

**ROBERT O'MOCHAIN AND YUKI UENO. *SEXUAL ABUSE AND EDUCATION IN JAPAN: IN THE (INTER) NATIONAL SHADOWS*. ABINGDON: ROUTLEDGE 2022. 222 P. ISBN: 9781032310237**

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In an investigation into the Japanese debate around 'comfort women', Robert O'Mochain and Yuki Ueno craft the perfect primer for contemporary discussions around multiple issues of sexual violence, feminist movements, and sexuality education. *Sexual abuse and education in Japan: in the (inter) national shadows* is a volume published in September 2022 which covers a broad swath of Japan's historical and current anxieties around gender, sexuality, and the power dynamics which emerge from gendered social structures. Both authors bring to the table a wealth of experience in disciplines of international relations, language, literature, and gender studies.

This interdisciplinary background produces a book which is approachable for non-Japan specialists and audiences interested in any of the issues discussed within. O'Mochain has been researching and publishing on the topics of masculinity, sexual harassment, and sexual violence in Japan for over a decade. He has often focused on educational contexts which is reflected in multiple sections of this volume. Ueno has written primarily on language and gender, including about the sexualisation of Japanese schoolgirls' uniforms.

O'Mochain and Ueno set out the thematic framework of their key term: 'international status anxiety', a preoccupation with 'defending and enhancing a state's global image', to dissect Japanese political factions' denial of responsibility and reluctance to provide repatriations for sexual crimes during wartime (8). Examples and arguments always connect back to historical precedents of sexual violence, male-dominated political action, and Japanese society's continued silencing and demeaning of women. Three sections define this volume: (1) an overview of sexual abuse and education in Japan, (2) a psychosocial analysis of sexual abuse seeking to explain its prevalence, and (3) a 'reflection and solution' section aptly titled 'Beyond the #MeToo model'.

First, O'Mochain and Ueno provide background on the development of different masculinities in Japan, introducing hard faction masculinity (*kōha*) and soft faction masculinity (*nanpa*). These terms become vital to later examples of how Meiji era (1868-1912) masculinity fed into modern political conservatism. The authors also make sure to introduce the conversation around *shōshika*, or declining birthrate, which is an ongoing demographic concern in aging Japan. The section also outlines sexual harassment, #MeToo related campaigns, and the lack of legal protection for women and LGBTQ individuals in Japan.

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In the second chapter of part one, sexual abuse is explained in an educational context, and it is the first – and only – time transcribed interviews are used. It includes an interview with a student named ‘Rina’ who details her experiences of sexual assault by a university English-language instructor she trusted. Although these accounts powerfully demonstrate the pervasive issue of sexual abuse in Japanese schools, it is odd because both ‘Rina’ and ‘Song’ (a male student and victim of sexual assault) are not mentioned again until the very end of the book. Their accounts support the authors’ stance that victims are aware of the social pressures which prevent them from ‘voicing up’ and finding support after such incidents. However, they are a jarring addition to a volume which otherwise relies on secondhand data from news sources and previously published research.

For their conclusion, O’Mochain and Ueno bring together the case studies from the rest of the book. They use these to consider how policy changes, social movements, and campaigns like #MeToo may transform Japanese society in the future. They set forth the positioning of Japan as a ‘Capitalist Development State’ which glorifies aggression and crafts a society where women are especially vulnerable to exploitation. In this final chapter, the authors seek to answer the question ‘why and how do men in Japan sexualize power?’ (164). It comes down to a large-scale lack of protection, education, and support for vulnerable populations, including children, youth, and women who are victims of sexual violence.

The resistance against change in existing legislation comes primarily from political conservatives, including far-right nationalist groups. There is denial of a need to apologise not just for the crimes against ‘comfort women’ but against Japanese and foreign women today, taking such stances as ‘sexually promiscuous women are the ones who should be saying sorry’ (166). The lack of accountability and progressive legal change in Japan when it comes to sexual crimes is difficult to fight when NPOs struggle to become established and school textbooks modify or erase historical accounts of sexual violence. One of the primary concerns for NPOs and committees in Japan is to improve environments and reduce sexual and gender harassment in school and workplaces.

The authors end on the note that feminist groups in Japan may need to turn away from the individual focus #MeToo campaigns have in the West, especially because it does little to pierce ‘ultra-nationalist, political elite groupings in Japanese society’ (195). They suggest collaboration between Japan and South Korea to deal with the ‘comfort women’ issue and address their respective societies’ sexual abuse issues. The calls for action are ones which are familiar, asking for raised voices and victims coming out of the shadows. But, as Ueno mentioned, this would require change as early as childhood, raising sons and daughters to have different conceptions of femininity and masculinity. And, of course, the burden cannot fall solely on parents or victims of sexual abuse. Eventually, it must work its way up into educational systems and political circles. The message here is clear: gradual change is occurring, but we have a long way to go.

Notably, the emphasis of this book is not on ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, or even people of mixed nationalities living in Japan. Instead, O’Mochain and Ueno focus more generally on how traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity impact Japanese fields of politics, education, and other public spaces. From their discussion on the relations Japan has with neighbouring nations like China and South Korea, should emerge more in-depth examinations of the impact this has on the perceived ‘Other’—non-ethnically Japanese or indigenous Japanese groups like the Ainu, within Japanese society.

This book connects cultural attitudes and social norms established in both Meiji era and post-World War II era Japan to inequalities faced by Japanese society today. *Sexual abuse and education in Japan: in the (inter) national shadows* is not a work derived from ethnographic material and, although qualitative interview and survey data is used – particularly around experiences of sexual harassment – it lacks thick description and additional context on the individuals mentioned. Researchers already specialising on sexual abuse in Japan will find the contents a useful review rather than containing any revelations.

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