demanded the suspension of screening of *Shusenjo* on May 30, 2019. Furthermore, conservative commentators filed three lawsuits against Dezaki and distributor Tofu. On June 19, five plaintiffs, Fujioka, Yamamoto, Fujiki, Gilbert and Marano filed a civil lawsuit in Tokyo District Court, asking for the suspension of the screening of *Shusenjo* and for payment for damages. On October 4, 2019, two plaintiffs, Fujiki and Marano, filed a criminal lawsuit, for infringement of copyright and regarding unauthorized use of images, which was accepted by the Kumagaya Police on the same day. Moreover, Fujiki filed a criminal lawsuit for fraud which was accepted by the Kumagaya Police on April 28, 2020.

### **A Breach of Sophia University’s Guidelines for Academic Research Ethics**

Sophia University’s *Guidelines for Academic Research Ethics* in January 2010 (revised in November 2017), states: “Founded by the Jesuits, Sophia University has centered its investigation of truth on academic pursuits, and conducted research activities that contribute to cultural progress and human welfare based on the spirit of Catholicism,” and proudly continues, “high ethical standards are also required of researchers.” Really, Sophia University has excellent ethical guidelines for academic research and, furthermore, after April 2010, they also implemented guidelines related to research on human subjects in 24 paragraphs.

At Sophia University, none of the guidelines should have been breached—if even just one item is violated, then the study in question becomes an issue for the University Ethics Committee. Regarding Dezaki’s film, in which the eight conservatives

were interviewed, the interviewees stated that nine out of the twenty-four criteria were violated. However, it turned out that Dezaki's Research plan on the film did not undergo examination by the Sophia University Ethics Committee. Dezaki's supervisor at that time was Professor NAKANO Koichi. Both Professor Nakano and Dezaki need to be thoroughly investigated for violations of Sophia University regulations.

Sophia University's ethics committee must fulfil its duty concerning informed consent. According to Sophia University's guidelines, participation is entirely voluntary. Even if one agrees to participate, one can freely withdraw at any time. Among the eight conservative commentators, seven, except for Representative SUGITA Mio, sent their intent to withdraw from participation to Professor NAKANO Koichi, Dezaki's supervisor, early in October 2019, and requested the return or disposal of original footage of their interviews. Despite repeated requests, Sophia University has failed to respond. Normally, Sophia University would have thoroughly investigated Dezaki's graduate project—but it has not, and now it freely circulates around the world like a virus. For Sophia University, it should have been blatantly obvious that controversy would arise, given the theme of Dezaki's film. Really, informed consent was denied to the conservative interviewees.

As explained so far, Mikine Dezaki, a graduate student at the time at Sophia University and his supervisor Professor NAKANO Koichi, completely breaching the regulation on scholarly ethics of Sophia University, and through the fraudulent method, shot interviews with the conservatives, edited them in an extremely unfair manner and on the top of it, made a commercial film out of the interviews, which is widely and grandly spreading at movie theaters, universities and other facilities all over the world. Regrettably, this act is still going on, extremely damaging the honors of the eight conservative commentators. We cannot just sit and watch this situation—Japan and the Japanese people are continuously disgraced in the international community.

### **Sophia University Must Resolve This Issue Now**

Sophia University has begun a limp-wristed preliminary investigation regarding this issue, which was in clear violation of their own ethical guidelines, in September 2019. Regarding the scholarly nonsense portrayed within *Shusenjo*, with Professor NAKANO Koichi and Mikine Dezaki as the responsible parties, Sophia University, on December 18, 2019, finally decided to undertake a comprehensive investigation, calling this case “suspicious.” Really, to a clearly thinking person, this case is more than “suspicious”.

If Sophia University fails in its responsibility, it would lose its credibility and

the Japanese academic community as a whole would lose its credibility.

The current case concerning Sophia University infringes on MEXT guideline. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology implemented “The guideline in dealing with malpractice in scholarly activities” on April 1, 2015. Former graduate student Mikine Dezaki and his supervisor, Professor NAKANO Koichi, need to be held accountable.

**[Initiators of the Statement]**

**Academics’ Alliance for Correcting Groundless Criticisms of Japan (AACGCJ)**

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Chairman, AACGCJ

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- Total signers of this Statement are 55 scholars including 5 Initiators. The details of the signers appear on next pages.

## 55 Signers of the Statement

### [5 Initiators]

- \*TANAKA Hidemichi; Professor Emeritus, Tohoku University, Ph.D.
- \*YAMASHITA Eiji; Professor Emeritus, Osaka City University, Ph.D.
- \*ITO Takashi; Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, Ph.D.
- \*KOBORI Keiichiro; Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, Ph.D.
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### [50 Supporters]

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- \*ARAI Koichiro; Guest Professor, Aichi Gakuin University (Former Professor, Aichi Gakuin University)
- \*ARAKI Kazuhiro; Professor, Takushoku University
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- \*EDWARDS Hiromi; Lecturer, University of Maryland, US.
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(in alphabetical order)