

外国語要旨

The “Comfort Women” Issue and the Politics of “Atonement”:

Focus on the Asian Women’s Fund

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This study discusses the Japanese government-driven means to settle the “comfort women” issue, through analyzing the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) which was established in 1995 and dissolved in 2007 by the government of Japan to implement the “Atonement Project” to the former “comfort women”.

Since the 1990s, the “comfort women” in Asian countries such as South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan have fought for official apology and individual compensation from the government of Japan for being stripped of dignity resulting from war crimes of the Imperial Japanese Army that forced women to be sexual slaves for soldiers during World War II. However, the government had rejected their demands on the grounds that the issue on war compensation had already been solved by the Treaty of Peace of Japan and other related treaties. The government established the AWF to provide the “Atonement Project” which consisted mainly of paying “Atonement Money” donated by Japanese people to the victims. Most former “comfort women” criticized the AWF as the government avoiding legal responsibility for establishing and implementing the system that forced women to be sexual slaves.

One might find puzzling. The AWF was established even though the former “comfort women” and support organizations criticized it from the planning stage. They believed the AWF could not restore the dignity of the victims. 364 “comfort women”, however, accepted the “Atonement Project” of the AWF. Why did the government create the AWF despite the opposition of the victims? Why did the 364 “comfort women” accept the project? What impact the AWF has on the victims and the movement seeking a settlement of the “comfort women” issue? Those are the questions that this study considers.

To answer these questions, this study adopted not a normative perspective but an empirical one. From this perspective, it attempted to analyze the process from the beginning to the end of the AWF and to consider measures by the Japanese government to be able to restore the dignity of the former “comfort women”.

The results indicated that factors which have prevented realization of individual compensation by the Japanese government were (1) the institutional constraints and (2) the growing influence of right wings in Japan. Japanese citizens have failed to make the Japanese government take measures in the issue, except the AWF.

The process from the beginning to the end of the AWF signified a test of political influence of Japanese citizens on the question of “how” to make “atonement”. However, Japanese movements have lacked conception on “how” to make it. The AWF has been criticized from the normative perspective that “what” to do to make it, and this has become a testing ground for one’s attitude toward the issue. This created the dichotomy of the pros and cons of the AWF in the movements. Japanese movements have been obsessed with this dichotomy since the AWF was established. Under this circumstance, the victims with the “Atonement Project” have become invisible to the movement and academics.

The study concludes that the lack of conception on “how” to make “atonement” caused not only the conflict within the movements, but also to weaken the meaning of restoring the “comfort women”’s dignity. The study suggests that there is a need in Japanese movements to develop the conception to be able to restore their dignity, and to ensure the participation of the victims themselves in the process of discussing, accepting, or refusing of this conception.