

Frontiers of Memory in the Asia-Pacific

Difficult Heritage and the Transnational Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism

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Introduction

Frontiers of Memory in the Asia-Pacific: Difficult Heritage and the Transnational Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism

Shu-Mei Huang, Edward Vickers, and Hyun Kyung Lee

Conflict over Asia's Conflict-Related Heritage: Three Vignettes

In late July 2020, one of the present editors, Shu-Mei Huang, was invited by a Taiwan-based television producer to participate in a programme commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary that August of the end of World War II.¹ In a preparatory meeting, she was asked, 'Can you show us some artefacts that demonstrate the brutality of nuclear bombing? For example, photos showing how the victims were hurt or how objects were deformed?' Wondering why the producer seemed particularly fixated on the atomic bombing of Japan, Huang responded that she did not possess this kind of material. But as the conversation progressed, it became clear that the producer was intent on making Japanese victimhood a principal focus of the programme. Eventually, Huang refused the invitation.

In March 2021, Edward Vickers (in collaboration with Mark Frost) edited a special issue of *Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* on 'The "Comfort Women" as Public History' (Frost and Vickers 2021a). With the issue already in press, a storm of controversy arose over an article in the *International Review of Law and Economics* by the Harvard University professor J. Mark Ramseyer casuistically portraying the 'comfort women' system as the extension of an essentially consensual commercial sex industry (Ramseyer 2021).² The journal editors hurriedly commissioned a

1. Precisely what Taiwanese were commemorating on this anniversary was itself a matter of some debate. Many younger, typically independence-leaning historians have preferred to talk simply of the 'end of the war', borrowing the term commonly used in Japan (*zhongzhan* 終戰; Jp. *shūsen*), in preference to *kangzhan* 抗戰, short for the 'War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression', favoured by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Kuomintang (KMT). Talking simply of the 'end of the war' elides the question of victory or defeat or judgement concerning responsibility for the conflict. Its use in Taiwan is a mark of sympathy for and, to some extent, identification with Japan among pro-independence elements repelled by the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism now loudly broadcast by the regime in Beijing.

2. The article was first published online on December 1, 2020. Following protests from numerous scholars pointing out the many problems with Ramseyer's use (or abuse) of evidence, the journal withdrew the paper. See Frost and Vickers (2021a).

supplement in which prominent scholars lined up to condemn Ramseyer's article. Frost and Vickers had sought to use the special issue to draw attention to tensions between 'heritagization' and regard for nuance and complexity in interpreting past atrocities. The Ramseyer affair underlined both the pressing need for scholarly nuance and the difficulty of maintaining such a stance amidst the welter of controversy surrounding the 'comfort women' issue.

Finally, in mid-2021, Huang, Vickers, and Hyun Kyung Lee all participated in a webinar discussing the treatment of the Holocaust as heritage in East Asia, involving heritage practitioners from the region as well as curators and scholars from Israel and North America. The Israeli scholar co-convening the webinar circulated several discussion questions beforehand, including one asking the practitioners how their institutions dealt with China's 'human rights record' or that of Israel in relation to Palestinians. He noted that both issues 'have been entangled with Holocaust remembrance and are politically sensitive.' In response, several participating heritage practitioners signalled their reluctance to debate this question publicly.

The Transnational Politics of Difficult Heritage in Contemporary Asia

These vignettes touch upon various aspects of the transnational politics of heritage across the Asia-Pacific today and their links to wider global debates. One concerns the spectre of Eurocentrism or Western 'hegemony' which haunts much contemporary debate over public history. The Ramseyer imbroglio, for example, saw the pronouncements of a single Harvard professor receive enormous publicity both in America (where the *New Yorker* ran a lengthy article denouncing him) and in East Asia (where Japan's rightist press and Korean media lined up on either side). The very act of convening a symposium on the Holocaust and its heritage in East Asia also testifies to the influence of Western discourse on atrocity commemoration and interest in framing Asian victimhood within this Western template.

Calls for the 'decolonization' of historical narratives and of heritage, boosted since 2020 by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, may thus seem relevant to the Asian context. But while Eurocentrism continues to distort understanding of the past in Asia as in the West, we should beware of reducing transnational heritage politics to a contest between Western 'hegemony' and a 'counter-hegemonic', non-Western response. The BLM movement and the peculiarly American racial politics out of which it sprang are, after all, Western phenomena, so transferring their preoccupations to Asia if anything exacerbates Euro- or West-centrism. When we see a Taiwanese broadcaster framing World War II as a story of Japanese victimhood, or Asian heritage practitioners declining to debate Chinese policy, we are witnessing the influence of political forces emanating not from the West but from Asia. Here,

the reach of China's communist regime is particularly evident as our own experience in compiling this volume further illustrates.³

Talk of colonialism also raises problems of definition that are especially contentious in Asia. Campaigns for 'decolonization' of heritage tend to portray colonialism itself as intrinsically Western and to locate it in the past, even while emphasizing its continuing contamination of our present-day consciousness. However, in Asia colonialism has been both Western-imposed and homegrown, and is definitely not confined to the past. Strategies for maintaining or expanding territorial control and neo-colonial dominance (arguably encompassing both China's Belt and Road Initiative and America's longstanding network of alliances and bases across the region) crucially shape our present-day geopolitical—and 'geocultural'—landscape (Winter 2019).

The complexity of memories of conflict across the Asia-Pacific, and their intertwining with colonialism past and present, informs the analysis in this volume of 'difficult heritage'. Adopting a transnational approach (in contrast to the methodological nationalism that still characterizes much scholarship on heritage), we seek to deepen understanding of how movements to commemorate colonialism or conflicts relate not only to national politics but are increasingly entangled with regional and global political forces and discourses. Taken together, the various chapters analyse how the repackaging of the 'difficult past' as heritage can serve either to transcend or reinforce the frontiers that demarcate our collective identities and impinge upon international relations. Conceiving difficult heritage sites as 'frontiers of memory', we illuminate how heritage has played an instrumental role in expanding or contracting the temporal boundaries of the remembered past. Memory left unattended or uninhabited may be lost beyond a retreating frontier, while memory assiduously inhabited and cultivated can come to form a new centre for communal consciousness or even galvanize into aggressive actions within or between states.

A particular focus is the relationship between transnational discourses of peace or humanity and the role typically assigned to difficult heritage in fostering national consciousness. Rather than promoting cross-border dialogue and critical reflection, in the East Asian context, transnational elements tend to be deployed—whether in the heritage sector or through schooling or other media—to transmit nationalist messages. With respect to World War II, Mitter (2020, 50) notes that East Asia lacks the kind of 'unified liberal discourse' on war associated with Western Europe and North America, and which finds strong echoes in Australia and New Zealand. Despite significant Sino-American rapprochement in the 1970s–1980s, Cold War tensions have persisted across East Asia, notably in the form of the frozen conflicts between Taiwan and mainland China and the two Koreas (with such tensions

3. A Chinese scholar, who was due to contribute a chapter to this volume on Japanese colonial heritage in Northeast China, felt compelled to withdraw his contribution on seeing a reference in this introduction to Chinese policy in Xinjiang.

contributing also to the stigma still attached to the leftist camp in Japan; see Chapters 6 and 10). Meanwhile, what Mitter terms ‘circuits of memory’ frame modern conflict within a larger narrative of resistance to imperialism or colonialism—Western, Japanese, or both.

While experiences of colonialism and war might in theory serve as a basis for transnationally shared memory, politics in the Asia-Pacific has tended to favour shoring up national frontiers (actual and metaphorical) rather than transcending them. In part, this can be attributed to the legacy of Japan’s efforts to justify its oppressive ‘East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere’ by invoking pan-Asian solidarity, thus helping to discredit notions of a cohesive East Asian identity. But Hitler’s abortive drive to construct a *Festung Europa* (‘Fortress Europe’) did not noticeably hinder postwar moves towards Western European unity—arguably quite the opposite (Mazower 2009). Mitter (2020) observes that postwar Asian attitudes to Japan were more ambivalent than those of Europeans or Americans towards Nazi Germany; revulsion against Imperial Japan did not unite East Asians in the way that revulsion against Nazism came to unite the elites of postwar Western Europe. Sheltered by the US’s protective (or suffocating) embrace, postwar Japan quickly regained its status within Asia as a beacon of prosperous modernity but simultaneously turned inwards, becoming a model for its Asian neighbours of corporatist, developmental statism underpinned by a profoundly chauvinistic, albeit proudly pacifist, form of nationalism.

The tendency for colonial legacies to reinforce rather than erode the imagined barriers between nations is evident in the way that, across the Asia-Pacific, colonial heritage generally serves to fuel national victimhood and grievance rather than provoke self-reflection. Here, Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser degree, Japan, and Taiwan are outliers, witnessing more or less vigorous debate over responsibility for the destruction and suffering inflicted by colonial settlement or expansionist imperialism.⁴ Elsewhere, colonialism and racism are almost uniformly portrayed as crimes inflicted by foreigners (Western or Japanese), occluding the memory—and enduring reality—of colonialism perpetrated by Asians on Asians (Vickers 2015). The orthodox narrative of China’s modern history, organized around a ‘Century of Humiliation’ commencing with the Opium War of 1840, encapsulates this dichotomy of foreign imperialists *versus* native patriots; so too does the glorification by

4. Though we should remember that Australia and New Zealand, too, with their sacrosanct ‘ANZAC’ narratives and rituals concerning World War I and the Gallipoli Campaign more specifically have long fostered national mythologies of wronged innocence based on highly partial historiography. Emphasis on victimhood inflicted by metropolitan British arrogance and stupidity, and on Antipodean heroism in the face of adversity, largely obscured or distracted from more troubling aspects of the past: the complicity of Australian elites in whipping up enthusiasm for war, the contemporary suffering of Indigenous people, or the wider prevalence of racism on the home front. And mainstream accounts of the ANZACs seldom accorded much acknowledgement to the suffering of British soldiers also involved in that campaign, let alone of the Turkish ‘enemy’. See Cochrane (2015).

Japanese conservatives of the Meiji Revolution⁵ which hails Japan's role as a beacon of Asian modernity (and consequent success in fending off the depredations of Western imperialists), ignoring the collateral damage to Asian societies invaded by a modernized Japan (see Chapter 10 in this volume). Epitomizing the hypocritical denial of homegrown Asian coloniality, 2020 treated us to the spectacle of a Chinese government, while presiding over internment of Xinjiang's Uyghurs, tweeting 'I can't breathe' in sympathy with American BLM protesters (Kim 2020).

There have been exceptions to this pattern of narrowly focusing on national victimhood while occluding the transnational dimension. Transnational collaboration in 'comfort women' activism constitutes one notable case in point (Frost and Vickers 2021a). The 2010s witnessed an international campaign to secure a UNESCO 'Memory of the World' inscription for the 'Voices of the "Comfort Women"' archive, involving activists and scholars in Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and elsewhere (Shin 2021). Another instance involves Sino-Korean talk of a joint application for a UNESCO heritage designation for colonial Japanese prisons (Huang and Lee 2019; see also Chapter 9 in this volume). However, such transnationalism in heritage diplomacy has tended to be highly fragile and contingent on nationalist calculation and diplomatic realpolitik; in both these instances, Beijing abruptly withdrew its support after 2016 as it sought to 'punish' South Korea for participating in America's THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile defence programme (Suh 2017). Meanwhile, Japanese pressure forced UNESCO to suspend registration of new 'Memory of the World' inscriptions pending reform of the process for vetting applications. The key Japanese demand, motivated by fierce opposition to the 'comfort women' inscription (and anger at an earlier successful Chinese application to inscribe Nanjing Massacre-related documents), was that state parties be granted a veto over inscriptions to which they objected. In the heritage arena, neither the Japanese nor Chinese governments have shown willingness to dilute their control over narratives of the national past.

Where concerted attempts have been made to connect Asia's war heritage to prominent themes of global commemorative discourse, these have generally derived impetus from profoundly nationalistic considerations. This is particularly evident with respect to World War II (except in Australia and New Zealand where World War I looms larger). In Japan, efforts to associate suffering inflicted by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the Nazi genocide of the Jews date back to the 1960s when publicity surrounding the Adolf Eichmann trial alerted Japanese observers to the totemic status that the Holocaust was gaining in Western consciousness (Zwigenberg 2015). Much later, from the 1990s, China's Communist Party, seeking a legitimating narrative more attuned to its new pursuit of capitalism than Marxist class struggle, alighted on memories of the mid-century conflict with Japan and strove to present atrocities suffered at Japanese hands as 'China's

5. Otherwise known as the Meiji Restoration. See Chapter 10 for a discussion on the distinction.

Forgotten Holocaust'. A burgeoning trend of 'philo-Semitism' in Chinese attitudes to Jews, paradoxically rooted in profoundly anti-Semitic stereotypes (Ainslie 2021), extends to envious admiration for Israel's historical statecraft, manifested in its weaponization of Holocaust victimhood as a legitimating narrative.

The conjunction of atavistic nationalism with consciousness of the Holocaust's global status as the ultimate atrocity has sparked competitive efforts to drape the sanctifying mantle of the Holocaust over national memories of conflict (Frost and Vickers 2021b; Vickers forthcoming). In this volume, Chapter 8 on the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum (SJRJ) shows how Chinese authorities keen to stress China's leading role in the global anti-fascist struggle of the mid-twentieth century have increasingly invoked comparisons with, or connections to, the Holocaust. The SJRM narrative promotes an image of Sino-Jewish friendship, Chinese benevolence, and the shared 'traditional' virtues of the two peoples. Not to be outdone, some activists on behalf of former 'comfort women' also embrace comparisons between the plight of these women and the victims of Nazi genocide (Frost and Vickers 2021b).

This competitive deployment of tropes borrowed from Holocaust commemoration illustrates how invoking universal themes of suffering, sacrifice, and the evils of war or colonialism can serve as thin cover for antagonistic nationalisms. In South Korea the mainstream media tends to dichotomize innocent but brave Korean resisters confronting brutal Japanese aggressors. The result is to highlight the theme of Korean suffering and sacrifice but ignore or deny the kind of nuance and complexity (or collaboration and compromise) that inevitably characterized most interactions between colonizers and the colonized (as some work on colonial Hong Kong has emphasized; see Law 2009). While scholarship may acknowledge such nuance, public history seldom does; the enshrining of memories of war and colonialism as 'heritage' typically involves assertion of unique national victimhood, ignoring others' memories of suffering. For example, we may search in vain in Korean or Chinese museums or textbooks for details of the horrors inflicted on Japanese civilians by atomic bombs or firebombing, just as mainstream public history in Japan features only the most perfunctory references to suffering inflicted by imperial forces on other Asians. A commitment to 'peace' is universally invoked but generally to advance nationalism under the banner of pacifism.

This collection stems from a conversation begun in Hangzhou during the 2018 Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) biennial conference and continued in Bangkok and Kyushu in 2019, and during the 2020 ACHS conference (conducted online, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic). It reflects our shared interest in exploring memory and the politics of heritage across the Asia-Pacific transnationally and comparatively, countering the narrow methodological nationalism that continues to characterize much scholarship in this field. In his recent study of how memory of World War II is shaping a 'new nationalism' in China, Mitter (2020, 17) observes that 'the analysis of trans-Asian memory of the Second World War is still a work in

progress, with China especially underexamined'. Progress in this area may be somewhat more advanced than Mitter acknowledges with volumes by Morris, Shimazu, and Vickers (2013); Morris-Suzuki et al. (2013); and Frost, Schumacher, and Vickers (2019) examining the transnational politics of 'imagining Japan' and commemorating conflict in contemporary East Asia. Nonetheless, those earlier collections adopt a somewhat narrower focus than the present volume, which brings together themes of colonialism, anti-colonial resistance, postcolonial nationalism, and related conflict under the rubric of 'difficult heritage'. As Mitter correctly notes, to understand the particular ways in which war is remembered across contemporary East Asia, it is essential to understand also the role of colonial legacies in shaping the imagination of national identity across the region, and that is central to our purpose here.

Our work is informed by recent scholarship that injects into current debates over heritage and memory a dose of healthy scepticism regarding the role played by commemoration of conflict or atrocity in 'healing' or reconciliation (David 2020). Memory is not history, and maintaining and explaining this distinction is crucial to limiting the potential for crude or simplistic visions of the past to stoke antagonistic tribalism (Lowenthal 1998; Margalit 2002). As David Rieff (2016, 54) has eloquently argued, the concept of 'collective memory' is also something of an oxymoron; as a metaphor for shared identities based on shared narratives of the past, it is powerful—but also potentially dangerous. And while memory can be anchored and partially fixed by heritage, heritage is not a 'thing': instead, it refers to 'a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past' (Harrison 2013, 14). Recent attempts to emphasize the 'future orientations' of heritage 'as a series of activities that are intimately concerned with assembling, building and designing future worlds' (Harrison 2020, 4) may be well meaning; however, commemoration, remembrance, or the conversion of memory into 'heritage' do not constitute some sort of intrinsic good. When handled badly, with disregard for historiographical nuance and complexity, the commemoration of the 'difficult past' can institutionalize division and entrench hatred, rather than facilitate reconciliation (Frost and Vickers 2021b).

By the same token, attempts to destroy or bury relics of a shameful or troubled past are often symptomatic of nationalist efforts to whitewash the past, distorting our present identities and relationships with foreign 'others'. Discussing the removal of the old prison gate in Tokyo's Nakano district, Tomoko Ako, in Chapter 6 of this volume, references the case of Chiayi Prison in Taiwan to underline the importance of penal heritage relating to former political prisoners for drawing public attention to attempts to stifle social dissent in the present. Invoking foreign examples in this way is nothing new in the heritage field: activists in Taiwan earlier cited the cases of the Abashiri or Seodaemun prisons (in Japan and Korea respectively) to justify their efforts to preserve former sites of the incarceration of political prisoners. Special effort is often required to persuade a sceptical public of the need for preservation of prisons, and overseas precedents can be useful for such purposes.

But while transnational precedents have thus sometimes been invoked in support of calls for critical reflection on sensitive aspects of the national past, far more pervasive across the Asia-Pacific is the borrowing of heritage tropes to reinforce the nationalist politics of competitive victimhood (Frost, Schumacher, and Vickers 2019). The politics of determining what to commemorate and what to obscure or forget means that repackaging the difficult past as ‘heritage’ typically involves shoring up the imagined frontiers that divide communities. The transnational politics of difficult heritage thus carry often-disturbing implications for present relations among the region’s different nations and communities.

In exploring these themes, the current volume presents recent scholarship examining both the making and consumption of difficult heritage across the Asia-Pacific. We do not aspire to be ‘global’ in our scope: our focus is trained on East Asia and Australasia, and on the heritage of colonialism and conflict that these societies broadly share. While geographically quite disparate, these societies possess significant elements of a shared recent past, especially in relation to colonialism (mainly British and Japanese) and war. While the coverage here of Australasia and Southeast Asia is relatively thin, the inclusion of the Palau and Australia–New Zealand–Japan cases is warranted by their connection to the Asia-Pacific theatre of World War II, commemoration of which is a major theme of this volume. That war is also intimately related to the legacy of colonialism, and imperialism is our other major cross-cutting theme. Analysing discourses of commemoration, as well as their architectural embodiment in museums, memorials, and other sites, necessarily involves an interdisciplinary approach, and this volume therefore features contributions from scholars specializing in critical heritage studies, area studies, anthropology, the built environment, history, cultural geography, and cultural studies. The frontiers we seek to transcend are thus disciplinary as well as national; neither type of boundary is easily surmountable, but it is important to make the attempt.

Difficulties with ‘Difficult Heritage’

‘Difficult heritage’ has been associated with ‘places of pain and shame’ (Logan and Reeves 2009), summoning up memories of violence, occupation, oppression, and other forms of trauma.⁶ In their landmark 2009 volume, Logan, Reeves, and their contributors discussed the challenges of managing ‘difficult heritage’ sites, examining cases drawn from a variety of cultural contexts concerning painful and/or shameful historical episodes. Some of these cases, mostly involving civil unrest

6. Since the 1990s, a vast array of terms has been coined to describe ‘undesirable heritage’ (Macdonald 2006), distinguishing it from mainstream ideas of heritage as positive, glorious accomplishments of human civilization. These include ‘dissonant heritage’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Graham 2002), ‘difficult heritage’ (Logan and Reeves 2008; Macdonald 2009), ‘heritage that hurts’ (Uzzell and Ballantyne 1998), ‘negative heritage’ (Meskell 2002), ‘contested heritage’ (Tunbridge, Jones, and Shaw 1996; Shaw and Jones 1997; Winter 2007), and ‘dark tourism’/‘dark heritage’ (Lennon and Foley 2000). For further discussion of this terminology, see Lee (2019, chap. 1).

and war, defied efforts to manage or ‘package’ them as heritage, especially where the cause of trauma remained real and present. Writing at around the same time, Sharon Macdonald (2009) also deployed the concept of ‘difficult heritage’ in her work on Germany, focusing specifically on the Nazi ceremonial sites at Nuremberg. Macdonald examines how heritage ‘difficulties’ can evolve during the post-conflict period; how they are implicated in the formation, or reformation, of community identity and collective memory; and administrative and political challenges this can pose. In this volume, we seek to advance understanding of how sites of pain and shame have been appropriated and refashioned as ‘heritage’ in the contemporary Asia-Pacific in a context of intensifying cross-border contestation and competition. War sites, prisoner-of-war camps, prisons, and colonial architecture, as Logan and Reeves observed in the early 2000s, have in many societies increasingly become the object of efforts simultaneously to expand tourism and to mobilize memorial sites for purposes of national (re)branding.

But as Logan and Reeves also observed, what constitutes heritage, and what makes it ‘difficult’, are often highly contentious matters, interpreted very differently by different groups. With respect to Indigenous heritage,⁷ for example, in parts of the early twenty-first-century Asia-Pacific—notably in Australia, New Zealand, and (to some extent) Taiwan—sites associated with Indigenous culture have become the focus of efforts to remind the public of the suffering and injustice inflicted by settler colonialism (Huang, 2021). Elsewhere, for example in China regarding its ‘ethnic minorities’ but also in the case of Japan’s Ainu (see Chapter 2 of this volume), Indigenous communities continue to find their heritage exoticized and commodified, with ‘difficulties’ involving relations with the majority ethnic community almost entirely buried, denied, or elided.

If ‘difficult heritage’ is often hard to pin down, this is perhaps because, properly considered, all heritage is in some way, or to some degree, ‘difficult’. When it serves merely to romanticize, exoticize, or crudely moralize—for purposes of commodification, profit, or propaganda—heritage simplifies and distorts the complexities of the past, with consequences that can be deeply divisive and politically dangerous. Japan’s nationalists have sought to promote the legacy of the Meiji era largely because they see this as a way of distracting public attention from the ‘difficulties’ of the mid-twentieth century and fostering instead an uncomplicated pride in national success. At the time of writing (June 2021), this extends to the prime-time airing on public broadcaster NHK of a weekly ‘Taiga drama’ celebrating the life of the nineteenth-century industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi. But what for some is the unproblematic object of sepia-tinted nostalgia can for others bear associations of intense pain and shame, as witnessed by Korean protests over public portrayals of Japan’s UNESCO-listed ‘Sites of the Meiji Industrial Revolution’ that ignore the wartime

7. In this edited volume, the term ‘Indigenous’ is capitalized as a sign of respect, whether it is used as part of a proper name, in reference to a specific group, or as a generic term. For more see Chapter 2 by Roslynn Ang.

employment at many such sites of Korean (and Chinese) slave labour (see Chapter 10 by Vickers). These disputes find an echo in recent controversy over the role of profits from slave trading in the construction of many of Britain's country houses (Huxtable et al. 2020). Whether it be the quaint streets of a Japanese castle town or a Palladian mansion in rolling English countryside, the setting for a cosy costume drama can conceal a dark or 'difficult' past.

A crucial aspect of the 'difficulty' of difficult heritage involves the act of publicly debating or writing about it. Pressures to censor or self-censor research on past conflict and its commemoration operate constantly and in more or less subtle ways. Such pressures explain why Japanese scholars are mostly inclined to avoid contentious topics related to World War II such as the 'comfort women' (see Vickers 2020). The situation elsewhere in East or Southeast Asia is often even more severe and can extend to intimidation of scholars in the diaspora (Hamilton and Ohlberg 2020, chap. 11; Soh 2008). Such pressures have intensified significantly since around 2010. In Japan, following Abe Shinzo's return to the premiership in 2012, the country's diplomats have effectively been tasked with policing worldwide efforts to commemorate or debate 'comfort women' (Schumacher 2021; Dezaki, Frost, and Vickers 2021). Despite—or because of—their acute political divisions, the opposing sides in Northeast Asia's history wars broadly share a highly politicized and profoundly instrumentalist approach to heritage. This is evident, for example, in attempts to globalize difficult heritage by linking it to universalistic notions of human rights or peace, thus weaponizing memory in the service of essentially nationalistic goals (evidenced in chapters here by Huang, Vickers, and others). The 1996 UNESCO World Heritage listing of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (the Genbaku Dome) set a regional precedent for the reworking of difficult memories and places into vehicles for ostensibly universal, humanistic messages—a precedent that People's Republic of China (PRC) officials have been eager to follow, for example, through pursuit of a 'Memory of the World' inscription for a Nanjing Massacre-related archive.⁸ For many involved in promoting such listings, the loud espousal of a commitment to 'peace' serves as a cover for, or means of legitimating, a heightened sense of national moral superiority.

The connection between morality and the politics of apology for past wrongs has attracted growing scholarly attention in recent years (Cooper 2001; Cunningham 1999; Daase 2010). Some have attributed the difficulty of achieving reconciliation in East Asia to a uniquely 'Asian' connection between morality and memory, contrasting Asian cultures of 'honour and shame' with Western cultures of 'dignity and guilt' (Kim and Schwarz 2010). Like Morris-Suzuki (2013), however, we find this dichotomy unconvincing; it obscures the diversity of approaches to memory within all societies as well as the ways in which dominant understandings of the past change over time. East Asia's intractable apology diplomacy has not been

8. On Hiroshima, see Zwigenberg (2015).

Taipei's National Martyrs' Shrine

The Past and Present Lives of a Difficult Monument

Lu Pan

This chapter focuses on the spatial history of the National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine in Taipei (hereinafter referred to as the National Martyrs' Shrine unless otherwise noted) and its surroundings, Taipei's Yuanshan Area.¹ Through an examination of the spatial transformation of Yuanshan Area and its visual representations, I argue that the changing nature, memory, and symbolism of Yuanshan Area was shaped by various regimes with their own urban modernization agendas and ideals constituted of Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese identities.² The National Martyrs' Shrine, located in Dazhi, Yuanshan Area, Taipei, manifests the legitimacy and dignity of the 'Republic of China' on Taiwan—even if its sovereign status is not recognized in the international community.

The martyrs' shrine (*zhonglieci* 忠烈祠) is a kind of Chinese war memorial that came into being in different places following the birth of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1911. Throughout Chinese history, *ci*, or ancestral temples, have been used as spaces where a community or the living generations of a family pay tribute to their deceased ancestors. In this sense, a *ci* is a ritual space that maintains the societal, communal, and familial hierarchical order. Unlike a *ci*, a *zhonglieci* is neither a space where private families or close communities perform rituals nor an object of worship for royal families during feudal times. Rather, it is a site of national remembrance. An early form of *zhonglieci* in China can be found on the original site of Linggu Temple, a Buddhist temple built during the Liang dynasty (502–557 CE) on the outskirts of Nanjing, where, in 1928, the 'ROC' government built the National Revolutionary Army War Memorial Cemetery. Although the legal document 'Rules for Establishing Martyrs' Shrines in Respective Provinces'—which was compiled

1. A more extensive version of this chapter can be found in the author's 2020 monograph (Pan 2020).

2. Edward Vickers' chapter in this volume briefly discusses the Gokoku Jinju (Gokoku Shrine) in Fukuoka and how its function also changed after World War II. It is worth noting that the status of Shintoism and the function of these shrines also changed in Japan itself, as militarism was supplanted by pacifism as the national ideology.

under the ‘Complete Regulations on Special Favourable Treatment and Pensions for Past Fallen, Disabled, and Injured Revolutionary Soldiers’, published by the Ministry of the Interior of the ROC—was implemented in response to an urgent need to extend condolences to the soldiers and their families and boost morale in the battle against the Japanese in North China in 1931,³ the term *zhonglieci* was not officially used until May 1936 (Tsai 2010, 6).

Following the victory of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the Chinese Civil War, the fate of these commemorative shrines built on the Mainland took a drastic turn. Most of the martyrs’ shrines were demolished and the inscriptions on their monuments defaced, as they were perceived to be ‘undesirable’ legacies of the previous regime. After the Cultural Revolution, only the Nanyue Martyrs’ Shrine, built in 1943 in Hengyang, Hunan province, and the Graveyard of the National Heroes, built in 1945 in Tengchong, Yunnan, remained standing. While most such monuments on the Mainland have been physically eradicated and are no longer considered part of the national memory, the construction of commemorative shrines on the soil of Taiwan—an island originally ‘unfamiliar’ with martyrs’ shrines—especially after the full retreat of the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1949, aimed to continue the interrupted national memory-building project that had begun on the Mainland. However, the Kuomintang government first had to deal with numerous war monuments left by the Japanese colonizers—Shinto shrines that commemorated Japanese soldiers (Tsai 2010).⁴ These Japanese shrines were either demolished or repurposed as Chinese martyrs’ shrines. The National Martyrs’ Shrine in Taipei, incorporating both newly constructed and repurposed elements, thus embodies a modern national mechanism of reward and mobilization in which ‘imagined fellow countrymen’ who were killed on the Mainland are honoured, worshipped, and, most importantly, taken as role models to guide the future behaviour of the living.

Among many other martyrs’ shrines in Taiwan, the National Martyrs’ Shrine can be seen as the most important example of an existing martyrs’ shrine in Taiwan for two reasons. First, the National Martyrs’ Shrine is considered the highest-level commemorative monument in the postwar ‘national’ narrative of the ‘ROC’ in Taiwan. Therefore, it reveals some of the fundamental agendas, ideals, and ways of representing the formation of war memory in postwar Taiwan. Second, its transformation from a Japanese Shinto shrine to the National Martyrs’ Shrine, as well as the overall transformation of Yuanshan Area, reflects an intriguing aspect of the spatial ‘reappropriation’ and ‘reproduction’ of war heritage in contemporary Taiwan in its complicated relationship with mainland China, Japan, and its own past.

3. The conflict was precipitated by what is widely known as the ‘9.18 Incident’ or the ‘Mukden Incident’.

4. According to Tsai (2010), it may not be a coincidence that Japan also began to build similar military shrines just before Chiang Kai-shek ordered the construction of these monuments in China. Tsai believes that there is a parallel, if not a direct relation, between the Japanese and Chinese shrines in the sense that the latter were inspired by the former to a certain extent.

Martyrs' shrines all around Taiwan have received increasing academic attention in recent years, particularly as regards the relationship between these structures and their predecessor Shinto shrines built during the Japanese colonial period. Recent studies on ritual spaces from the Japanese colonial period to the KMT years under martial law have shed light on a critical turn in the present discourse about martyrs' shrines (Chen 2004; Dong 2006, 2009; Sung and Chen 2013; Li 2016). In other words, martyrs' shrines are seen as a thing of the past, not of the present. After the democratization of Taiwan, such shrines can be examined in the postcolonial and post-martial law contexts of Taiwan. In his comparative research on commemorative shrines in China and Taiwan and their counterparts in Japan (Gokoku and Yasukuni shrines), Chin-tang Tsai (2001, 2010, 2015) finds a parallel, if not an interconnection, between these two forms of 'sacred sanctum' for war-memorializing sacrifices. He goes on to examine whether such an interrelation remained after the war. Meanwhile, in his historical research on the establishment of a national commemorative system for the martyrs of the Anti-Japanese War, Shih-ying Chang (2010, 4) points out that the KMT government's efforts to conduct a census of the fallen soldiers 'concern[ed] the legitimacy of the regime'. However, as his analysis shows, the hasty and disparate procedures of martyr commemoration 'challenged the legitimacy of the national government and devalued the efforts made' in promoting martyrs' shrines (Chang 2010, 4–5). This 'failure', along with the CCP defeat of the KMT in the Chinese Civil War and subsequent destruction of the commemorative shrines on the Mainland, erased memories of the Anti-Japanese War across the Taiwan Strait and transformed the shrines into 'an empty symbol, which gradually lost their original meaning' (Chang 2010, 4).

Unlike previous research that mostly focuses on the institutional structure of the National Martyrs' Shrine, my study focuses on three major aspects going beyond this shrine per se. These aspects all address the interrelation between the memory of Yuanshan Area and that of the National Martyrs' Shrine itself. To trace the spatial history of the National Martyrs' Shrine, I will first scrutinize the space-producing process in Yuanshan Area during the Japanese colonial period. Yuanshan Area is not only the site of the National Martyrs' Shrine (and its predecessor the Gokoku Jinja, or Gokoku Shrine) but also the Taiwan Jinja (Taiwan Shrine, later upgraded to the Taiwan Jingu), which is considered the highest-level Shinto shrine in Taiwan. The spatial meaning of the National Martyrs' Shrine in its postwar and contemporary forms is deeply related to how it was transfigured from its earlier spatial context in wartime mainland China. After the destruction of the Taiwan Jingu near the end of war and the takeover of Taiwan by the KMT, the visual image of Yuanshan Area was dominated by the Grand Hotel Taipei (Yuanshan Dafandian in Chinese, also known as Yuanshan Hotel), built in 1952 under the direct order of Soong Mei-ling, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek. This hotel was long considered to be a mysterious 'castle' that only hosted and entertained the 'ROC's' friends, allies, and important guests invited by Chiang and his high-ranking officials during the Cold War period.

The National Martyrs' Shrine was nested in the space of the Gokoku Jinja until its full reconstruction in 1969.

Apart from discussing the transformation of the spatial functions of the area surrounding the National Martyrs' Shrine, I will analyse the aesthetic and spatial styles of this monument in relation to war mobilization, commemoration, and nation building via architectural form. Its architectural form is particularly revealing and is therefore considered important for a colony and a newly established regime where the built environment and its symbolism, spatial layout, and forms of representation serve 'as an effective propaganda vehicle for the demonstration of power and the formation of identity' and often plays 'a constructive role in the legitimization of new authority . . . as a "power-radiating", "image-generating" device to represent the modern state' (Wang and Heath 2008, 21). I will also use various visual representations of the Shinto shrines and Yuanshan Area, and visual images of the National Martyrs' Shrine to understand how the images of these monuments and spaces were circulated in relation to their conceived ideology and memory. These ideals are seen not only in visual representations of Yuanshan Area, such as maps, paintings, and propaganda films, but also in the style and function of the architectural artefacts in the area. In shaping Yuanshan Area in the postwar period, we see a subtle rivalry, but also an interdependence, between the National Martyrs' Shrine and the Grand Hotel. On the one hand, the task of building the National Martyrs' Shrine to commemorate the recently concluded Sino-Japanese War was suspended by the construction of the Grand Hotel under the more urgent political discourse of anti-communism and the Cold War. Yet, on the other hand, from a visual perspective, the Chinese 'Northern Palace' style of architecture, chosen for both the Grand Hotel and the National Martyrs' Shrine, bespeaks a unified language of visual Chinese nationalism. Since the lifting of martial law in the 1980s, as a symbol of the KMT regime's authoritarian nation making, the National Martyrs' Shrine is not completely defunct but has been re-evaluated as an example of 'difficult heritage', defined by Sharon Macdonald (2009, 1) as spatial legacies associated with 'a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity'.

Yuanshan Area during the Japanese Colonial Period

The transformation and restructuring of Yuanshan Area since the beginning of Japanese rule in the early twentieth century can be viewed as a typical example of a colonial spatial practice that stripped away the spatial meanings originally conferred by the colonized. The stripping was initially realized by the Japanese military's conquering of Taiwan's land by force and then by the creation of new spatial artefacts. Su Shuo-bin (2010, 140) points out that the Japanese colonizers exerted their spatial governance in Taipei through the homogenization and visualization of

The Prison Gate as Leftist Heritage?

Political Indifference and the Pursuit of ‘Healthy Nationalism’ in Japan

Tomoko Ako

Japan’s war remembrance has been stimulated in part by the restructuring of the regional and global political economy since the end of the Cold War. As Asia has gained growing global prominence, Japan’s war memories, such as those relating to Hiroshima and Okinawa, have increasingly circulated transnationally, invoked in the cause of preventing a nuclear conflict or opposing indiscriminate attacks on citizens around the world (Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama 2001). Commemorative activities have undergone a process of ‘heritagization’, becoming increasingly dependent on material objects and built environments, as the number of war survivors has decreased year by year (Frost and Vickers 2021). The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a flourishing of war-related museums in the form of ‘peace’ museums and memorials collecting and exhibiting items from the wartime period (Smith 2002). Local communities and non-governmental groups became more active in preserving memories of their specific experiences, creating more spaces for vernacular memories, often in tension with official histories (Senso Iseki Hozon Zenkoku Netto Waku, 2004).¹

The 1990s represented a high point for openness and public reflection on the wartime past in Japan, as the end of the Cold War and the bursting of the ‘Bubble Economy’ challenged the authority of the long-dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and many embraced the hope of lasting reconciliation with a democratizing South Korea and with China. However, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, the fragmentation of the Japanese left, growing nationalism in South Korea and China, and a nationalist backlash from rightists within a resurgent LDP have created a context far less propitious for the commemoration of ‘difficult heritage’. Meanwhile,

1. Activists, scholars, and citizens organized the Japanese Network to Protect War-Related Sites (Senso Iseki Hozon Zenkoku Netto Waku) in 1997. The network has arranged a variety of activities to record memories of war in modern Japanese history, preserve war ruins as historical sites and cultural assets, and promote communication and consultation between groups and individuals who contribute to the realization of peace. See more in Senso Iseki Hozon Zenkoku Netto Waku (n.d.).

the Japanese public, which in the 1990s harboured largely favourable views of their Chinese and Korean neighbours, has significantly soured on the cause of reconciliation. Fear of a rising China, and resentment against Koreans and Chinese portrayed in the Japanese media as possessed by inveterate, irrational anti-Japanese prejudice, has, in its turn, fuelled nationalist resentment against Korea and China among many Japanese, and stronger resistance to calls for reconciliation or reflection on Japan's role in an increasingly remote conflict. This context is crucial for understanding the story I tell in this chapter.

The public memory-making process in contemporary Japan has been characterized by struggles and compromises to preserve or restore local built heritage. Those seeking to preserve built heritage of any sort in Japan often face a daunting task, and this is especially so in cases where political and commercial vested interests are ranged against preservation, and where the building in question holds little appeal for local elites. War-related heritage is the object of particular sensitivity, but various sites have been preserved (at least partially) for varying reasons. Sites of Japanese wartime victimhood, most notably relating to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have been sanctified in the postwar public consciousness. However, even in these instances, preservation of built remains has been partial and selective. While the iconic 'Genbaku Dome' in Hiroshima survived to be inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the 1990s (despite the desire of many local elites in the postwar years to demolish it), the remains of Nagasaki's Urakami Cathedral, which stood at the epicentre of the bombing there, were dismantled in 1958 and a new cathedral erected in their place. As Ran Zwigenberg and Tomoe Otsuki have shown, the contrasting fates of the atomic ruins in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were determined by the complex interaction of Cold War diplomacy, national politics, and conflicting local interests in the context of concerted efforts to reinvent postwar Japan as a beacon of pacifism and exemplar of the peaceful deployment of advanced technology (Zwigenberg 2015; Otsuki 2015).

Enshrining pacifism at the heart of a reconfigured postwar national identity was strongly tied to commemoration of Japanese victimhood, epitomized by the atomic bombings. At the same time, both Japan's political leaders and American officials were keen that the focus of any commemoration be war as a generalized evil, with the public discouraged from reflecting on questions of responsibility—Japanese or American—for civilian suffering. In the interests of postwar 'stability' and the repositioning of Japan and America as Cold War allies, considerations of perpetratorhood in relation to wartime loss and destruction were effectively suppressed (see also Chapter 10 in this volume).

Some relics of the infrastructure of the militarized wartime regime have nonetheless survived. Jung-Sun Han argues that conserving the Ichigayadai Building in Tokyo (the wartime headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Army) and the Matsushiro Underground Imperial General Headquarters Complex in Nagano engages a politics of shame related to memories of suffering caused by the Japanese state in the

recent past (Han 2012).² However, precisely because of their ‘shameful’ associations, engagement at these sites with the more difficult aspects of Japan’s wartime past has often been profoundly ambivalent. The Matsushiro Complex, only ever partially open to visitors, was viewed as an embarrassment and left off tourist maps when Nagano was preparing to host the 1998 Winter Olympics. More recently, the role of Korean forced labour in constructing the complex has been a focus of controversy, with Japanese nationalists pressing for erasure of references to this. For its part, the Ichigayadai Building has, since the early 2000s, regained its military role, serving as the headquarters of Japan’s Defense Agency. Together with its connection to the postwar Tokyo War Crimes Trial and its role as the location of the ritual suicide in 1970 of the famous novelist Yukio Mishima, this gives the site a powerful if complex significance for contemporary ultra-nationalists. Still more significance is attached by such elements to Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine, the focal point during the war of the imperial cult of State Shinto, and today the site of controversial rites commemorating Japan’s war dead (including convicted war criminals).

This chapter deals with efforts to preserve a much less well-known example of built heritage connected to the wartime past: the main gate of the Nakano Prison (formerly called the Toyotama Prison). This is generally viewed as a manifestation of negative or shameful heritage and, as we shall see, is regarded with suspicion or hostility by many locals as a ‘leftist’ building. The majority of residents living near this site in Nakano, a suburban area in the vicinity of central Tokyo, belong to the comfortable middle class and generally endorse the status quo; many are instinctively averse to any hint of political controversy.

Many political prisoners were held in the Nakano Prison after the Security Act was enacted in 1925, effectively marking an end to the relative openness of the period known as ‘Taisho Democracy’. That is why the gate, the sole trace of the original buildings following the dismantling of the prison in 1983, is commonly regarded as a ‘leftist’ building. On the other hand, a number of architects and local activists have issued strong calls for the gate to be preserved as a ‘Gate of Peace’. Taking an ethnographic approach as a participant-observer, I conducted my research not only as an academic but also as a local resident and a parent of a pupil attending the elementary school scheduled to move to the site where the gate is located, and here I explore in more depth why local resistance to the preservation of the gate as a cultural property has been so strong, and the widespread indifference to this site.

A Wall May Be Built at the ‘Gate of Peace’

In January 2018, I first learned that a prison gate remains at the site to which my son’s public elementary school was due to be relocated. This structure is the main

2. The Matsushiro Complex refers to the underground shelters and tunnels built by foreign forced labour in preparation for moving the Imperial General Headquarters of Ichigaya to inner Japan.

gate of the old Nakano Prison built in 1915. Before and during the war, the prison held many political and ideological criminals, including the proletarian literary writer Takiji Kobayashi, Marxist economist Hajime Kawakami, the anarchist Sakae Osugi, and the Buddhist teacher and activist Josei Toda. The philosopher Kiyoshi Miki died in the prison on September 26, 1945, just after the end of the war, due to worsening scabies he had contracted during his incarceration. It is said that the GHQ (General Headquarters) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers abolished the Security Act immediately following Miki's unusually tragic death. GHQ subsequently requisitioned the site and used it as a US Army prison during the Allied occupation of Japan (1945–1952). It then returned to use as a conventional prison, until its closure in 1983, in the context of growing pressure from local residents for relocation of what was increasingly seen as a blight on this gentrifying neighbourhood (Shakai Undoshi Teki ni Kiroku Suru Kai, 1986).

The site of Nakano Prison was subsequently reconfigured as a 'Peace Forest Park' and the location of a correctional training centre, with only the main gate of the old prison remaining at the corner of the site. The gate is constructed of brick and is said to be a masterpiece of modernist architecture from the Taisho period (1912–1926); it is the only extant building designed by Keiji Goto, an architect dubbed a 'young genius' by his contemporaries. As a result, when the prison was closed, there were demands that the gate at least should be preserved due to its architectural importance.

When a decision was taken several years ago to move the correctional training centre to Akishima city, the Peace Forest Elementary School (PFES), attended by my son, was scheduled for relocation to this site in order to cope with a growth in student numbers due to recent real estate development in the neighbourhood. However, the relocation of the correctional facility was postponed because rare birds were found at the planned new site in Akishima, and the construction of new buildings for the elementary school was suspended. Due to the rapid increase of students, the playground of the elementary school had become too small, and there were insufficient classrooms. The parents' and teachers' association (PTA) of the elementary school formed a special committee and pressed the Nakano Ward authorities to start construction of the new school buildings as soon as possible. However, in the process of negotiation the existence of the 'prison gate' was hardly discussed, and it seemed that many assumed it would be demolished.

Since 2018, I have been working hard to help to coordinate a campaign to preserve the prison gate. Confronting loud opposition, I have attempted to highlight this structure's value as a cultural property and as a resource for teaching young people about local and national history.

The prison gate was indeed originally slated for preservation. However, the design of the new school buildings eventually presented by Nakano Ward, while retaining the gate, would leave it entirely concealed behind the four-storey school building, making it impossible for elementary school children and citizens to see

Organic Heritage Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region

Reconciliatory Landscapes

Anoma Pieris

Japan's Asia-Pacific War 'deathscapes' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010)—spaces related to collective trauma and remembrance—take many forms, including both military and civilian memorials, among which the most prominent for the national culture of commemoration are the urban peace memorial parks at Nagasaki and Hiroshima: multilayered landscapes created in city spaces razed by atomic bombing, the latter famously designed by architect Kenzo Tange. As brilliantly analysed by Lisa Yoneyama (1999), the manner in which the ruined Genbaku Dome or the reconstructed Shima Hospital inscribed the traumas of atomic bombing on the memorial landscape was hotly debated between the public and city authorities. The peace parks introduced Western-style civic plazas and lawn spaces into the congested morphology of the Japanese city, in a spatial language directed towards a global audience and distinct from the ornamental gardens found in palaces or shrines. At Nagasaki, in contrast, scattered ruins of the fragments of buildings form an unwieldy composite nested in the urban fabric. Because of the enormity of the tragedies they represent, both of these landscapes offer modalities for representing civilian trauma. Historically well-established memorial traditions, such as military memorials and cemeteries organized to represent national service and sacrifice, are less able to capture the human dimension of social suffering.

When compared with these formal practices of memory making, pacifist memorial landscapes composed of dissonant residues of 'difficult' histories appear as anomalies. They are distinct from the imposition of a militarized or pacifist schema on a commemorative space. The two examples studied in this chapter—subnational Asia-Pacific War memorial sites in Naoetsu, Joetsu city, Niigata prefecture, Japan; and Cowra, New South Wales, Australia—are linked by mutual memorialization practices around tragic events: a fatal breakout by Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) at Cowra POW Camp and the deaths of Australian POWs in a 'dispatched camp' (that is, a factory camp) at Naoetsu, but they are articulated quite differently from

each other and from the national commemorative landscapes described above.¹ The community custodians of these spaces have invented, over time and through accumulated organic and transnational practices, settings for telling these stories without seeking to represent a unified ‘national’ narrative. The materialities of these spaces are likewise organic; less dependent on monuments and more on the placement of trees, shrubs, and other flora, more specifically flora gifted by former enemy nations; and their care and cultivation. Strategies used include ‘incorporating practices’, where memory is embodied in movement through a garden, and sculptures scattered in a commemorative landscape evoking discrete aspects of a broader narrative (Connerton 1989, 79).

In both of these examples, the various stakeholder groups for the difficult histories being narrated are not directly connected to them but have inherited them through residency in localities where incarceration camps and the associated atrocities/tragedies took place. Unlike the colonial Central Police Station Compound in Hong Kong and the St John’s Island quarantine station in Singapore, discussed by other authors in this collection (see Chapters 4 and 5), these POW camps were of short duration with few, if any, physical traces remaining and are framed by the imperial histories of military oppression during the Asia-Pacific War. There is greater alignment with Tomoko Ako’s study describing efforts made by local communities to prevent the suppression of difficult histories related to an incarceration site (see Chapter 6). But because of the focus on gardens (not artefacts) as memory-making practices, a different range of issues surfaces at these sites. An aim of this chapter is to unravel some of the entanglements of war, incarceration, and atomic annihilation that underscore Asia-Pacific War memories as invoked through landscape strategies at Cowra and Naoetsu and the roles various stakeholders play in addressing them as exemplifying what this chapter identifies as ‘organic heritage diplomacy’. The interest for architectural history is the way that garden spaces, and in particular flora, are deployed.

The Naoetsu Peace Memorial Park and the Cowra Japanese Garden can be similarly characterized as located in regional towns, remote from national commemorative discourses, and networked into the history of the Asia-Pacific War mainly due to their stories of high POW casualties. Cowra is a small rural farming town in New South Wales, Australia, north of Canberra, near Young, which hosted a military training camp during the war and, alongside it, a POW camp for Japanese and Italian prisoners. Naoetsu is an industrial town in Niigata, Japan, currently in the Joetsu prefecture around 300 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, where Allied POWs were made to work in industrial factories. Their commemorative strategies have proven to be symbiotic despite their physical distance from each other because of their mutual difficulties in dealing with the local conditions and actions

1. The topic discussed here is introduced in Pieris and Horiuchi (2022) and in Horiuchi and Pieris (2007).

surrounding POW deaths. This chapter begins with an overview of the complexities of transnational military memorialization followed by an examination of the two case studies during and after the war.

Military Memorialization

The military counterpart of the aforementioned peace parks, made internationally notorious because of the enshrinement of convicted war criminals, is the Shinto Yasukuni Shrine, a war memorial described by Akiko Takenaka (2015) as one of many sites where death is used to promote militaristic nationalism as opposed to peace. Chidorigafuchi Cemetery and other memorial sites to the 'unknown soldier' form a parallel constellation of military cemeteries, pairing spaces for the spirits and bodies of the dead in a manner repeated all over the world. Every Australian capital city, correspondingly, has a memorial to the two world wars placed prominently in parklands and the significance of the Australian War Memorial is emphasized in its placement on an axis to Parliament House. Metropolitan cemeteries include separate sections for military graves. Described by Ken Inglis (2008) as 'sacred places', memorials as well as cemeteries and gardens of remembrance of different sizes are similarly dispersed throughout Australia, in cities as well as every hometown from whence soldiers were recruited. However, Australian physical war heritage is typically displaced outside the continent due to the nation's participation as an ally of Britain or the US in conflicts in Europe and Asia and away from national territory. As Waterton and Dittmer (2016, 61) have noted, in writing on the so-called 'Anzac legend' (by which the Australian and Allied Forces' military defeat at Gallipoli has been institutionalized as national memory), the transnationalism that is ever present in these various encounters is 'eclipsed by a vehement form of national self-representation.' The many POW commemorative sites in Southeast Asia are marked by tensions arising from imperial alliances, national rhetoric, and lack of control over displaced heritage. Internally, national representations are likewise fragmented by the experiences of Indigenous soldiers and minorities.

Similar transformations are evident in Asia and, indeed, within Japan. Mark Frost, Daniel Schumacher, and Edward Vickers (2019, 2) argue that following a half century of internal unrest caused by decolonization, the Cold War, and nation building, 'the boundaries of Asian war remembrance have increasingly transcended those of the nation-state', becoming multi-vocal in character and including a range of stakeholders beyond national governments. These boundaries have also been reconfigured in response to broader geopolitical shifts influencing the creation of national memories or truth and reconciliation efforts in each country (Frost, Schumacher, and Vickers 2019, 5). Within Japan, they argue, war remembrance and reconciliation has been part of an internal struggle between right-wing and left-wing politics (7). The authors also describe how transnational and organic forms of reconciliatory activism offer dynamic interpretations of war memory, in turn

impacted by the needs and expectations of the several audiences for these spaces both locally and globally.

Books like Patrick Finney's *Remembering the Second World War* (2018) and Twomey and Koh's *The Pacific War* (2015) are comparative anthologies that engage with different intersectional and transnational perspectives that include studies on Australasian as well as Asian cultures of remembrance. They complement the efforts of critical cultural studies in interrogating national memory. Increasingly, anthologies are not organized by country but explore other dimensions of the aforementioned multi-vocality. But these stories and their related tensions rarely surface at official military sites.

The pre-eminent deathscape for Allied military commemoration in Japan is the Yokohama War Cemetery, created by the Australian War Graves group, for Commonwealth servicemen who died as POWs or while with the Commonwealth Occupying Forces in Japan. The Yokohama Cremation Memorial houses an urn with the ashes of 335 POWs. The cemetery's presence in Japan attaches the disturbing history of death during wartime incarceration to the field of national memory, albeit at its very margin in the case of both countries, because, as Joan Beaumont (2018, 166–67) notes, 'at neither the national nor the sub-national level did it assume a central place in practices of remembrance of the Second World War' comparable to other POW sites throughout Southeast Asia directly associated with captivity, such as, she notes, Hellfire Pass on the Thai–Burma Railway, Changi Prison in Singapore, and the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea.

Beaumont identifies several reasons for the flagging interest in the cemetery, apart from official and diplomatic engagements, including the distance for Australian war veterans and their families, both culturally and physically; resentment of Japan due to their mistreatment of prisoners; and the lack of significance of Yokohama for the Australian narrative of the war. The largest number of Australians interred there had been captured in Ambon and imprisoned on Hainan Island. These factors, in her view, influenced the general ambivalence towards the site. Unable to comment on the Japanese reception of the site, she nevertheless captures its politics, describing it as a 'physical footprint of the victorious powers' imposed on the city's residents after Japan's defeat (Beaumont 2018, 167). Beaumont notes that members of the Prisoner of War Research Network Japan have conducted tours of the space in recent decades but that it is mainly used as a recreational space. Although there are annual ceremonies and diplomatic exchanges, the site lacks the historical associations and community recognition that might make it a dynamic reconciliatory space.

Commemorative Landscapes at Naoetsu and Cowra

When compared with 'national' memorial sites whose custodians are part of the political or military establishment, the subnational commemorative landscapes

Staking Claims to Difficult Memories

Diplomacy and Jewish Heritage in Shanghai and Beyond

Shu-Mei Huang

Introduction

Heritage making has allowed nation-states to step into memory as a contested terrain on which to compete with one another in producing historical statecraft. China, in particular, excels in this realm (Mayer 2018). This chapter presents how heritage is mobilized to present Chinese benevolence and generosity towards Jewish refugees during World War II, which exemplifies contemporary Chinese philo-Semitism (Ainslie 2021), while, at the same time, attracting others and their different attempts at staking claims to the difficult memories of border crossings. This chapter investigates the tensions between national narratives of war memory, local urban-renewal initiatives, and the international politics of heritage, as Shanghai—and China—have sought to secure a role in commemorating what has been seen as the totemic atrocity of modern times: the Holocaust (also known as the Shoah). It will conclude, however, that this competition over memory and heritage might turn out to be more concealing than revealing.

Over the past two centuries, diaspora Jews have reached China from different places and through various routes, leaving traces in the built heritage of colonial outposts like Hong Kong, Harbin, and Shanghai. Old synagogues have typically constituted the focus of efforts to preserve Jewish heritage, with a different emphasis or inflection in each case, though always with an eye to the transnational dimension. Of these three cases, Shanghai has assumed special prominence due to its role as a safe haven for Jewish refugees during World War II when travellers could arrive at the port without entry visas.¹ Many of them settled in the Tilanqiao area of Shanghai, the basis for the research presented in this chapter. The designation of Tilanqiao as a

1. From the mid-nineteenth century, some Sephardi Jews arrived in Shanghai and Hong Kong following the establishment of British colonial power in the two outposts, the most well-known being the Kadoorie and Sassoon families. The largest group of Russian Jews arrived in Harbin to avoid oppression following the 1917 Revolution in Russia. The Jewish migrants enjoyed some level of economic and cultural prosperity until Japan occupied Manchuria in 1931. See O'Neill (2018).

heritage area—associated with an ongoing effort to achieve a UNESCO Memory of the World (MoW) inscription for documentary heritage related to wartime Jewish refugees in Shanghai—is compared to other contested cases in China to shed light on the cross-border geographical and historical contingencies of heritage making, including but not limited to Sino-Israeli relations.

Unpacking the commemoration of Jewish heritage in China

Preservation of Jewish heritage cannot be easily reconciled with the politically driven cultural nationalism that has driven ‘heritage fever’ in China (Zhu and Maags 2020), as it is about the Jewish community—foreigners to the country. Nostalgia, which is part of the emotional ground that supports preservation, is not as conveniently invoked, since Judaism is not officially recognized as a religion in China and the Jews are not one of China’s officially recognized ‘ethnic minority’ (*shaoshu minzu*) populations. Nostalgia availed from selective preservation of urban heritage has been instrumental and profitable in Shanghai, best exemplified in the case of Xintiandi, discussed below. Waley (2016) has taken note of ‘orientalizing gentrification’ in the former colonial metropolises of the Global East, which echoes Jiang and Vickers’ (2015) analysis of how Shanghai’s museums have increasingly been directed towards memories of the ‘exotic’ cosmopolitanism of the pre-1949 past and how this has contributed to a specific construction of civic identity on a local level.

While this wider nostalgia-driven heritagization is less relevant in the case of Tilanqiao, the associated concept of ‘cosmonostalgia’ is worthy of further discussion. Often invoked in the context of Holocaust commemoration—the ‘paradigm case’ of cosmopolitan memory (Levy and Sznajder 2002)—it can help us understand the ‘memory boom’ around Holocaust memories since the 1980s. As a key constitutive case in the global assemblage of cosmopolitan memory, the Holocaust has been granted new meaning, as the blaming and accusing of the perpetrators has more recently been gradually replaced with claims of universalism and cosmopolitanism with a ‘future-orientation’ (Levy and Sznajder 2002, 102). Global and local cultures mutually bind and shape one another in mobilizing Holocaust memories to create ‘cosmopolitan memory’, sometimes by non-Jewish communities.

Despite a growing recognition of Jewish heritage in Europe beyond a past tainted with anti-Semitism, Bunzl (2005) argues that anxiety towards ‘others’ continues to be deeply seated in universal claims to human rights and shared heritage for a global community. Jewish heritage has been incorporated into the imagination of ‘new Europe’ by right-wing groups seeking to exclude Islamic communities and African migrants. Macdonald (2013) discussed the workings of cosmonostalgia as harkening back to a prewar urbanism in which cosmopolitanism was the norm and the Jewish urban citizens contributed to the vitality of urban life. Cosmonostalgia as such might contribute to a polarized dichotomy of urbanity as accommodating of open, liberal universalism as opposed to backward, conservative rurality.

In the case of Shanghai, cosmonostalgia is further complicated by political ideology; it represents one pole less on an urban-rural dichotomy than on a socialist-capitalist dichotomy, which can be seen in how the city's past was rejected during the Mao Zedong era (Jiang and Vickers 2015).

Nostalgia as resistance

In comparing Shanghai and Berlin, Lu Pan (2013) argued that in China nostalgia emerges as a form of power struggle in exhibiting competing understandings of modernity and reclaiming the legitimacy of pre-revolutionary urbanity, the plurality of whose local heritage didn't enjoy favourable fame in the national context. Shanghai was a city that was only partially under Chinese control during the transition from the Qing dynasty to the Republic of China, and significant parts of the city were ruled as semi-colonies. The urbanity of Shanghai, which inevitably involved colonial capitalists accumulating wealth, made it a target for the nascent Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Pan 2016). The traditional Shanghainese residential architectural form of the *Shikumen*—distinguished by high brick walls enclosing a narrow front yard (a crystallization of the reinvention of modernity in a local context)—was not recognized as legitimate Chinese heritage by the state given that the *Shikumen* were largely built by foreign developers and foreign landlords to accommodate both the foreign and Chinese residents of Shanghai between the 1870s and the 1930s (Ren 2008; Wu 2015).

Behind the notable speculative urbanism of the past two decades (He and Qian 2017; Shin 2016), Shanghai is remaking claims to its suppressed urban past and the cosmopolitanism of the prewar period. In the context of neoliberalizing China, there has been a tendency to romanticize Shanghai's cosmopolitan 'pre-Liberation' past (Jiang and Vickers 2015). Nevertheless, the geography of Shanghai's cosmopolitan past has been mostly limited to the French Concession and the Bund. The district of Hongkou (known as Hongkew before World War II) was until recently not included in the cultural imagination of cosmopolitan Shanghai, and as such the cosmopolitan memories invoked by prewar Jewish life in the district are of special significance. In particular, the preserving of prewar *Shikumen* inhabited by Jews in Hongkou—the absent cosmopolitan subjects from whom the sense of cosmopolitanism is mobilized—raises intriguing questions, to which I turn next.

The Development of Tilanqiao Heritage Area and Its Recent Turn to Documentary Heritage

In Shanghai, the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed rapid urban transformation in the build-up to the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. During this time, the subject of heritage also made significant progress in the face of the obvious threats posed by massive and unprecedented demolition in the city. In 2004, Tilanqiao—a

region of roughly twenty-nine hectares in Hongkou—was named a heritage area, Shanghai's twelfth such area.² Around the same time, the ultra-commercial, high-end shopping and entertainment area of Xintiandi, built around the site of the First National Congress of the CCP in 1921, broke ground; it was later to be hailed as a successful 'property-led redevelopment' (He and Wu 2005; Wai 2006). Tilanqiao did not become another Xintiandi as the Hongkou District Government had hoped. Tilanqiao, as part of Hongkou, remains relatively rural and is considered inferior to inner-city districts such as Jing'an or Xuhui. In an effort to counteract its aura of backwardness, the street administration name 'Tilanqiao' was changed to the 'North Bund' (*Beiwaitan*) in 2018,³ but the area of about 178,000 registered residents, migrant workers not included, has remained relatively underdeveloped.

During the war years, Tilanqiao presented different forms of imprisonment side by side, a Jewish ghetto and Tilanqiao Prison, forming an interesting and 'difficult' case of urban heritage. Today, the Jews are mostly gone. Taking a walk on Zhoushan Road in Tilanqiao today, one can still see some local residents drying clothes against the high wall of Tilanqiao Prison, which was built under the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) in the early twentieth century. Nearby are European gable houses, brick-built and characterized by arched windows and dormers. Now mostly occupied by lower-middle-class tenants and small shops, many of these are buildings with intriguing pre-Liberation histories. A decorative tile on the ground reading 'Ark Shanghai' indicates the historical theme officially chosen by the district government to frame the local past, highlighting how Tilanqiao served as a safe haven for the Jews during World War II.

Hongkou was sparsely populated until the establishment of an international settlement took root. In 1903, the SMC built a sizeable, modern-style prison based on Singaporean and Canadian designs and named it the Ward Road Gaol. Once seen as the 'Alcatraz of the Orient', it gradually became the centre of a new urban neighbourhood. Before the 1930s, Tilanqiao was inhabited by a mix of foreigners and Chinese residents coming from the outlying villages. Many Chinese fled to avoid the Japanese air raids starting from the late 1930s, leaving behind some empty plots and damaged properties for the Jews who arrived between 1938 and 1940 (Ristaino 2001, 105–6). The enclave became formalized when the Japanese authorities (who took over Hongkou from the SMC after August 13, 1937) were pressured by the Nazis to establish the '*Shitei chiku*' (meaning 'designated area' in Japanese), effectively a ghetto, to limit the mobility of roughly 20,000 stateless Jews on February

2. In 2003–2004, the Shanghai government approved eleven heritage areas. Tilanqiao became the twelfth when it was added to the list in 2004.

3. Although the North Bund is now the official name of the area, the more historically meaningful name of Tilanqiao remains in the name of the heritage area. The Jewish refugees in Shanghai would mostly have known the area as Hongkew (see Figure 8.1).

18, 1943 (Ristaino 2001, 190–91).⁴ From 1943 to 1949, the Jewish refugees shared the designated area of forty blocks along with 100,000 Chinese residents.

Postwar Chinese arrivals from the environs of Shanghai took over the remaining buildings after most Jewish people left for the US, Australia, or returned to Europe in the late 1940s. Some of those Shanghai Jews made it to Palestine after Israel was established in 1949.⁵ The prison was taken over and renamed by the CCP regime. The area remained underdeveloped until the 1990s. Most of its new development has been purposefully concentrated along the Huangpu River under the vision of remaking the industrial, dilapidated area between the waterfront and Tilanqiao into the ‘North Bund’. In 2001, a plan to build the Shanghai Port International Cruise Terminal in the North Bund area was proposed as a major state infrastructure investment project. Yet, soon after some early conceptual schemes were released, a few Shanghai-based Jewish groups and individuals started to campaign for more recognition of the Jewish memories in Tilanqiao. Some local historians and heritage experts also raised criticisms and eventually secured the preservation of the historical buildings in Tilanqiao and its status as a heritage area. Ron Yi-San, one of the most important heritage experts in China, was the key figure in the campaign during the early 2000s.

Selective preservation and the turn to documentary heritage

The heritage area designation did not, however, guarantee the preservation of all significant local buildings. The Hongkou District Government continued to prioritize urban redevelopment over heritage preservation. Why weren’t there any developers being attracted to regenerate the place as there were in Xintiandi? One reason was that Tilanqiao Heritage Area cannot easily fit into the stages/prototypes identified by Zhong and Chen (2017), for its positioning in Hongkou and its built fabrics make it a rather difficult case. It is primarily composed of Grade-C listed buildings—mostly Shikumen houses that form *lilongs* (once the lowest level of self-governing administrative organs in urban Shanghai and still used in colloquial terms to refer to ‘residential communities’ in general); each of them may have only limited architectural value, but overall the collective is significant. In addition, Tilanqiao Prison is a unique complex within the district and its presence has led

4. Not all the Jews in Shanghai were stateless, so the number of stateless Jews was smaller than the total Jewish population of Shanghai.

5. The continual displacement of European Jews was sadly and ironically echoed in the forcing of more than 750,000 Palestinians to leave their homeland for the political project of establishing a Jewish nation-state, Israel. See more in Pappé (2017). In conversation with a Palestinian friend, she expressed concern that this chapter might isolate the discussion of Jews in Shanghai and their postwar movement from the long-term narrative of Zionism and the critical support granted by the British Empire, which would (again) marginalize the experiences and memories of the Indigenous communities of Palestine. While this concern is extremely valuable, this research is nevertheless limited by its scope and therefore cannot answer many important questions, such as whether or not there is any link between Zionism and the immigration of the Shanghai Jews to Israel. More research would be needed to address these remaining debates.

Mapping Kyushu's War-Related Heritage

Hard and Soft Frontiers of Memory in Japan's 'Asian' Gateway

Edward Vickers

What is the rationale for discussing the politics of war-related heritage in Kyushu? Historically, a good case can be made for seeing this island as distinctive in a number of ways. Dubbed the 'Gateway to Japan' in one English-language history (Cobbing 2009), Kyushu has always been Japan's most important conduit for traffic—whether peaceable or otherwise—with the Asian mainland and the wider world. During the Heian period (794–1185), Hakata Bay (today the site of Fukuoka city) was a principal port of embarkation for traders, officials, and scholars visiting China. The nearby 'western capital' of Dazaifu was one of the earliest sites at which a Buddhist presence is recorded in Japan. Much later, from the sixteenth century, Kyushu was the main venue for contacts with the Portuguese, Dutch, and other emissaries from early modern Europe. Having fended off two invasion attempts by the Mongols in 1274 and 1281, in 1592–1598 it became the launchpad for Hideyoshi Toyotomi's hugely destructive invasions of Korea. Finally, from the mid-nineteenth century, it was Kyushu (and nearby Yamaguchi) that witnessed Japan's earliest efforts to adapt the technology and ideas of the modern West—ideas that included the then-prevalent fashion for imperialist expansion.

In 2005, Japan's fourth 'National Museum', the first such institution to be established in over a century, opened in Dazaifu. Its first director declared that the museum was 'built around the concept of understanding the formation of Japanese culture from the perspective of Asian history' (Cobbing 2009, xiii). In recent years, other sites relating to Kyushu's premodern role in connecting Japan to the wider East Asian 'Sinosphere' have been officially canonized as 'heritage'. So too have locations related to interaction with European powers in the early modern period (e.g., the port of Hirado in Nagasaki) and to the beginnings of Japan's industrialization in the nineteenth century (e.g., the Shimazu clan's factory in Kagoshima).

However, this chapter examines how sites related to the more recent and 'difficult' history of Japanese imperialism in Asia are, or are not, articulated with the 'gateway' narrative so prominent in the broader heritage landscape. In the age of

imperialism, Kyushu became a crucial base for the movement to claim for Japan the leadership of Asia. The Genyōsha (玄洋社, 'Dark Ocean Society'), founded in Fukuoka, played a significant role in spearheading the imperialist project that eventually led to the Asia-Pacific War. Kyushu's strategic location also meant that military and naval bases were clustered there, and its many factories and mines witnessed the wartime deployment of forced labourers (including prisoners of war). Moreover, the industrial and strategic importance of the island's major cities made them key targets for American bombing raids in the latter stages of the war. Kyushu thus became the locale for the final atrocity of World War II: the atomic bombing of Nagasaki.

There are, therefore, ample resources for a Kyushu-centred perspective on the Asia-Pacific War as heritage. Besides the familiar themes of wartime suffering—horrifically epitomized by Nagasaki—and fortitude on the home front, we might expect Japan's 'gateway' to exemplify a more outward-looking approach, acknowledging the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, and ways in which local experiences of war intertwined with those of Japan's neighbours. After all, Kyushu today continues to trumpet its role in connecting Japan to Asia, for example, through the city of Fukuoka's annual 'Asia Month' every September. But does this apparent embrace of transnational 'Asianness' for instrumental purposes in the present extend to any willingness to reflect on darker manifestations of Kyushu's 'gateway' role in the past? Or do we instead see here further evidence of a pattern whereby, as Ted Boyle (2019, 301) has put it, 'the state's official narrative [of the war] fails to map onto local experiences'—let alone those of Japan's Asian neighbours?

I shall argue here that the case of Kyushu illustrates how, in Japan, the 'frontiers of memory' in public history tend to take on a more or less open or 'permeable' quality, depending upon historical period and thematic focus. Put very simply, when there is a happy story of international cultural and commercial exchange to be told, the imagined frontier between Japan and the Asian mainland tends to be treated as 'soft' or permeable, with shared legacies acknowledged, even celebrated. However, with respect to episodes relating to the more 'difficult' themes of Japanese imperialism and military expansionism, the frontiers of memory tend to be drawn very differently, with a hard, impermeable boundary cordoning off Japanese experience from that of other Asians. It is the purpose of this chapter to trace how these frontiers are drawn in Kyushu's heritage landscape, analyse patterns of sanctification and suppression, and discuss their implications.

Heritage Policy in Context

Before focusing on local heritage sites and museums, it is useful to consider how Japan's historical ties to Asia are portrayed in other vehicles for official discourse. The school curriculum is perhaps the most important of these. As the Chinese historian Yang Biao has observed, the portrayal of the history of Sino-Japanese

interaction in the Japanese school curriculum is almost a mirror image of typical portrayals of relations with Japan in China's textbooks (Yang 2014). In China, the focus tends to be on recent history and especially on Japan's mid-twentieth-century invasion. Premodern exchanges are also discussed, but generally only as brief footnotes to the main narrative. In Japan, however, exchanges with China, especially during the Tang dynasty (618–907), are portrayed as a crucial formative influence on Japanese civilization, whereas the more recent history of Japanese imperialism in Asia typically receives only superficial coverage. Textbooks deal evasively with Japan's invasion of China, instead focusing on the conflict with the US, culminating in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Coverage of the latter events overshadows all other aspects of the war, embodying a pacifist national identity premised upon the uniqueness of Japan's atomic victimhood.

The pattern of downplaying Japanese involvement in modern Asia while highlighting Asian influences on premodern Japan is evident beyond the history curriculum—for example, in subjects such as Japanese language and civics. Classical Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文) is a compulsory element of the high school 'national language' (*kokugo* 国語) curriculum, but students have no opportunity to study modern Asian languages at school: the foreign-language curriculum begins and ends for most with poorly taught English. It is as if all European pupils were forced to study basic Latin grammar and gobbets of Virgil and Ovid but systematically denied the opportunity to learn modern Spanish or French.

This curricular narrowness is not exclusive to Japan; as Caroline Rose has shown, notions of shared 'Asianness' are similarly absent from China's school curriculum (Rose 2015). In Japan, however, this inward-looking tendency has recently worsened as an electorate spooked by China's rise, alarmed at the anti-Japanese rhetoric from Japan's neighbours, and chronically ill-informed regarding the country's imperial past has become more receptive to the arguments of homegrown nationalists—hence, the success of nationalist politicians such as Abe Shinzo (prime minister from 2012 to 2020), Ishihara Shintaro (governor of Tokyo from 1999 to 2012), and Hashimoto Toru (governor and then mayor of Osaka from 2008 to 2015). Abe championed the unapologetic celebration of Japanese traditions and history, significantly tightening censorship of school textbooks, especially their coverage of the Asia-Pacific War and territorial disputes. He derived considerable support from right-wing activist groups such as the Nippon Kaigi (日本会議), founded in the mid-1990s specifically in order to restore national pride (for example, through 'moral education' in schools), revise the postwar 'Peace Constitution', and push back against what conservatives portray as 'masochistic' narratives of national history. Such groups have been effective in pressuring the mainstream media, notably the public broadcaster NHK, to eschew critical analysis of controversial historical episodes such as the 'comfort women' system of wartime sexual slavery (Yoshifumi 2017; Fackler 2014).

The same nationalistic political trends have important implications for heritage management in Japan. There is strong bureaucratic control over public museums, dating back to Meiji times, when museums, along with schools, were treated as instruments for moulding loyal imperial citizens. The structure of centralized control survived the postwar American occupation when, as Aso puts it, the state sought to ‘avert domestic and foreign suspicion of latent militarism’ by promoting Japan as ‘a peaceful “culture nation” (*bunka kokka* [文化国家]), salvaging an imperial-era aesthetic canon that would still be administered from the centre, but now in the name of the people’ (Aso 2014, 203–4). Although it is now an ostensibly liberal-democratic state pulling the bureaucratic levers, this administrative apparatus has rendered museums and heritage-management functionaries ultimately accountable to the conservative nationalists who dominate contemporary Japanese politics. An increasing admixture of profit-oriented ‘new public management’ since the early 2000s has enhanced corporate influence in the sector (Aso 2014, 215–19), but the intertwining of corporate and bureaucratic power in Japan means that this has not made for greater diversity or openness. As Bull and Ivings (2019) show in a recent article on a museum devoted to postwar Japanese refugees from formerly occupied regions of Asia, museums in contemporary Japan find it very hard to deviate from a standard, bureaucratically endorsed narrative of national history. This is particularly so with respect to museums focusing on World War II, concerning which ‘fierce debates’ have ‘stimulated a visceral awareness of public accountability’ (Aso 2014, 221; Hein and Takenaka 2007).

Pressure on museums, along with other institutions, to conform to a sanitized, nationalist narrative of the wartime past has significantly intensified since the early 2000s. Perhaps the most notorious instance of this concerns a formerly notable venue for the airing of critical perspectives on the Asia-Pacific War, the Osaka International Peace Centre (Ōsaka Kokusai Heiwa Sentā 大阪国際平和センター), founded as the result of ‘local citizen and media collaboration’ in 1981 (Aso 2014, 221). Threatened with the withdrawal of funding from the municipal government, then headed by Hashimoto Toru of the Japan Restoration Association (Nippon Isshin no Kai 日本維新の会), in 2014 this museum closed in order to revamp its exhibits. Following its 2015 reopening, the exhibition excluded previous content relating to Japanese atrocities in wartime East Asia and instead focused on the ‘victimhood and stoicism’ of Japanese civilians (Seaton 2015)—an approach which, as we shall see, is also much in evidence in Kyushu.

Nationalist efforts to censor historical narratives for public consumption (or encourage self-censorship) have also extended into the international arena. For Japan, as well as for her East Asian neighbours, the process of obtaining recognition from UNESCO in the form of World Heritage Sites or Memory of the World inscriptions has in recent years become a significant arena for nationalist rivalry (Vickers 2021). UNESCO’s high prestige in Japan means that both the government and the public attach high importance to obtaining its imprimatur for heritage sites

or documentary manifestations of ‘memory’. But when sites or archives are deeply intertwined with Japan’s fraught relations with the Asian mainland, as is often the case in Kyushu, UNESCO’s seal of approval can be used to legitimate profoundly nationalist and divisive visions of the past. China and Korea have also been deeply implicated in the ‘weaponization’ of war-related heritage through UNESCO processes, but Japan is no laggard in this respect (Vickers 2019).

Kyushu’s Heritage and Alignment with the Establishment Vision of Japan’s Past

Before turning to the treatment of World War II-related heritage, it is relevant to note that tensions between local, national, and transnational interpretations of Kyushu’s past are evident in the treatment of various sites relating to earlier historical periods. Lindsey DeWitt has shown how the successful campaign to inscribe the Okinoshima and Munakata Shrine complex (in northern Kyushu) as a World Heritage Site (approved in 2017) sought to celebrate ancient connections with Asia while sidestepping the site’s more recent significance for nationalists as the location of a significant naval victory during the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War (DeWitt 2018). Yamaguchi Yuka (2018) has analysed the campaign (also crowned with success in 2017) to gain a UNESCO Memory of the World inscription for records of Edo-period (seventeenth to nineteenth century) diplomatic missions that traversed the strait between Kyushu and the Korean peninsula, with the island of Tsushima (north of Kyushu) serving as the main venue. This campaign, backed by rightists close to Prime Minister Abe, portrayed these exchanges as a model of reconciliation between former enemies, even while Tokyo continued efforts to stymie the Korean-led transnational drive to commemorate wartime ‘comfort women’.

In 2018, another successful campaign secured World Heritage status for sites relating to the ‘hidden Christian’ communities of northwestern Kyushu. A critical analysis of the process by which these Catholic sites were assessed for their ‘outstanding universal value’ noted how the original push for registration came from local Catholic groups who sought the ‘conservation of their churches as living heritage’ (Otsuki 2018, 39). Both the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, the expert body that advises UNESCO on heritage matters) and the local group of experts convened by the Nagasaki authorities (on which ICOMOS depended for local access) were accused of ignoring ‘local voices and ethnographic knowledge’—although one expert involved in this process recalls that the initial application to UNESCO was ‘totally incoherent.’¹ Otsuki argues that the eventual exclusion from the World Heritage Site inscription of any sites dating from the period after the lifting of the state ban on Christianity in the late nineteenth century presented ‘a romanticized image of underground Catholics,’ conveniently confining this group, and the injustices they experienced, to the past.

1. Anonymous, personal communication with the author, April 2021.

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