

“Sold for 40 Yen”: Nishioka Tsutomu Admits Fabricating Evidence on the “Comfort Women”

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Part of the ongoing civil lawsuit involving former Asahi reporter Uemura Takashi and Nishioka Tsutomu (formerly a professor of history at Tokyo Christian University), included the September 5, 2018 cross examination of Nishioka. Uemura initiated the lawsuit in part to restore his honor, impugned since 2014 when Nishioka published a series of articles in the weekly magazine, Shukan Bunshun, discrediting Uemura’s 1991 reporting about the former comfort woman, Kim Hak-sun, the first South Korean survivor to come forward publicly. These articles led to Uemura’s dismissal from his teaching positions in Japan as well as tremendous personal anxiety because Nishioka’s supporters used these false allegations to target Uemura’s family members with death threats.

On September 5, in Tokyo District Court for the first time Nishioka admitted to having intentionally misquoted Uemura’s initial articles and to adding text not found in the original documents. This acknowledgement challenges not only Nishioka’s claims against Uemura but also extends to the better publicized Sapporo lawsuit between Uemura and the famous right-wing former television star-cum Prime Minister Abe political advisor, Sakurai Yoshiko. The lawsuit against Sakurai Yoshiko has been filed at Sapporo district court because she attacked not only Uemura but also Hokusei Gakuen University which had hired Uemura as a part-time lecturer. The Sapporo ruling is set for November 9th, and as Uemura’s legal efforts enter their final stage (the Tokyo lawsuit’s closing arguments will be November 28th), Nishioka’s distortions and malfeasance are finally coming to light.

 Image on the right: Mr. Uemura talking with supporters at court following his September 5th testimony. Photo by Takanami Atsushi

In 1991, Uemura published an article about Kim Hak-sun, the first Korean survivor of the comfort women system to come forward publicly and tell her story. In Nishioka’s 2014 response to those articles, he asserted that: 1) Uemura added the following statement that he (Nishioka) maintained Kim did not say, “I was taken to the battlefield as a member of the ‘girls’ volunteer corps’ (*kyoshi teishintai*);” and also 2) that Uemura omitted clarification that Kim stated that she “was sold by (her) parents to a brothel owner for 40 yen.” According to Nishioka, Kim allegedly said, “My parents sold me and I was forced to become a comfort woman,” claiming that this statement appeared in both a 1991 article in the South Korean left-leaning newspaper, *Hankyoreh*, and in Kim’s December 1991 complaint against the Japanese government.

In Nishioka's 2014 *Shukan Bunshun* publications, he wrote that even though Uemura knew that Kim had acknowledged that her parents had sold her, "Uemura failed to mention this fact and wrote as if she had been 'taken by force by the Japanese Army.' It is not an exaggeration to say that (Uemura's) articles were fabricated." Nishioka's article appeared with the headline: "Comfort Woman Fabricator: *Asahi Shimbun* Reporter," triggering an avalanche of nearly 250 emails to the university that had recently employed him (as well as countless phone calls). Uemura, who had been scheduled to begin teaching following his retirement from journalism later that year, was forced to forfeit his new position due to countless accusations, blackmail, and threats against the university.

Additionally, Nishioka claimed that Uemura published his articles to influence a lawsuit against the Japanese government brought by his mother-in-law, a leading member of a Korean feminist organization. These subsequent assertions resulted in an even greater backlash against Uemura and his family with Nishioka's supporters "doxxing" Uemura ("doxxing" is the term for publication without permission on the Internet of private information including photos, addresses, and phone numbers). As a result of heinous harassment, police security was deemed necessary for Uemura's daughter to attend high school.

In the midst of this, on October 23, 2014 *Shukan Bunshun* published a conversation essay between Nishioka and Sakurai Yoshiko (the famous television personality) in which they redoubled the fuel in the "trash Uemura" fire by stating that the Uemura family should "stop playing the victim." As a result, Uemura was unable to find employment at any Japanese university and currently teaches as a visiting professor in Korea.

Under the current courtroom examination, it has become clear that Nishioka's claims regarding Kim and the article in the *Hankyoreh* newspaper are not supported by any evidence. In fact, and to the contrary, television news footage from Kim's famous 1991 press conference confirmed that at the outset she had clearly stated, "I was a '*teishintai*'... and I was forcibly taken by the (Japanese) Army." Furthermore, the statement "Sold by my parents for 40 yen to a brothel" never once appeared in the written complaint (although this statement in particular has become a rallying cry for the denialists). In light of this, Nishioka acknowledged before the court that, "My memory was wrong." Also, he said, "I summarized with my own words," and, "I will consider making a correction after this trial if necessary."

Finally, in a moment of high drama, Nishioka admitted he had made a mistake with his citations, yet when Uemura's attorney asked why, Nishioka repeatedly murmured, "I did not check the original text," and "I did not notice," and avoided further clarification. At this juncture, audible gasps filled the courtroom: Nishioka admitted for the first time that he had inserted a sentence into the text of the *Hankyoreh* news article that he famously translated into Japanese in an attempt to prove that Kim Hak-sun was lying and that Uemura had fabricated his story. Nishioka's translation of the Korean text has been used repeatedly as key evidence to defame Uemura. Its citation in Nishioka's book, *An Introduction to the Comfort Women Issue*, as well as its re-quotation in numerous other publications, including the monthly right-wing magazine, *Seiron*, only amplified criticism of Uemura.

In short, on September 5, 2018, the public learned it was the history-denying historian, Nishioka, who fabricated evidence — not the journalist, Uemura.

The original *Hankyoreh* article reported Kim Hak-sun stating that, "My father-in-law who had taken me (to China) also seemed to lose me to the Japanese military by force without ever

receiving payment at the time.” Nishioka never once quoted this section of the article. Put simply, Nishioka inserted a sentence of his own while translating the Korean article into Japanese, and he knowingly omitted Kim’s testimony that she was taken by force.

The court also rejected Nishioka’s allegation that Uemura’s mother-in-law coerced him to write the article, with Uemura’s lawyer demonstrating that the *Asahi* Seoul-based bureau chief had given Uemura information regarding Kim Hak-sun’s story during a phone call and encouraged him to cover it. Nishioka’s lies were exposed during his examination and have crystallized the truth at the heart of this case.

The question is clear: “Who is the fabricator in this story?”

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This article was translated and adapted from [here](#).

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Featured image: Mr. Nishioka leaving court following his September 5th testimony. Photo by Takanami Atsushi

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