

## Borders of memory: affirmation and contestation over Japan's heritage

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# Borders of memory: affirmation and contestation over Japan's heritage

EDWARD BOYLE 

**Abstract:** This essay, introducing the special issue on ‘Borders of Memory’, aims to shed light on the links between memory and heritage in contemporary Japan. It does so by examining how heritage sites serve as spaces within which collective memory is both affirmed and contested. Heritage sites enable us to survey the contours of the borders of memory that exist between different memory collectives. An analysis of South Korean and Chinese objections to the Meiji Industrial Sites shows how these heritage sites work as borders of memory, spaces where the competing collective memories of neighbouring East Asian governments and societies clash and rub up against one another. This analysis is then extended to the four articles that make up this special issue. In each case, it is the competing meanings invested in the site, and the struggle over the narrative within which it is incorporated, that results in such sites coming to be demarcated as borders of memory. Understanding these heritage sites as bordered spaces allows us to see such them as being not only where antagonistic collective memories come into contact, but also spaces through which they connect. The existence of such spaces enables the political process of articulating the stories associated with different memory collectives.

**Keywords:** border studies, heritage, memory, UNESCO, Meiji industrial sites, history wars, South Korea, China, Okinawa, Ainu

## Introduction: heritage, memory and borders

This essay, which introduces a special issue on ‘Borders of Memory’, will shed light on the links between memory and heritage in contemporary Japan. It will do so by examining how heritage sites serve as spaces within which collective memory is able to be affirmed and contested by various groups. The creation of heritage sites produces material and symbolic spaces that are able to stand

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at the intersection between various memory collectives. This is because heritage sites are mnemonic objects, which form the external and material component of 'collective memory' (Halbwachs 1992). Such objects possess the potential to encode or channel the internal, psychological understandings of the past held by individuals through physical objects or official commemoration (Olick 1999). The differences between the collective memories of different groups means that these heritage sites become locations at which both the affirmation and contestation of collective memories occurs.

Heritage sites are therefore spaces through which to survey the contours of the borders of memory that exist between different memory collectives. This understanding of borders draws upon two decades of work in border studies that has opened up their study to a whole variety of perspectives (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012). In applying the notion of borders to memory, the aim is to move away from thinking about borders solely in terms of sovereignty and territory (Elden 2010), and reframe heritage spaces as sites of 'cultural encounter'; a move essential, as the late Chris Rumford noted, for the development of a genuinely 'multiperspectival border studies' (Rumford 2012, 899). Doing so allows for a greater appreciation of borders as 'multifaceted social institutions' rather than simply formal, political markers of sovereignty (Laine 2016, 467). Borders should no longer be seen as existing solely at the edge of the nation, but understood as being woven into the fabric of society as a whole (Rumford 2014). The presence of these borders comes to indicate 'a landscape of competing meanings' (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007, xv) and a 'site of struggle' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 18). Here, competition and struggle are not understood as narrowly referring to disputes between two different states, or between state and society, but are rather a reflection of bordering as practice: 'a practical activity enacted by ordinary people as well as (nation) states, to make sense and "do work" in the world' (Cooper and Perkins 2012, 57).

The borders of memory are 'predominantly interpreted as the communication of practices, as stories narrated by some and contested by others' (DelSordi and Jacobson 2007, quoted in Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012). The work being conducted at these heritage sites, and the reason why this special issue will argue for the importance of understanding them as bordered spaces, is the process of attempting to narrate the meaning of the site through the stories within which these spaces of heritage, as mnemonic objects, are embedded. This introduction shall begin by outlining the mechanisms through which the borders between memory collectives come to be inscribed onto the material and symbolic spaces of heritage sites. Initially, the focus will be upon inter-state contestation, but in introducing the papers included within this special issue, it shifts to demonstrating how such borders of memory are also defined through stories, motivation and legitimacy from both the sub- and supra-state levels (Harvey 2015). Understanding the material and symbolic spaces of such

heritage sites allows us to see such sites as being where antagonistic collective memories meet, but also makes clear that the amelioration of such antagonism could have a significance broader than the space of the heritage site itself.

### **Manufacturing heritage**

On 8 July 2015, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee officially added twenty-three Japanese locations, under the collective heading 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining' (hereafter Meiji Industrial Sites), to its registry of World Heritage sites. The proposal to inscribe these sites as World Heritage had been dogged by objections from China and South Korea, who argued that clear reference should be made to the wartime use of forced labour at a number of these sites (Kodera 2015). Negotiations between the Japanese and South Korean delegations, two of the twenty-one national delegations making up the Committee, resulted in a compromise being reached. In exchange for South Korea removing its objections, the Japanese delegation announced that 'Japan is prepared to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions in the 1940s at some of the sites'. Meanwhile, although not a member of the Committee, China's ambassador to UNESCO urged Japan to ensure that 'the sufferings of each and every one of the forced labourers is remembered, and their dignity upheld' (McCurry 2015).

The controversy over the Meiji Industrial Sites provided these states with a fresh opportunity to rehash the 'history wars' that have bedevilled international relations in East Asia since at least the 1980s (Lewis 2017; Saito 2017; Kingston 2017; Tamaki 2010). This conflict centres on the question of whether there has been appropriate Japanese acknowledgement and restitution undertaken for actions committed in its name, during the course of the Pacific War in particular (Seaton 2007, Hook 2015).<sup>1</sup> The terrain upon which these battles are fought is largely that of 'official' memory (Gluck 2007), and revolves around how the 'official' historical narrative of Japan is presented, in the 'political speeches, in school textbooks, in public museums, and in public cemeteries, public monuments and other mnemonic sites under government control' (Duus 2017, 2).<sup>2</sup> Japan's submission for the inscription of these sites to UNESCO, an international organization, offers another venue through which this official history is able to be affirmed ... and contested. The reason for the intensity of the reaction to the Meiji Industrial Sites by Japan's neighbours is due to the perceived potential of such sites for encoding a particular narrative about Japan's past into the memory of the world as a whole.

## **Universalizing Japan's heritage**

The re-articulation of an official historical narrative through UNESCO's World Heritage sites appears in many respects anti-ethical to the aims of the institution. Launched in 1972, UNESCO's world heritage programme sought to preserve natural and cultural sites deemed part of the shared heritage of humanity as a whole. The programme was intended as a means of cosmopolitan commemoration, through which national memory would be 'systematically replaced by transnational forms and forums of memory and dialogue' (Beck 2005, 43). The 'Outstanding Universal Value' of these sites would provide the means to overcome confrontation between competing nationalist commemorations by emphasizing the 'shared' nature of this heritage. Nevertheless, as is shown by the spillover from history wars to heritage nomination in East Asia, a central problem remains that the framework within which heritage is developed is still that of the nation-state.

This is clear in heritage practices in Japan today. Heritage in its modern, institutionalized, sense emerged in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, as a romantic drive to preserve and restore monuments of value to the nation.<sup>3</sup> Japan's self-conscious establishment of a modern national state following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 rapidly led to the enactment of legislation seeking the preservation of antiquities 'for future generations'. Such a national programme was an outgrowth of domestic antecedents (the eighth century Shōsō-in, for example) and a Japanese adoption of practices associated with contemporary European states. From as early as 1871, the Proclamation for the Protection of Antiques and Old Properties saw the Meiji Government begin to 'protect heritage for the sake of the entire nation as a part of public policy' (Kakiuchi 2014). The institutional arrangements that developed within Japan converged on those of western nations, as did their role, which was to 'invent' and manage her heritage in order to rearticulate a coherent national sense of the past while packaging and displaying such heritage for consumption overseas (Gluck 1985, Vlastos 1998, Ruoff 2014). The recognition accorded to its cultural preservation efforts provided one means through which Japan was able to gain a seat at the world power table (Saveliev et al. 2016).

Following the Pacific War, and in immediate response to a 1949 fire at Hōryūji Temple near Nara, the Japanese state, in conjunction with the Arts and Monuments department of the postwar Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Occupation Authorities, enacted the 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (LPCP). This law sought to rearticulate the content of the various cultural property protection laws that had been promulgated between 1871 and 1945 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018), while developing the future framework for heritage management in Japan. This Law still forms the basis for heritage protection in Japan today, although it has been significantly extended and modified in the

intervening years (Scott 2003, Kakiuchi 2014, Trifu 2017). However, more broadly, the 1950 LPCP proved an influential model for legislation in other countries, particularly in Asia, offering a valuable example of how newly independent nations could 'negotiate their national histories and how they appropriate cultural pasts and natural environments within strategies of governance and identity making' (Winter and Daly 2012, 4).

The international legitimacy of such domestic policies has been strengthened through UNESCO's world heritage programme, and convergent national discourses of international collaboration came to be developed and mediated by intergovernmental agencies such as UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOM (Winter 2015, 1004). Participation in the Convention, which Japan joined in 1993, has conferred legitimacy on the efforts of national cultural bodies and their own efforts at Heritage preservation. Consequently, World Heritage status has become increasingly desirable as more and more governments lobby for the recognition and inscription of their national heritage sites as being part of World Heritage. This has resulted in a heritage boom gripping much of the eastern and southern arcs of the Asian continent (Daly and Winter 2012, Hole 2013, King 2016, Matsuda and Mengoni 2016, Frost et al. 2019). Despite its supposedly universal nature, therefore, this system, under which nations nominate their own heritage as possessing Outstanding Universal Value, works to anchor the nominated heritage sites as national 'objects' embedded within a broader international process of heritage management (Meskell 2015).

The 2015 dispute over registering the Meiji Industrial Sites provided a clear reminder that the supposedly 'universal value' of World Heritage is politically constructed, and that the memories invoked by particular heritage sites do not necessarily cross national borders intact. Their celebration as being the 'shared heritage of mankind' is conducted through national institutional arrangements for heritage management, reflecting the fact that cosmopolitanism 'does not only negate nationalism but also presupposes it' (Beck and Sznajder 2006, 20). UNESCO has provided another pole of legitimacy in the creation and maintenance of heritage sites, but the histories and institutions within which these sites are narrated and maintained are overwhelmingly national ones. This is significant when we think about how these sites are understood in relation to collective memory (Saito and Wang, 2014). I will next highlight the way in which the Meiji Industrial Sites have become symbolic sites for the expression of differences in official national memories, before moving on to the ways in which particular heritage sites come to embody borders of memory more broadly.

## **Disputing heritage**

The institutionalization of heritage through predominantly national frameworks means that narratives into which such sites are incorporated are those of the

nation-state. This remains the case even though the submission of a site for inscription by UNESCO should be done on the basis of universal rather than national values. The submission of the Meiji Industrial Sites to UNESCO as cultural sites that commemorate cosmopolitan values is made on the basis of their prior incorporation within Japan's national heritage. The Meiji Industrial Sites collectively symbolize a national reaction to the West within which Japan's own successful industrialization is understood as both uniquely Japanese *and* Asian. This more cosmopolitan perspective enables Japan's 'autonomous industrial development in the field of heavy industry' to be re-narrated as an 'Asian cultural response to Western industrial values' and therefore come to possess a universal rather than merely national significance (UNESCO, quoted in Matsuura 2019). Although, as Matsuura details, this narrative framework subtly shifts the meaning for a number of the component parts of the Meiji Industrial Sites, the story itself is a re-articulation of Japan's official historical narrative. The Meiji Industrial Sites symbolize the ability of Japanese people to synthesize various cultural strands into a unique world culture (Saunders 1931). Japan forms the border between Europe and Asia, forming a unique synergistic space created by the encounter of East and West (Mervart 2015) within which Japan is able to industrialize without losing its cultural identity and authenticity by becoming a cheap copy of the West. Japan's current position in the world is evidence of the success of its 'Asian cultural response'.

The objections from South Korea and China to this narrative occur on two distinct levels. The first is at the sites themselves, and the absence of commemoration for the forced labour of Koreans and Chinese in these symbolic spaces. However, this objection is related to the second, which occurs at the level of Japan's official narrative of successful industrialization. In Japan's interpretation, this was a national response to the threat of the West and developed indigenously, which is why the Meiji Industrial Sites representing this process of industrialization deserve to be recognized as World Heritage. For Korea and China, however, Japanese industrialization was not merely an internal development, but emerged together with a process of imperial expansion and colonial exploitation, which, at its height, would encompass the entirety of the Korean Peninsula and large areas of China. Rather than being based upon an 'Asian cultural response', one unique and autochthonous to Japan, Japanese industrialization was like that of the West, dependent upon the dispossession of other peoples and the extraction of labour and resources from other parts of the world.

The significance of this challenge to Japan's official narrative is that it undermines the basis upon which these sites are considered the world's, rather than merely Japan's, heritage. If Japan's industrialization is understood merely as mimesis, then the global significance of these sites is diminished. That Japan

was conscious of these potential objections is suggested by the fact that, as Matsuura notes, the Meiji Industrial Sites nomination officially covers the period from 1850 to 1910, which was the year in which Japan officially colonized Korea. William Underwood astutely refers to this approach as ‘History in a box’, through which Japan ‘assumes’ (or perhaps hopes) that ‘contemporary observers can grasp the full meaning of key events that occurred at a particular location in the past while ignoring other key events that happened at the same place a couple of decades later’ (Underwood 2015). The role of this ‘box’ is to try to fix the meaning of both the Meiji Industrial Sites, and the broader narrative within which they come to be memorialized.

The Meiji Industrial Sites form, therefore, a border of memory, a space where the competing collective memories of neighbouring East Asian governments and societies clash and rub up against one another. The argument for understanding these Sites as a border is not made on the basis that they exist on the physical or territorial edge of the Japanese nation. Rather, their submission as World Heritage has institutionalized them as spaces open to contestation, as has been clearly shown by the protests of the Chinese and South Korean governments. The claim to universal value, the cosmopolitan commemoration of these sites as embodying an ‘Asian cultural response to Western industrial values’, is challenged by South Korea and China. The borders of memory have come to run right down the middle of these Meiji Industrial Sites.

### **Borders of memory**

It was in order to reflect upon the wider significance of the nomination of the Meiji Industrial Sites that Kyushu University organized a conference in December 2016 entitled ‘Borders of Memory: national commemoration in East Asia’.<sup>4</sup> In the course of that conference, a number of excellent papers grappled with the centrality of national borders to official historical narratives and mnemonic sites. For example, two papers on the weaponization of historical events by the People’s Republic of China looked at how commemoration and official narratives surrounding comfort women and the Nanjing massacre differ significantly depending on whether they were aimed internally, for domestic audience, or overseas. These differences were because the Nanjing narrative was recast for a Chinese diasporic audience (Cheng 2016), while the commemoration of ‘comfort women’ was placed within a broader international context (Vickers and Ohashi 2016).<sup>5</sup> The borders of the state are therefore absolutely central to defining how these events are commemorated for different constituencies. The border was also visible in cases where, as with the Meiji Industrial Sites, official narratives compete with one another, as when China and Taiwan dispute which state is responsible for commemorating Chinese soldiers buried in India and Burma after the Second World War. Here, the



struggle to maintain cemeteries in distant lands is connected with claims over which of these polities is the legitimate Chinese state today (Vu 2016).

Although borders are central to the contemporary contestation over commemoration and heritage in these examples, however, the actual sites themselves do not emerge as borders of memory. Rather, the competition is over the social memory of these sites, *whose* official narrative these sites should be incorporated within, and *how* the official narrative should foreground the presence of these sites. As a result, the borders being invoked through these practices of commemoration are able to be examined unreflexively, as the divide between separate official narratives. However, in the case of the Meiji Industrial Sites, and the four articles that make up this special issue, the salient question with regards such sites is *what* the official narrative is, and what, therefore, is the collective memory being invoked. It is the competing meanings invested in the site, and the struggle over the narrative within which it is incorporated, that results in such sites coming to be demarcated as borders of memory.

As noted above, the importance of heritage for the modern nation-state stems from its ability to narrate these mnemonic sites in order to shape the collective memory of the population. Nevertheless, the existence of an official history does not mean that there exists one national memory, unresistingly moulded into its desired shape by the institutions of the state. The presence of an official history is rather reflective of the state's efforts to shape 'social memory' through various spaces of 'articulation' (Ashplant et al. 2000, 17; Bull 2018, 2).<sup>6</sup> The collective memory of the nation is never merely individual memory writ large, for it is 'only *people* that remember' (Reilly 2011, 466, emphasis in original), and a nation is, as Weber argued, a 'community of memories' (Weber 1978, 903; also Olick 2003 in particular). A state's efforts at narrating an official history in order to shape a coherent collective memory from this disparate community is liable to succeed to the extent that it is 'broadcasting on a wavelength to which the public was ready to tune in' (Hobsbawm 1983, 263). This is much easier in cases in which such broadcasts are able to be directed at the antennas of antagonistic nationalism, as is clearly the case in the dispute over the Meiji Industrial Sites nomination.

However, 'collective memory' is ultimately a deeply political process that reflects 'the struggle of different groups to give public articulation to, and hence gain recognition for, certain memories and the narratives within which they are structured' (Ashplant et al. 2000, 29). The truth of this assertion is clear from recent work on both Japan and East Asia more broadly (Seraphim 2006, Jager and Mitter 2007, Shin and Sneider 2016). All of the articles in this special issue are concerned with the relation between specific heritage sites and the borders of memory that cut through these symbolic and material spaces. The presence of borders of memory at these sites shows the 'fractiousness of social memory' (Bull and Ivings 2019) or 'contested geopolitical messages'

(Hashimoto and Telfer 2019) present at them, the existence of which is frequently smoothed over by the institutional bureaucracy within which these heritage sites exist. This occurs due to the – to borrow Charles Tilly’s metaphor invoked by Bull and Ivings – misleading ‘crispness’ granted to descriptions of such sites through a bureaucratic demand for order.

This is particularly evident in the articles by Matsuura, and Bull and Ivings, both of which engage with sites whose position within the official historical narrative, and thus within Japanese collective memory, appear superficially secure. Matsuura’s article examines the case of the Miike Coal Mine, one of the 23 component parts of the Meiji Industrial Sites, and therefore with a well-defined role within the national narrative. Matsuura, however, clearly brings out the variety of local responses to the Miike mine, and notes the differences in how specific groups memorialize events at the mine. This extends, indeed, to the local commemoration and reconciliation being conducted at the Miike Site, in which the antagonistic mode of remembrance (Bull and Hansen 2016, 400) embraced by the South Korean and Chinese states for the Meiji Industrial Sites as a whole is undercut by the work of local activists. As Matsuura notes, the reaction of individuals to the Meiji Industrial Site nomination, and the degree of coherence between the official narrative and their own understanding and memories of the state are to a large extent determined by the memory communities such individuals inhabit. The response of individuals to heritage, the way in which they remember through such mnemonic sites, is a product of group identity at more local levels, rather than being determined by some unitary national collective memory.

Matsuura’s article offers a particularly clear example of the state’s official narrative failing to map onto local experiences, and the inability of this national narrative to ‘capture’ the memories of those who actually experienced these events. The article by Bull and Ivings also shifts our gaze to this discrepancy between national and local in their study of a small repatriation museum, the Maizuru Memorial Repatriation Museum, located in Maizuru, a port in Kyoto prefecture on the Sea of Japan. In 2015, this museum was granted UN Memory of the World status for its collection of documents pertaining to the repatriation of post-war Japanese, including internees held by the USSR in Siberia. Building upon the distinction between ‘regimes’ and ‘repertoires’ of migration, roughly meaning the bureaucratic presentation and actual practices of the repatriation process, the article succeeds in not only offering a history of Japanese repatriation through the port of Maizuru, but in analysing the issues of memorializing that history within the museum. In doing so, it emphasizes that heritage, and the memorialization it represents, is never about the past, but the relationship of the past with present and how that relationship promises to shape our futures.

Bull and Ivings’ article shows just how difficult it is for local sites of memory to stand outside a broader official national story. This is the case even when

the 'experts' involved (curators and historians) are aware of the shortcomings in the official narrative. Despite the plethora of materials available at the Maizuru museum, the heritage on display has an inherent tendency to slot within a pre-existing narrative of post-war Japanese repatriation, rather than attempting to make visible the diversity of repatriate experiences outside of state-sanctioned accounts. This occurs even as the intended audience for the museum's 'story' shifts over time: from the wartime generation to their (great-) grandchildren to a UNESCO committee which 'could not be expected to know much about events in East Asia'. The challenge of appealing to this latter audience resulted in a 'universalization' of the collective memory of detention and repatriation, through analogy with Germany and Hungary, in a way that parallels the broader internationalist approach to 'comfort women' in the Chinese museum highlighted above. This shared heritage works to play down the uniqueness of national suffering, but it still mediates 'eyewitness' objects through a national story, with the more cosmopolitan perspective adopted equating the suffering of the Japanese civilian population with that from other countries.

These two articles demonstrate how the borders of memory that exist between the various memory communities invested in heritage sites can come to be overwritten in the official stories deployed to make sense of this heritage. These stories become shaped and dominated by the state's national historical narrative. This should be little surprise, for the state is supposed to stand above contesting groups in society, and, given that heritage is fundamentally about our relationship with the past in the present, the narration of heritage in the present will naturally reflect the wider story of the state through which such heritage is being institutionalized. This remains the case even when such heritage is narrated within a specifically cosmopolitan, transnational context, as the national provides a layer of narrative mediation able to connect the local experiences being invoked through the heritage itself with the way in which comparable memories and heritage are understood in other places. Such official narratives work to flatten out any antagonistic borders of memory present at these heritage sites, a necessary process given that locals do not necessarily see borders in the same way as governments (Newman and Paasi 1998, 195).

### **Memorializing national borders**

The notion of borders of memory adopted above has suggested that the central problem for such contested sites is the question of *what* is the official narrative of heritage sites. The incorporation of heritage sites within a national narrative necessitates the exclusion of many communal memories from the story through 'wilful amnesia', as Matsuura points out. Ernest Renan (1882, 11) famously noted how 'forgetting' and 'historical error, forms an essential factor in the

creation of a nation'. The role of heritage in the retelling of the national narrative guarantees that the mobilization of specific communities of memory within this story will involve historical elisions and assertions that thrive 'on ignorance and error'. For the Meiji Industrial Sites, of course, the primary elision is in the narrative emphasizing the connections of industrial development before 1910 with Japan's contemporary situation. Especially given the continuous operation of a number of these sites, 'wilful amnesia' is required in order that the role of the forced mobilization of both Japanese imperial subjects (Koreans) and enemy combatants (Chinese and POWs) in enabling the continuous operation of these sites is concealed. In doing so, it becomes clear how the symbolic space of these sites works to commemorate the contemporary borders of the nation, and how local reconciliation achieved in these communities remains there, apart from the antagonistic national narratives that constitute the 'history wars'.

The piece by Bull and Ivings demonstrates how the borders of the nation become naturalized within these sites of commemoration. As they document, in its initial two years of operation, Maizuru was not only a site of repatriation for Japanese from other parts of the empire, but also processed a return of colonial subjects to their places of 'origin' (Morris-Suzuki 2010). Koreans and Chinese present in Japan at the end of the war were sent back from one side of the harbour, while the other was utilized to 'welcome' Japanese repatriates from northeast Asia. The new borders of the Japanese nation were materialized on opposite sides of Maizuru harbour, through which the state sought to divide and re-place the formerly disparate population of the Japanese Empire back into its constituent national boxes. This bordering process was literally built over, with the subsequent transfer of the processing centre for Japanese repatriates across the bay in 1947. That this 'exodus' of former Japanese colonial subjects from Japan is not on display at the Maizuru museum shows how an official narrative of Japanese repatriation serves to shape the ways in which this period is commemorated in the present. The focus of this official narrative reproduces the state's concerns at the time, focusing on the welcome afforded fellow Japanese nationals rather than the messier process through which Imperial subjects were demarcated into 'national and non-national citizenry'.

In this example, the obviously cosmopolitan and transnational possibilities that would appear inherent in the commemoration of forced labour and population transfers remain unincorporated within the stories of these sites because they are antagonistic to the official narrative of the state. The competing national narratives of Korean and Chinese suffering and humiliation limit the ability of the Maizuru museum to fully reflect local circumstances. That this is not always the case, though, is shown by the other two articles in this issue, by Hashimoto and Telfer on the Okinawa Peace Park, and by Nakamura (2019) on issues around the repatriation of Ainu remains, and their proposed

internment at the new Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony. In both cases, the heritage sites directly relate to areas of Japan that were officially incorporated after the emergence of the modern Japanese state following the Meiji period, and therefore the assimilation of people who had previously stood outside the boundaries of Japanese-ness (Oguma 1998; Boyle 2016). This is reflected in the contestation over the memorialization occurring at these two sites, located at opposite ends of the nation.

In the case of the Okinawa Peace Park, the site's direct connection to the Battle of Okinawa makes contestation over its meaning inevitable, as the authors set out. Such contestation opens with the material development of the site itself, which began to be developed in the 1950s, while Okinawa was still ruled by the American military Government of the Ryukyu Islands. While Hashimoto and Telfer correctly note that in 'the 1960s, the Japanese government built Japanese Prefectural war memorials in Okinawa for fallen Japanese soldiers', it is important to emphasize that almost all of these are within the bounds of the Peace Park itself, with a full thirty-two of them in the park's 'Prayer Area'. While certainly 'an attempt to extend Japanese sovereignty over occupied Okinawa', most of this construction was the responsibility of the prefectures themselves, resulting in a 'noisy landscape of competitive prefectural representation' (Uesugi 2018). Even in its 'nationalization', therefore, the material construction of the Peace Park sees the borders of the distant memory collectives, administratively formalized as Japan's prefectures, come to be reinscribed within the actual commemorative site itself. This privileging of bounded groups was then reprised with the construction of the Cornerstone of Peace in 1995, a remarkably cosmopolitan war memorial that nevertheless not only groups the names of the 239,000 casualties of the Battle of Okinawa by nationality, but also distinguishes Okinawans from Mainland Japanese (Selden 2008, 7).

This latter divide is, of course, central to the 'contested geopolitical messages' that Hashimoto and Telfer analyse, most importantly through the figure of the *kataribe*, the storytellers who relay 'their' stories to visitors. Originally survivors of the war, they are now almost entirely people with no first-hand experience of the war itself. As a result, their stories are now not accounts of their own memories and experience, but instead 'personalized war stories' that are inevitably contextualized through a narrative shaped by Okinawan-mainland relations, including disputes over the overwhelming US military presence on the islands. It is this contextual distinction that accounts for the differences in the stories told to Okinawan and mainland Japanese audiences, given that the message of the story depends upon the audience to whom it is being delivered. In this sense, the divide between Japan and Okinawa, which is present at the emergence of Japan's modern state, re-marked through its postwar settlement, and reproduced in contemporary discussions surrounding the US military presence, also runs directly through this heritage site. It is this which

allows Japan to be both victim and victimizer here. Yet the ‘mélange of memorials’ (Selden 2008, 8) indicates not only the different approaches to commemoration by the Japanese state and Okinawa prefectural authorities, but also that by different prefectures and memory communities in both Japan and Okinawa itself. The history within which each memorial is embedded provides a potential narrative, ensuring the site itself remains cut through by the borders of memory.

Nakamura’s article recounts similarly contested terrain regarding the repatriation of Ainu human remains from Japanese universities, and their proposed internment in the new Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony at Shiraoi, Hokkaido, scheduled to open on 24 April 2020. In Hashimoto and Telfer’s telling, the cultural distance between Japan and Okinawa led to the decision to ‘sacrifice’ Okinawa and its population in defence of Japan, and subsequently to offer the islands to the United States. A historical understanding of this cultural distance thus becomes refracted through the collective memory of Okinawans, and the border they feel with the mainland. For Nakamura, the cultural distinctions between Japanese and Ainu find themselves reflected in later ethical and legal issues (see also Uemura and Gayman 2018). For instance, differing practices of Ainu burial were used to provide ethical cover for the Japanese collection of remains, on the grounds that, according to Japanese norms, graves not being cared for by individual family members could be considered abandoned. This was in total contrast to Ainu norms, which mandated collective gravesites that were not visited out of respect. This cultural border between the two groups in the past feeds into the current stand-off over how to repatriate Ainu remains from university collections. Even today, the question of collective versus individual responsibility for the remains rumbles on, with a Japanese legal system that guarantees ‘individual rights and equality’ held to prevent the recognition of collective rights to the dead, which, Ainu groups argue, is in accord with Japan’s signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Nakamura’s article sets out the issues related to the transfer of Ainu ancestral remains, which remains an ongoing process of memorialization. The last two years have seen scandals regarding the use of Ainu remains in research continue to rage (Mainichi Shinbun 2018a), and a growing international dimension to this call. An initial request by the Ainu Association of Hokkaido for the remains of seventeen Ainu held in Germany, made in March 2016, has been left in limbo (IWGIA 2017, 307), but in January 2017 it was announced that one Ainu skull acquired through ‘ethically unacceptable’ means would be repatriated (Mainichi Shinbun 2017). An agreement for the return of Ainu bones held in Australia was reached later that same year (Yoshigaki 2017), while a documentary film on the return of Ainu remains at Urakawa is winning international awards (Mainichi Shinbun 2018b). Nevertheless, the sheer volume of the remains would appear to make it inevitable that the bulk of these

will remain unclaimed, and therefore be transferred to the memorial hall at the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, irrespective of the wishes of various Ainu groups. More significant is the impact that this has on the proposed site of the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony itself. Irrespective of its stated aims, and the degree to which the planned museum dwells upon past injustices, it is hard to see how the site can avoid problematizing the official historical narrative in a similar manner to Okinawa's Peace Park. The justification for such a Symbolic Space in the first place can only be victimization of the Ainu by the Japanese, and consequently the border between Japanese and Ainu promises to be re-inscribed right down the centre of the memorial site itself.

### **Conclusion: antagonistic cosmopolitanism**

Each of the four articles in this special issue contribute to our understanding of the ways in which heritage sites are cut through with borders of memory. These borders appear as particularly obvious, and fraught, when they are staking out two or more antagonistic official narratives. In the cases highlighted by Matsuura, and Bull and Ivings, this is partly because the legacy of Japan's imperial past is not contained by the current borders of the Japanese nation-state. Antagonism extends across the state's boundaries, and consequently the position of heritage sites within Japan's official history is contestable by Japan's East Asian neighbours. This contestation is overtly political: in addition to Chinese and South Korean opposition to the Meiji Industrial Sites, recent years have seen Russia oppose the UN inscription of the documents from the Siberian internees held at Maizuru, while Japan opposed China's successful effort to register documents related to the Nanjing Massacre.<sup>7</sup> In 2017, South Korea raised objections to the listing of the Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region as World Heritage sites (DeWitt 2018, 138).

Political contestation over UNESCO submissions is often presented as undesirable, or somehow opposed to the cosmopolitan spirit that was intended to animate the inscription of sites as the world's heritage. Yet, as already noted, it is widely recognized that collective memory emerges from a process of political contestation. Viewing the collective memory of the world as being able to peacefully coalesce out of a shared understanding of that which is being memorialized is based on a fantasy that the total recall of contested historical events will work to heal divisions (Dolff-Bonekämper 2010, Hayashi 2013). The official memory of the state or the world will never map exactly onto the memories held by individuals, which are shaped by both their own experiences and the memory collectives to which they belong. Consequently, the borders between such memory collectives are able to be surveyed through their deployment of heritage and other mnemonic sites within their own, antagonistic, stories.

It is not the presence of borders between antagonistic memory communities that distinguishes these two sites from the ones examined by Hashimoto and Telfer, and Nakamura. The difference is merely that in these latter examples, the central dispute is over how the Japanese state should memorialize those imperial legacies that fall within the Japan's current borders. It is tempting, therefore, to view the latter two disputes as domestic, categorically distinguishable from those sites caught up in international controversies like the 'history wars'. This would be a mistake, as both of these latter sites have been materially and symbolically opened up through their involvement with cosmopolitan values and networks. A transnational anti-war movement whose message finds local reflection in the stories of the *kataribe* powerfully shapes the borders of memory running through the Okinawa Peace Park, for example, while the state's recognition of the Ainu as an indigenous people deserving of at least a 'symbolic space' representing ethnic harmony is inconceivable without UN and international pressure. Recognizing the importance of transnational influences on the current antagonistic clashes at these sites can work to allay fears regarding cosmopolitanism and universality more generally. Chantal Mouffe, for instance, has argued that a cosmopolitan focus on transnational institutions and universal rights ignores real and legitimate differences of social and political interests (Mouffe 2005, in Bull and Hansen 2016). In the case of these heritage sites, at least, it has been the attention to transnational institutions and universal rights that has created these spaces as material and symbolic sites through which to discuss these differences in social and political interests, differences that are profoundly shaped by the narratives within which such sites are incorporated.

It is important to recognize that such contestation has been aided by transformations in national heritage institutions, themselves situated within transnational knowledge networks. The 1950 LPCP was characterized by two major institutional innovations: the introduction of the category of 'Intangible Heritage', and permitting local governments, rather than the state, to designate heritage sites. Subsequent years have seen further developments in both of these directions: the Agency for Cultural Affairs currently lists seven (+2) types of cultural properties,<sup>8</sup> while the categories of Cultural Landscapes and Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings, in particular, signal the shift to a bottom-up system of registration (Kakiuchi 2014). This has opened up an increasing number of heritage spaces within which contestation between multiple stakeholders can occur, as in the four examples in this special issue. Such spaces contribute to an ongoing discussion among national, regional and local actors over difficult questions of remembrance and 'redress', the significance of which may refract outwards from the physical space such sites occupy.<sup>9</sup>

This allows us to emphasize the role of borders as not merely spaces of contestation, demarking the point at which competing collective memories meet,



but also of connection. The presence of an increasing number of heritage sites invested in by a greater variety of memory collectives will not necessarily overcome borders of memory, and may merely dramatically increase the presence and prevalence of such borders. The narratives through which we attempt to make sense of these mnemonic sites will continue to be framed through our contemporary political imagination, which remains a distinctly bordered one. Yet the presence of such sites, where borders of memory become visible, enables the political work of articulating and contesting the narratives within which they are situated. In so doing, these sites are able to, in some small way, 'redress injustices of the past'.<sup>10</sup>

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### **Notes**

1. Although in the case of Korea, in particular, this could be extended back to the beginning of formal colonialism in 1910, or indeed practically any point after 1871.
2. From this point forwards, references to official history or memory will not employ quote marks.
3. This is in the generally-understood sense of the term as meaning more than just history, referring rather to the inheritance of past events or objects by those in the present.
4. For a full summary of the conference and the papers delivered there, please see <http://cafs.kyushu-u.ac.jp/borders/kanri/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Borders-of-Memory-Report.pdf>. In addition to the funds received via the author's JSPS grant, the conference was made possible through support provided by the War Memoryscapes in Asia Project (WARMAP), directed by Mark Frost at the University of Essex and funded by the Leverhulme Trust, and by the British Association of Japanese Studies. Many thanks to Dr Christopher Hood, Lynn Baird, and Professor Phillip Seaton for their cooperation.
5. A key institution for Vickers is the Comfort Station Memorial Museum in Nanjing, formerly a part of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall that opened in 2016. There is

- considerable overlap, both in narrative and institutionally, between the two events in China. See Vickers (2019) and Frost et al. (2019).
6. I understand ‘spaces of articulation’ as including both the ‘arenas’ and ‘narratives’ of articulation of Ashplant et al. (2000), as well as the ‘modes’ adopted by other scholars.
  7. Which resulted in Japan temporarily withdrawing its funding from UNESCO in 2016.
  8. These are: Tangible Cultural Properties (structure); Tangible Cultural Properties (fine arts and crafts); Intangible Cultural Properties; Folk Cultural Properties; Monuments; Cultural Landscapes; and Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings; together with two additional categories of Selected Conservation Techniques and Buried Cultural Properties.
  9. And indeed, come to affect other sites. Following on from the Ainu case, activists are now pushing for the repatriation of human remains to Okinawa, see Kyoto Shinbun (2018).
  10. This is similar to the process advocated for by Bull and Hansen as ‘agonistic’ memory. While fraught, though, I am not convinced that the process needs to be as painful as the latter notion would imply, see Bull and Hansen (2016).

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