

ABSTRACT

Collective memory is a term that describes a series of memories of individuals that are shared by the collective and treated as official and socially acceptable for the group, may that be a small community or the whole nation. Memory is always selective and subjective so it cannot be taken as an equal to history. However, its value as a historical source should not be underestimated.

A significant part of the collective memory in contemporary Japan is the Second World War. Even though it has been almost two generations since its end, the memories and the legacy are still vivid. The reason why is the great impact the war had on the Japanese. The country changed immensely and the society also underwent major modifications. One of them was the fact that once a proud nation deriving its origin from gods had to take responsibility for the war atrocities and accept their defeat.

As my work will demonstrate, the question of historical responsibility has not been fully answered yet. There are still people who believe that Japan has not done enough to apologise and atone for its crimes and they demand action. I am using the example of the former comfort women, whose case is still open, to illustrate that there are still war-connected problems in Japan that are being overlooked or not dealt with properly.

Keywords: collective memory, war responsibility, Pacific War, comfort women, apology, compensation, Japan, South Korea