



Session 3: Commentary

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MICHAEL G. WATSON: Very good questions, we'll have the answer in a moment. Professor Kiichi Fujiwara from University of Tokyo—is our next discussant.

KIICHI FUJIWARA: Thank you chair. I really appreciate Daqing's wonderful paper and I dislike my position right now because I agree with him. Discussants are not supposed to agree with people and I dislike agreeing with people. But Daqing is so persuasive, I've been totally persuaded. What Daqing has been sharing with us would be what Japanese has to be calling "*rekishi mondaï*" or the history issue, or memory wars, to be more exact. History writing of the Second World War is essentially a political battle that is based on diverse readings of the fighting that took place and their historical significance. In more simple terms, was there a massacre in Nanjing, things like that. There are very few people in Japan who would deny that a large scale of atrocity took place in Nanjing. I think it is quite fair to say that more Japanese would certainly agree that there was a large-scale massacre. And having said that, when it comes to the number, for example, the whole thing is about numbers, which I'm not really interested in that, but it really seems to be the heart of the question.

According to the Chinese representation, it is supposed to be 300,000 people massacred in Nanjing, I believe. And there has been questions that were raised against this 300,000. Now the question is, if this 300,000 were 100,000, is it not a massacre? In fact one of the ex-soldiers frankly stated, it must have been around 50,000, we don't call 50,000 a massacre. And according to my view, even if it would be 10,000, it would be a massacre. Now through all those titbits what looks like objective

historiography, you actually see a projection of national prejudice, a certain reading of history. Now, the question here in more normal terms would be a question about the truth and falsification. The Japanese's discussion on Nanjing atrocities has been widely discussed as Japanese amnesia over the war which in many ways is true, but Daqing's argument is somehow different. He focuses on different regimes of truth, and Daqing is not only discussing this new nationalist orientation in Japan. But also, he discusses about the nationalist's orientation in China as well, although he very carefully avoids to fall into the trap of "they are as bad as we are" school. I mean there are so many of people writing such a kind of history in Japan. He doesn't say that. But Daqing has zeroed in and has put his fingers on a drift to a more nationalist reading of history that has taken place in both Japan and unfortunately in China, and not only these two countries for that matter.

To break it down into three parts; first, there is more focus on the nation as an actor of history, vis-à-vis social groups, individuals, communities, classes, any kind of abstract entity that you can think of. A clear example would be the discussion about war responsibility. One of the reasons is why the Chinese government argues that it's not the Japanese people who are responsible for the war but the Japanese rulers. This reading is based on the Marxist reading of history in many ways. It was a ruling class of the state that reflects the interest of the ruling class that should be held responsible and therefore not the people. There is something very false in this reading. And many Chinese, for obvious reasons, rather resented the very humane treatment of Japanese war criminals in China, when in fact many Chinese were actually in a desperate situation right after the war. We see a rebound here and that there is some more nationalist reading of the war responsibility. The war was after all not a fight between imperialists and anti-fascist forces, but a fight between the Japanese and the Chinese as nationalities. The Japanese are assumed to be responsible, held responsible for the wartime atrocities, which then leads to very easy way for the Japanese to put blame on the Chinese: who are you to blame on us? So we see nationalization of history reading, here.

The second point would be the social aspect of this. In most of the

history debates, those involved in the debates argued that the falsification is done by the government or the state. And if the Japanese people open up to the reality, they would more heartily endorse the wartime crimes. On the Japanese side, there is a similar argument. The argument goes that the Chinese Communist Party is fooling the Chinese. They made this rather debatable comment that if the Chinese people open up to the reality, they could regard Japanese as liberators of the Chinese. Hardly a sustainable viewpoint, but that was they think. However, that is not the case, because it is not the falsification done by the government or the state, but a rise of popular reading of nationalism that caters to their own prejudice. Daqing here points out to a rise of popular nationalism, and on this he is not only limiting his scope to Japan but also to China. And this has led to a new kind of conflict between China and Japan, for there is not much security conflict between China and Japan. We used to have quite a lot and are still have that, but under control. The kind of conflict that has gone way out of hand is this encounter of historical memory. So the conflict over the definition of the past is now getting more important than the present conflict.

So, these are the things, I believe, I do not have much disagreement with Daqing. And a kind of a recap of some of his arguments. Then, it should lead to broader questions, which I have no answers, but now take this opportunity to ask questions, which I have no answer anyway. The first question would be: "What is wrong about revisionism?" To put it plainly, when I was a graduate student, I thought revisionism was supposed to be the thing that students of political science or history should work on: revise or challenge previous widely held assumptions. Now that the trouble about this memory debate is that there seems to be an underlying assumption that there is a real authentic history and any move away from that would be a challenge to the shared authenticity of history. Now when it comes to Holocaust denial or Nanjing denial, I will certainly support that viewpoint. And having said that, this has put us in a very awkward position that instead of challenging orthodoxies, liberal intellectuals are forced into a position to argue against revisionism. In fact, all of us are falling in this revisionist argument against each other. Those who argue that there were no Nanjing atrocities, from my viewpoint, would be a revisionist argument against liberal readings of history that we used to share.

And my reading of course would be revisionism against the authentic history that they want to share.

Within this highly political debate, it becomes so difficult to retain a more traditional and yet professional viewpoint toward historical readings or materials. In fact, it makes you shy away from advancing such arguments. One case in point is many debates about the authenticity of photograph about the Nanking Massacre or atrocities there. What took place afterwards was, to follow Tessa Morris-Suzuki's beautiful statement, "People started to shy away from any discussion". They aren't sure which photograph is real, so they shy away from discussion of any photograph. I don't think that many Japanese are arguing that there was no Nanjing Massacre at this point. The tragedy is, because this come to a divisive issue, the majority is now shying away from any discussion about that. In fact there is no real authentic history. It is simply a drift away from any discussion of history, that is a real result that may have come out from this history debate.

The second thing is a bit more discussant-like comment. When we intellectuals, I should read the word, so-called "*Intellectuals*" or "eggheads", when intellectuals discuss about history, we may force the assumption that the less educated are more nationalist and more chauvinist. If you're in colleges, if you're in our campus in the University of Tokyo, certainly most participants in our meetings will be against the right wing readings and there will be a shared feeling that the less educated would be more chauvinistic. I doubt that, I seriously doubt that. If you take the kind of public reaction toward history textbook debate last year, in year 2001, in fact it was intellectuals and college professors who led this fight toward a right wing reading of the history. If you take the major journal of the right wing, which would be *Seiron*, and *Seiron* sells about 200,000 copies, it's not small, of course. In fact, it was large compared to *Sekai*, whose circulation is actually below 40,000. I shouldn't be saying that, but officially, this is supposed to be 40,000 or less. Now many people take this as a sign that Japanese reading public is leading to the right. But if you take a look at the *Sankei Shimbun*, which by far is the largest selling right wing newspaper in Japan, it sells only 2 million, followed by *Mainichi* 3 million, *Nikkei* 4 million, and *Asahi* 8 million. Yomiuri sells more,

but it is worth remembering that *Yomiuri* can never take on a strong position in history debate because it's such a large-selling newspaper. In fact the public was strongly against the right wing textbook once it comes out and was approved by the government. And there was grassroots movement, which no intellectual ever anticipated. So this reading, that, the masses, the ordinary people, the less educated are far more chauvinistic and nationalistic than us may be actually the reverse. The intellectuals may be the first to become fooled by false consciousness

And the other thing I want to raise here is a question, "Is a liberal universal history is a way out?" Whenever we put some criticism toward nationalist reading or chauvinistic reading of history, we tend to assume or we may assume that there is a liberal universal reading of history. Now I'm not saying that all universalist reading of history is essentially colonialist. But borrowing this argument from Ray (Ileto), even those who oppose colonial rule or American Cold War policy, may still be deep in their heart that there is a more universal code in the writing of history. The trouble is that the liberalist universalist position vis-à-vis this nationalist reading of history may be self-defeating. We, in campus, tend to think of a liberal reading of history is the leading school of thought in Japanese historiography or social science, for that matter. But come to think of it, the group of people that have supported this may have been very limited. Those histories for the professional or the lack of appeal to the reading public gave a room for the rise of narrative history that caters to the needs of readers. It was a story about themselves, the story about the Japanese nation as if it were an individual. If we simply rule out this demand for interpretation of the past in the form of narrative history as simply idiotic and just rely on more professional or universalistic tools of historical analysis, our endeavour may very well end up in a small enclave, such as those that only take place within certain university campuses. And I think that was previously what happened among us, "intellectuals". If you're in our campus in the University of Tokyo, if you're a right wing, you're out. The trouble is that once you move out of the campus, we are only a minority. Thank you.