



VYTAUTAS
MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY
M C M X X I I

SPOTLIGHT
TAIWAN



International academic conference

**“Resilient Memories in East Asia:
Remembrance, Acknowledgment, Reconciliation”**

October 10–11, 2025
Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

QUICK SUMMARY

October 10

8:30-9:00	Registration
9:00-9:15	Introduction and greetings
9:15-10:15	Keynote presentation
10:15-10:40	Coffee break
10:40-12:20	Section I: Taiwan
12:20-13:30	Lunch break
13:30-15:30	Parallel panels I & II
15:30-15:50	Coffee break
15:50-17:10	Section II: Sinosphere
17:10-18:00	Free time
18:00~	Welcoming dinner

October 11

9:00-10:20	Panel III
10:20-10:40	Coffee break
10:40-12:20	Section III: Korea
12:20-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:30	Panel IV
15:30-15:50	Coffee break
15:50-17:10	Section IV: Japan
17:10-17:15	Closing remarks
17:15-18:45	Guided walking tour

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

October 10

Location: Room 310, Putvinskio str. 23, Kaunas

- 8:30–9:00 Registration
- 9:00–9:15 Introduction and greetings
- 9:15–10:15 **Keynote presentation: Jolan HSIEH (National Dong Hwa University)** – *Weaving Resilient Futures – Indigenous and Gendered Memories in Taiwan's Quest for National Identity and Reconciliation*
- 10:15–10:40 Coffee break
- 10:40–12:20 **Section I: Taiwan**
- Fang-chih Irene YANG (National Cheng Kung University)** – *Making a "Multicultural" ROC-Taiwan Nation: The Production of Imperial Taiwanese Soldiers as National Memories in Three Tears in Borneo*
- Hung-yi CHIEN (National Cheng Kung University)** – *"Our Memory Doesn't Count": The Crisis of Taiwan History in the Global Conservative Turn*
- Yu-Yin HSU (Ruhr University Bochum)** – *Reversing the Name of "Island of the Dead": Tomoe Takagi's Public Health Vision and Practice in colonial Taiwan*
- Chun Wei Daniel LIN (National Dong Hwa University)** – *The Relocating Enunciation of Alternative Acknowledgment and Reconciliation: News Representation of Indigenous Ancestral Spirits and Ethnic Minority Demands in Taiwan*
- Wan Jou LIN (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *Memory Carved in Skin and Soil: Indigenous Ecofeminism in Liglav A-Wu's Narrative World*
- 12:20-13:30 Lunch break
- 13:30-15:30 Parallel panels

Room 310, Putvinskio str. 23

Panel I "Anchoring Democracy in Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan: Multilevel Frameworks and Resilient Democracies" (convened by Jurga BUČAITĖ-VILKĖ, Vytautas Magnus University)

Sima RAKUTIENĖ (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Lithuania-Taiwan partnership in the context of authoritarian neighbourhood: resilience tools on local-municipal level*

Jurga BUČAITĖ-VILKĖ (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Resilient Local Governance under External Threats: Insights from Lithuanian Municipalities*

Malvīne STRAZDIŅA and Iveta REINHOLDE (University of Latvia) – *Approaches to resilience and good governance in Latvian municipalities*

Chun-Hung CHEN and Shiau-Chi SHEN (Soochow university) – *Transitional Justice and the Politics of Memory: Strategies for Democratic Resilience in Taiwan*

Zheng-han WANG (National Chengchi University) – *Haunting Justice: Ghosts, Memory, and the Ethics of Transitional Justice in Taiwanese Cinema*

Chun-yen HSIEH (National Chengchi University) – *Antibodies Against Authoritarianism*

Panel II “Memory, Space, Place, and the Politics of Remembrance and Reconciliation of the Indian Diaspora in East Asia” (convened by Ajay DUBEY, Jawaharlal Nehru University together with Bashabi GUPTA, University of Delhi and Sushmita RAJWAR, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Hemant TAHILIANI (Migration and Diaspora Institute) – *Negotiating Identity and Integration: Indian Diaspora in Taiwan*

Sushmita RAJWAR (Jawaharlal Nehru University) – *Traces of Ayuta: Memory, Migration, and the Indian Presence in South Korea*

Bashabi GUPTA (University of Delhi) – *Resilient Memories, Shared Histories and Intertwined Futures: Indian Diaspora in Japan*

Aditya ANSHU (Abu Dhabi University) – *Entwined Identities: The Indian Diaspora in Hong Kong and Its Socio-Cultural Legacy*

Apoorva Dasharath SINGEGOL (Jawaharlal Nehru University) – *Understanding the Indian Diaspora in China: Historical Linkages, Contemporary Realities and Identity Maintenance*

Tej Pratap SINGH (Banaras Hindu University) – *India and East Asia: Domestic Trauma, Bilateral Conflict-Cooperation and Regional Challenges*

Chetan TOKAS (University of Delhi) – *Indian Diaspora in Japan during the Colonial Period and their Interconnectivity with India*

15:30-15:50 Coffee break

15:50–17:10 **Section II: Sinosphere**

Jiabin SONG (Vytautas Magnus University) – *The Incompatibility between Confucianism and The Communism – A Study on The Changing Role of Confucius in The People Daily’s Official Discourse (1949-2019)*

Łukasz STACH (Jagiellonian University) – *Holding out for a hero? War heroes as a tool in shaping collective memory and build or enhance national identity. The case of WW2 war heroes in Japan, the Philippines and Singapore*

Alevtina SOLOVYEVA (University of Tartu) – *Secret, Sacred and Punishing: How the Soviet Atheism Lost the Battle to the Sacred Landscape in Mongolia*

Barbora KILIKEVIČIŪTĖ (Vilnius University) – *Contested Collective Memory in Post-Handover Hong Kong: Identity, Protest, and Historical Narratives*

17:10-18:00 Free time

18:00~ Welcoming dinner

October 11

Location: Room 310, Putvinskio str. 23, Kaunas

9:00-10:20 **Panel III “Alternative memories of the war in Japan: wartime resistance, Okinawan civilians, Siberian internment, and Sugihara Chiune” (convened by Gundė DAUKŠYTĖ, Heidelberg University)**

Alice WITT (Heidelberg University) – *Portrayals of resistance of ordinary people on the home front in Japan during the Second World War*

Alexandra VALDEZ (Heidelberg University) – *A Past Unresolved: Survivor Accounts of the Battle of Okinawa*

Gundė DAUKŠYTĖ (Heidelberg University) – *Cultural Diversity in Japanese Testimonies about the Siberian Internment*

Hikari BUN (Heidelberg University) – *Popular Japanese perception of Sugihara Chiune*

10:20-10:40 Coffee break

10:40–12:20 **Section III: Korea**

Karolė MIULLER (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Japanese colonial trauma in Korea and its perception in collective memory through history education*

Pranjali JAISWAL (Independent) – *Haenyeos: Cultural and Economic Roles of Jeju’s Sea Women*

Shalini MITTAL (Bennett University) – *Silenced Survivors: A Review of Gender-Based Violence in Wartime East Asia and the Politics of Forgetting*

Alexander ROTARD (University of Leeds) – *The Imperial Gaslight: Japanese Propaganda, British Silence, and the Erasure of Korea Past and Present*

Eugenio De ANGELIS (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice) – *Chronicles of Resilience: Memory and Belonging in Yang Yong-hi’s Pyongyang Trilogy*

Hyungsun KIM (Konkuk University) - *Jeju as an “Imagined Homeland”: Migration Experience of North Korean ‘Repatriators’ in East Asia*

12:20-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-15:30 **Panel IV “The Difficult Hour of the Gods: Politics, Religion, and Opposition to “Cults” in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan” (convened by Massimo INTROVIGNE, University of Turin and CESNUR)**

Yu-Chen LI (National Chengchi University) – *Neither Buddhist nor Daoist: The Ambiguous Status of Guanyin in Taiwan*

Chih-Che TSAI and Yowting SHUENG (National Chengchi University) – *The Other on the Vietnamese Battlefield: Anti-War Reflections in a Korean Pastor’s Vietnam War Memoir*

Massimo INTROVIGNE (University of Turin and CESNUR) – *Christian Opposition to “Cults” in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan*

Rosita ŠORYTĖ (European Federation for Freedom of Belief) – *Deprogrammed Apostates and Atrocity Stories About Korean and Japanese “Cults”*

Patricia DUVAL – *“Public Welfare” and Religious Liberty in Japan: The Case of the Unification Church*

15:30-15:50 Coffee break

15:50–17:10 **Section IV: Japan**

Aya KIMURA (Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine) – *Balancing Narratives in Peace-Themed Exhibition Partnerships: A Japanese-Lithuanian Museum Collaboration*

Jingran HUANG (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) – *Memorializing the Japanese Emigration in Manchuria: Monuments, Statues and Museums in China and Japan*

Loris ZEVRAIN (University of Milan) – *Narrative and Counter-Narrative: Mishima Yukio and the Role of Literature in Japan's Historical Memory*

Nataša Visočnik GERŽELJ (University of Ljubljana) – *Pacifism in Japan – Historical Evolution and Contemporary Perception*

17:10-17:15 Closing remarks

17:15-18:45 Guided walking tour of Kaunas' new and old town

LIST OF ABSTRACTS

(in the order of presentation)

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Jolan HSIEH (National Dong Hwa University) – *Weaving Resilient Futures – Indigenous and Gendered Memories in Taiwan's Quest for National Identity and Reconciliation*

This keynote examines Taiwan as a critical site in East Asia and the international community for understanding how Indigenous and gendered memories shape inclusive national identity and strengthen democratic resilience. It engages Taiwan's layered and contested histories, highlights Indigenous connections to land, spirit, and justice, and brings attention to often-silenced gendered experiences of violence and forgetting. By situating Taiwan within regional and global dialogues on reconciliation and memory politics, the keynote underscores how these diverse "resilient memories" are essential for fostering a more just, inclusive, and sovereign Taiwanese future.

SECTION I: TAIWAN

Fang-chih Irene YANG (National Cheng Kung University) – *Making a "Multicultural" ROC-Taiwan Nation: The Production of Imperial Taiwanese Soldiers as National Memories in Three Tears in Borneo*

As a problematic figure for the ROC's nation-building, the Taiwanese Japanese soldier underwent various attempts of nationalization to be incorporated into the ROC, shifting their identity from the enemy of the Chinese to that of Chinese citizens after WWII. Before the democratization, their visibility in public representations varied according to the needs of the times for the ROC nation-building project but always followed the pattern of the "tragic figure who was forced to be conscripted by the Japanese and suffered." With democratization, beginning in the 1990s, they spoke about their memories, demanding to be remembered differently. These competing memories co-exist, like a palimpsest, erased and added on, always leaving traces to be retrieved later according to the needs of the present in the "mythscape" (Bell, 2002) of competing and conflicting national identities in Taiwan.

This paper analyses *Three Tears in Borneo* (2024), a Public Television flagship production for "telling Taiwan's stories to the world," featuring Taiwanese Japanese soldiers as prisoner guards during WWII and later, as war criminals tried in international court, to explore the entanglements of the production of memories and national identities at this political juncture. This paper argues that the memories produced serve the ROC-Taiwan nation-building project. In doing this, this paper first situates this show within the global trend of "memorialism" (Nora, 2002) and points out the three "ideologies," postmodernism, postcolonialism, and multiculturalism, that guide the promotion and interpretation of the show for the making of a multicultural Taiwan. Secondly, the paper reviews the figures and tropes of public representations of the Taiwanese Japanese soldiers from the 1950s to the present, emphasizing their various memory images for national identity production. Finally, this paper analyses the show by investigating the tropes, figures, and sentiments retrieved from the palimpsest memories of Taiwanese Japanese soldiers and argues that it is the Sinicizing images from the past that constitute the present image, making it a reconciliation between ROC and Taiwan, with ROC incorporating the Taiwanese Japanese soldiers into the current "multicultural" nation.

Hung-yi CHIEN (National Cheng Kung University) – *“Our Memory Doesn’t Count”: The Crisis of Taiwan History in the Global Conservative Turn*

This paper examines the crisis that Taiwan History is facing in education and society within the broader context of Taiwan’s ethnic politics and the global conservative turn. Taiwan History emerged in the 1980s as part of a cultural nationalism movement during democratization and gradually became institutionalized in school curricula in the 1990s. The Taiwan-centred framework of history emphasizes the transnational character of Taiwan’s past, and both settlers and colonizers are equally represented in positive and negative aspects. A decade ago, these changes were seen as a key factor behind the rise of “naturally-born independentists,” particularly among those active in the 2014 Sunflower Movement. Yet over the past decade, while the Taiwan-centred curriculum has remained in schools, partisan polarization and students’ common resistance to mainstream narratives have led many to dismiss Taiwan History as nationalist propaganda. Meanwhile, feelings of exclusion from this historical framework, especially among Mainlanders and older generations, have driven some to embrace rising Chinese nationalism to challenge Taiwan.

This paper argues that the current crisis in Taiwan History should be understood within the broader context of the global conservative turn. One hallmark of this shift is a growing scepticism toward progressive politics that emphasizes diversity, equality, and inclusion, principles that have shaped twenty-first-century educational agendas. Taiwanese students’ dismissiveness toward Taiwan History parallels a similar attitude toward progressive agendas, such as gender equality education, which is often perceived as dogmatic, and students rarely fully internalize its agendas. This results in a cynical stance toward any narrative seen as disruptive to their everyday lives. In light of the present challenges for Taiwan History, renewed scholarly dialogue with Eastern Europe may prove more vital than ever. By drawing attention to the crisis of Taiwan History and ethnic politics, this paper seeks to engage East European scholars in a shared conversation, in the hope that new perspectives might emerge through mutual exchange.

Yu-Yin HSU (Ruhr University Bochum) – *Reversing the Name of “Island of the Dead”: Tomoe Takagi’s Public Health Vision and Practice in colonial Taiwan*

This paper focuses on medical educator Tomoe Takagi’s contributions to Taiwan. Through his editorials, speeches, and research findings, this article examines how he changed the state of public health in Taiwan and how he reversed the negative image that Japanese people have of Taiwan. Tomoe Takagi (1858-1943), often hailed as the “father of public health” in Taiwan, was instrumental in establishing the island’s modern public health framework during the Japanese colonial period. His philosophy integrated Western scientific rigor, a strong emphasis on sanitation and hygiene, and a deeply humanistic approach to medical education, famously articulated as: “Before becoming a doctor, one must first learn to be a human being” (為醫之前，必先為人).

Arriving in Taiwan in 1900, Takagi immediately confronted the widespread bubonic plague. This challenge underscored his commitment to bacteriology and epidemiology; disciplines he had studied in Germany. His strategy was comprehensive, blending scientific investigation with practical implementation. Even Tadao Yanehara, a notable critic of Japanese colonization, acknowledged the significant strides made in sanitation under the Governor’s Office, which substantially reduced epidemics like plague and malaria. These improvements not only facilitated Japanese settlement but also dramatically enhanced the health of the local population. Takagi’s vision and practices were central to these achievements. He demonstrated profound respect and aided the local ecology and people through his medical and scientific endeavours. While direct memoirs of his life are absent, an analysis of his editorials, speeches and research reveals the profound impact he had on transforming public health conditions in Taiwan.

Chun Wei Daniel LIN (National Dong Hwa University) – *The Relocating Enunciation of Alternative Acknowledgment and Reconciliation: News Representation of Indigenous Ancestral Spirits and Ethnic Minority Demands in Taiwan*

This study explores media representation of the enunciation of the indigenous ancestral spirits in the Taiwan's mainstream newspapers to investigate how the words of indigenous magical characters in the news representation might be able to re-construct the preoccupations as a resisting and relocating way to a re-located imagine alternative acknowledgment and reconciliation

From the perspective of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2012), this study intends to explore the possibility of decolonization in the encounter between the journalistic professionalism of mainstream news and the traditional cultural narratives of indigenous magical characters to identify the uncertainties and flexibility of the various ways of "becoming indigenous (Clifford, 2013)" and relocating "situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988)".

This study examines the ways how the enunciation and the cultural narratives of the indigenous magical characters in the news representation might shape cultural awareness and influence the perceptions of the related issues. For instance, in 2017 while indigenous peoples demand a museum of anthropology to return a 300-year-old stone pillar back to their tribe. The main reason supporting the demand, in the news, is that the indigenous ancestral spirits in the stone pillar came into the tribe leader's dream to express their demand to go home.

Drawn on the data from content analysis and frame analysis, this study intends to identify frames adopted in the news representation of the enunciation of the indigenous ancestral spirits in Taiwan's mainstream newspapers and its influence on the decision-making process of the events. The frames are examined to reveal the negotiation relationships and flexibility.

This study concludes by asking if the news representation of invisible ancestral spirits of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan could be a transformative way to provide valuable implications to empower local indigenous voices and foster collective action under current and future conditions.

Wan Jou LIN (National Taiwan Normal University) – *Memory Carved in Skin and Soil: Indigenous Ecofeminism in Liglav A-Wu's Narrative World*

This paper situates the discussion of decolonializing ecofeminism in the context of Taiwan's Indigenous literature and lived experiences, examining how ecological consciousness and gender intersect in Indigenous storytelling. While ecofeminist narratives have offered valuable insights into the relationship between gender, land, and other-than-human beings, Taiwan's Indigenous narratives call for a more nuanced approach, one that understands memory as a living and carving as nakivecik (tattoo ritual) serve as a "portable genealogy," deeply embedded in Paiwan people and their cultural knowledge, embodying their inherited role and social identity. This paper foregrounds one of Taiwan Indigenous peoples, Paiwan communities actively remember, retell, and reframe their histories in response to shifting social, political, and ecological conditions. It emphasizes the entanglement of gender, class, and power in these localized acts of remembrance, revealing how collective memory resists simplified narratives and insists on the recognition of historical injustices.

The literature of Indigenous peoples provides an indispensable perspective on Taiwan's history, politics, society, and culture. It presents a critical stance that challenges mainstream and hegemonic discourses. By interviewing one of the influential Taiwan female writer Liglav A-wu and textual analysis with her latest novel 母族記事 *Chronicles of the Women's Clan*, this paper explores how imperial legacy manifest not only within traditional ecofeminist discourse but also inside Indigenous communities shaped by settler colonialism during and postcolonial era. Through storytelling, novel writing, and other forms of literary expression, Indigenous women are reclaiming voice, memory, and relationship to land. In doing so, they participate in

what can be termed a decolonial ecofeminist praxis: Taiwan Indigenous women do not merely engage with ecofeminism from a Western theoretical standpoint but actively rework and localize it through their own ontologies and epistemologies.

PANEL I “ANCHORING DEMOCRACY IN LITHUANIA, LATVIA, AND TAIWAN: MULTILEVEL FRAMEWORKS AND RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES”

(convened by Jurga BUČAITĖ-VILKĖ, Vytautas Magnus University)

Recent geopolitics marked by the resurgence of authoritarian tactics face democracies with pressures at every level of governance, including local level. This panel brings together research insights on how small democracies navigate authoritarian impact using different strategies that span local councils, national institutions, and supranational alliances. Focusing on Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan as paradigmatic cases, we explore (1) the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes project power across digital, economic, and informational domains; (2) the adaptive responses of democratic institutions framed by multi-level governance theory; and (3) the emergent patterns of democratic resilience cultivated through international partnerships. The panel emerges as results of the project in Taiwan-Lithuania-Latvia science program, No. P-LLT-24-22.

First, we examine how hybrid threats exploit vulnerabilities in democratic representation including disinformation campaigns, and media subversion to erode trust in public institutions. Building on the concept of “soft power” weaponization, panel analyse how Russian influence operations target minority communities and electoral infrastructures, challenging the integrity of political processes. Second, we discuss the interplay among local governments, national bodies, and supranational actors (EU institutions, NATO, the Taiwan Relations Act). We assess how layered decision-making architectures facilitate both diffusion of responsibility and collaborative measures, highlighting the democratic accountability dilemmas inherent in political systems. Finally, we turn to resilience-building strategies that bolster democratic “immune systems.” Panellists will present case studies of democratic resilience efforts revealing how targeted civic programs, local communities engagement, and strategic dialogues enable local democracies to anticipate, absorb, and recover from external shocks.

Sima RAKUTIENĖ (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Lithuania-Taiwan partnership in the context of authoritarian neighbourhood: resilience tools on local-municipal level*

The presentation will focus on the Lithuania-Taiwan partnership in the context of authoritarian neighbourhoods, drawing from the primary results of the trilateral academic research project involving Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan. The project, titled "Patterns of Penetration to Democratic Systems from Authoritarian Regimes: comparative analysis of local representation in Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan" (No. S-LLT-24-1), aims to investigate how authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and China, influence democratic systems through various tactics. Democracies must be vigilant in identifying and countering these influences to uphold their values and interests. The presentation will specifically analyse Lithuania's resilience tools in response to authoritarian interference and explore how the partnership with Taiwan fits into Lithuania's political discourse. It will also examine the attitudes of Lithuanian political parties towards the Taiwan issue following the opening of the Taiwanese representative office in Vilnius in 2021. This research seeks to deepen our understanding of the challenges posed by authoritarian neighbours and the strategies democracies can employ to maintain their sovereignty and democratic values. The analysis at the local-municipal level will primarily focus on resilience tools, utilizing data gathered from semi-structured interviews (2025).

Jurga BUČAITĖ-VILKĖ (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Resilient Local Governance under External Threats: Insights from Lithuanian Municipalities*

The presentation contributes to the discussion on the resilience of local democracy by focusing on the influence of authoritarian regimes on local political governance within liberal democracies. The presentation focuses on the impact of the influence of authoritarian regimes

on self-governance practices and democratic integrity at the local level, using the case of Lithuanian municipalities. In our presentation, democratic resilience refers to the ability of a democratic system to adapt to and recover from internal challenges and external threats that may undermine its principles, institutions and practices due to external forces (Norris, 2011; Levitsky, Ziblatt, 2018). Institutional strength and institutional adaptability allow to uncover the organisational capacities of democratic systems. This aspect contributes with insights into the institutional adaptability and resilience of political representation models, such as the judiciary, electoral bodies, and legislative structures that need to function effectively. Institutional adaptability refers to the institutional strength to respond to emerging challenges and societal changes while maintaining democratic principles and values. However, it is also important to consider the impact on democratic processes and citizen engagement, which help to build trust, local networks and social cohesion between different stakeholders, politicians and communities. The findings (qualitative interviews with local authorities) reveal critical vulnerabilities, risks and strengths in Lithuania's local governance structures and offer insights into the broader implications for the concept of democratic resilience. Our analysis contributes by exploring how the dynamics of political representation influence democratic processes, citizen participation and community engagement, highlighting the importance of robust political representation mechanisms and social cohesion in sustaining democratic local democracy.

Malvīne STRAZDIŅA and Iveta REINHOLDE (University of Latvia) – *Approaches to resilience and good governance in Latvian municipalities*

This paper assumes that the penetration of authoritarian regimes, the distribution of power, and theories of political representation influence the functioning of the municipal level within systems of multi-level governance. The theory of multi-level governance encompasses the interaction and power dynamics among various levels and types of actors in governance systems, including the role of non-state actors. The construction of political behaviour, political identity, and civic community engagement, as ideological and manipulative discourses are well researched at the macro level. However, these processes are less explored at local level. Thus, the paper is intended to cover municipal level encompassing local politicians, public servants and civic society. The aim of this paper is to examine the role of municipal leadership in shaping local policies in three key areas: human resource management, municipal reputation, and civic engagement. These policy areas reflect both sentimental and rational forms of political influence exercised by municipal leaders. As such, they can indicate either tendencies toward democratic policy implementation or shifts toward authoritarian patterns of governance. The paper explores the following dilemmas:

- a) The choice between open recruitment and internal promotion with limited external calls (human resource policy);
- b) The balance between collective representation by the municipal team and the enhanced role of the municipal mayor;
- c) The tension between broad civic engagement and selective participation focusing on citizen councils. The central research question is: To what extent do municipal leaders influence the implementation of local policies in these selected areas? The paper presents finding of the project (No.: LV-LT-TW/2024/2 and LV-LT-TW/2025/12)

Chun-Hung CHEN and Shiau-Chi SHEN (Soochow university) – *Transitional Justice and the Politics of Memory: Strategies for Democratic Resilience in Taiwan*

In recent years, amid a global wave of democratic regression and authoritarian revival, democratic resilience has become a key concept in political science. However, current scholarship often concentrates on institutional design and governance capacity, with limited attention to the deeper impact of historical memory and the politics of memory on democratic consolidation. This article examines Taiwan's "Unearthing Local Histories Movement" as a

case study to explore how transitional justice can operate as a strategic tool to strengthen democratic resilience through memory activism, civic education, and community engagement. It argues that only by confronting authoritarian legacies, reconstructing historical narratives, and democratizing interpretive authority can societies rebuild a shared commitment to democratic values amid political polarization and contested historical understandings. Transitional justice should not be seen merely as a response to past injustice, but as an essential political project for reinforcing democratic resilience. The analytical framework developed in this study offers comparative insights for emerging democracies on how practices of memory politics can be mobilized to enhance internal democratic capacity in the face of historical trauma and institutional transformation.

Zheng-han WANG (National Chengchi University) – *Haunting Justice: Ghosts, Memory, and the Ethics of Transitional Justice in Taiwanese Cinema*

This paper explores the symbolic function of ghosts in Taiwanese films that revisit the authoritarian past; analysis how cinematic representations of spectres mediate ethical claims within the context of transitional justice. Drawing on Derrida's hauntology and Lacan's concept of symbolic death, the study examines how ghosts embody both the haunting presence of past violence and the call for justice and remembrance. Unlike traditional narratives in which ghosts appear before perpetrators, the ghosts in these films often appear before survivors or bystanders—signalling that the ethical demands of the past are not aimed at individual guilt, but at society as a whole. Through close readings of six films—*Super Citizen Ko*, *Detention*, *The Magician on the Skywalk*, *The Embers*, *Banana Paradise*, and *A Brighter Summer Day*—the paper identifies four types of spectres: ghosts of the dead, ghosts of the past regime, phantoms of familial trauma, and symbolic possessions. These spectres disrupt linear temporality and establish a dialogical space between memory, guilt, and hope. The analysis shows how cinema functions as a cultural medium for transmitting “postmemory” and staging public mourning. Ultimately, the paper argues that the spectre is not merely a figure of horror or loss, but a political allegory calling society to confront historical injustice and construct a shared ethical horizon. Specters demand not just remembrance, but transformation.

Chun-yen HSIEH (National Chengchi University) – *Antibodies Against Authoritarianism*

As the neighbour of the world's largest authoritarian regime—China—Taiwan's political life is constantly exposed to the influence of anti-democratic ideologies. These influences manifest through disinformation campaigns aimed at eroding citizens' trust in democratic institutions and through fake news designed to interfere in electoral processes. Given Taiwan's relatively short democratic history, the lingering shadow of authoritarianism, and ongoing ideological infiltration from China, it is conceivable that many young voters lack the awareness to recognize such threats or the conviction to defend democratic values. However, a notable group of Taiwanese youth actively engage in preserving the collective memory of authoritarian rule and transitional justice. Through civic participation, they remind society of democracy's hard-won nature and raise awareness of authoritarian dangers. This study explores a central question: Why are these young individuals—who never personally experienced authoritarian rule—nonetheless motivated to preserve its memory and resist authoritarian influence, even amid China's aggressive projection of autocratic values? We hypothesize that several factors may influence this democratic engagement among youth, including family background (economic status and political orientation), educational trajectory, and formative life experiences. The research will involve fieldwork with youth-led NGOs and employ focus group interviews to investigate their motivations for activism. It also aims to identify actionable strategies for resisting the global trend of democratic backsliding. We further hypothesize that these youths often come from economically stable families, possess higher education backgrounds (especially in the humanities or social sciences), and have been influenced by significant value-shaping events—such as social movements or mentorship from activist educators or peers.

PANEL II “MEMORY, SPACE, PLACE, AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE AND RECONCILIATION OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN EAST ASIA”

**(convened by Ajay DUBEY, Jawaharlal Nehru University
together with Bashabi GUPTA, University of Delhi
and Sushmita RAJWAR, Jawaharlal Nehru University)**

Material and imagined geographies are crucial sites where collective memories of the diasporic population are constructed, contested and sustained. Memories do not exist in abstraction; rather, they are situated against cities, ruins, memorials, monuments and borderlands that bear traces of historical events of resilience and reconciliation. Indian diasporas in East Asia have long documented histories of travel, trade, residence and intermingling of culture and artifacts that construct the geographies. Remembering an event is thus embedded in the space itself and the narratives attached to the spaces that reflect the social, political and historical process that shaped the regional relationships of the Indian diaspora in the East Asian nations.

The panel explores various dimensions of memory, resilience and reconciliation Indian diasporas have of East Asia and how imagined and material geographies act as sites of constructing and maintaining the collective memories. The panel aims to bring together interdisciplinary perspectives to examine how spaces are invested with memory through commemorative acts, architecture, place-naming, and the politics of visibility and erasure.

The panel will address a range of themes, including memorialization and geography, displacement and the memory of lost homelands and refugees, transformation and erasure, and the spatial politics of silence and absence. In doing so, it aims to uncover how space is implicated in both the acknowledgement and denial of historical injustices and how geographies of memory influence processes of reconciliation.

By emphasizing the Indian diaspora's experience in the East Asian space as a key medium of remembrance, the panel contributes to a broader understanding of memory as not only a temporal but also a spatial phenomenon. It invites reflection on how physical environments both anchor and transform collective memory, shaping historical consciousness and influencing the possibilities for plural, contested, and resilient narratives of the past across East Asia.

Hemant TAHILIANI (Migration and Diaspora Institute) – *Negotiating Identity and Integration: Indian Diaspora in Taiwan*

This paper examines the experiences of the Indian diaspora in Taiwan, a small but increasingly significant community in the East Asian context. While numerically modest, this group has made noteworthy contributions to Taiwan's higher education, research, and emerging labour sectors. At the same time, Indian migrants face persistent challenges, including language barriers, visa limitations, and episodes of xenophobia, particularly following recent labour migration agreements. Through a combination of policy analysis, demographic data, and media discourse, the study explores how this diaspora navigates the dual pressures of marginality and integration. The paper argues that the Indian community in Taiwan represents a distinct diasporic formation shaped by South–South mobility and soft-power diplomacy, thereby expanding the scope of contemporary diaspora studies beyond traditional Western destinations.

Sushmita RAJWAR (Jawaharlal Nehru University) – *Traces of Ayuta: Memory, Migration, and the Indian Presence in South Korea*

This paper seeks to explore the way through which Indian diaspora in South Korea has been able to navigate and reconstitute spaces of memory, cultural identity and also belonging within a society. The Indian community in South Korea is not very large but substantial around 13,500 individuals who are mostly NRIs.

The Indo-Korean cultural memory can be traced back in legend and transnational texts: the *Samguk Yusa*, a 13th-century Korean chronicle, that recounts the story of Queen Heo Hwang-ok, who came from the ancient Ayuta kingdom -----believed to be from Ayutha kingdom (2nd century BC to 7th century AD) in ancient Tamil region in the Southern tip of India by 20th-century Korean anthropologists. This tale, serves as a foundational narrative of shared heritage that continues to inform diplomatic and diasporic imaginaries.

Further remembrance is rooted in modern history. During the Korean War, the Indian medical mission—specifically the 60 Parachute Field Ambulance—served under the UN flag, becoming a symbol of India’s humanitarian role in Korea’s national memory. These acts of solidarity form a historical backdrop for the emerging Indian presence in South Korea today.

In contemporary times, Indian professionals—particularly engineers, scientists, and researchers—occupy urban spaces in Seoul, Busan, and beyond. Through institutions such as the Indian Association of Korea, the Annapurna Women’s Association, and Sikh gurdwaras, as well as the presence of Indian chefs, K-pop artists, and news anchors, the diaspora is engaged in producing new cultural geographies that blend Indian memory with Korean space.

This paper examines how such geographies of memory are actively constructed and performed—through rituals, associations, education, and shared narratives—while also analysing the challenges of spatial marginality and identity negotiation. It argues that the Indian diaspora in South Korea, though a relatively recent phenomenon, engages in a layered dialogue between mythic pasts, transnational histories, and lived urban realities, inscribing new cartographies of belonging within the East Asian landscape.

Bashabi GUPTA (University of Delhi) – *Resilient Memories, Shared Histories and Intertwined Futures: Indian Diaspora in Japan*

Presence of Indian diaspora in Japan is a process entangled in inter-Asian solidarities, contested visions of modernity, and enduring memories of resilience. The tapestry of migration is woven from ancient times through the movement of Buddhist monks to and from India carrying with them not only religious teachings but also facets of Indian art, architecture, literature, and philosophy. Then came the traders who settled in Kobe and Okinawa in the medieval building robust trade relations.

Between India and Japan, there is a shared but underexplored archive of memories that emerge, as from the 1900s onwards, Japan has been offering symbolic and material support to Indian nationalists, becoming an alternative site for imagining freedom. Freedom fighters like Rash Behari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose’s engagements and experiences viewed Japan as more than a strategic partner; it was a civilizational ally and interlocutor. A.M. Nair’s life as a spy, diplomat, and restaurateur in Tokyo, and Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophical meetings with Meiji Japan, further reveal a spectrum of intercultural exchanges. Subash Chandra Bose’s alliance with Imperial Japan, Rash Behari Bose’s stay in Japan and Nair’s discreet diplomacy points towards connected strategies of decolonial memories and imagination. Together, these lives map a transnational memory of freedom rooted in dignity, reciprocity and epistemic resilience. These memoirs, political archives, and symbolic spaces—such as Nair’s Indian restaurant in postwar Tokyo and Tagore’s *Japanyatrir Chithi* (Letters of a traveller to Japan) are visions of ethical cosmopolitanism and dialogue of Indians with Japan. Strong Indian diasporic communities of IT professionals, engineers, businessmen, textile engineers and designers along with students have emerged in the modern times. This community has contributed towards building revitalized bilateral relations currently.

This paper argues that the memory of these Indian diasporic encounters invites a rethinking of historical narratives in India and Japan. This study, by tracing these interwoven narratives of the Indian diaspora in Japan recovers memories, resilience and reconciliations of the Indian diaspora in Japan.

Aditya ANSHU (Abu Dhabi University) – *Entwined Identities: The Indian Diaspora in Hong Kong and Its Socio-Cultural Legacy*

This paper examines the historical trajectory, socio-cultural presence, and evolving identity of the Indian diaspora in Hong Kong. Tracing its roots back to the colonial era when Indian soldiers, merchants, and civil servants formed one of the earliest South Asian communities in the city, the study reveals how this diaspora has played a pivotal role in shaping Hong Kong's multicultural ethos. Despite their long-standing presence, Indians in Hong Kong have had to steer complex layers of identity, citizenship, and integration, especially in the post-handover era marked by growing political and social transitions. Through archival research, oral histories, and policy analysis, the paper highlights the contributions of the Indian community in commerce, education, religious life, and public service. It also explores ongoing challenges related to racial categorisation, minority representation, and intergenerational cultural transmission. By spotlighting the Indian diaspora's resilience and adaptability, the paper contributes to broader discourses on diaspora studies, multiculturalism, and South Asian mobility within East Asian contexts.

Apoorva Dasharath SINGEGOL (Jawaharlal Nehru University) – *Understanding the Indian Diaspora in China: Historical Linkages, Contemporary Realities and Identity Maintenance*

India is home to the largest diaspora population globally. However, the Indians presence in China remains comparatively limited, with estimates from 2015 indicating a population of approximately 45,000 to 48,000 individuals. This community primarily comprises of students, traders and professionals working for multinational companies. The Indian community in Hong Kong has deep historical roots dating back to the British colonial period. It remains the largest Indian community in China. Indian migration to China can be traced to the 16th century, beginning with individuals from Portugues colonies such as Goa who settled in Macau. Subsequent waves included the soldiers and traders participating in the colonial development of Hong-Kong under the British rule. Additionally, historical records also point to the movement of Indian monks who contributed to the spread of Buddhism in China.

This paper explores these historical linkages and traces the different waves that have contributed to formation of Indian Diaspora in China. It also examines the contemporary socio-cultural and economic realities of the diasporic community. A concept of strategic assimilation will be used to understand how members of the Indian diaspora are balancing integration into Chinese society with preservation of their cultural identity.

The study relies on secondary sources such as academic journal articles, news reports and official documents and uses thematic analysis to identify key patterns. The analysis draws upon a combined theoretical and conceptual framework using diaspora typologies, cultural hybridity and social identity theory.

The paper aims to address a gap in the diaspora studies by focusing on relatively underexplored Indian presence in East Asian contexts. This study aims to bring attention to their unique experiences. The findings will be relevant for academicians interested in diasporic and East Asian studies as well as for the policy makers working on issues related to migration and cultural integration.

Tej Pratap SINGH (Banaras Hindu University) – *India and East Asia: Domestic Trauma, Bilateral Conflict-Cooperation and Regional Challenges*

There have been successive waves of inbound and outbound migration to and from India to East Asia. East Asia escaped direct western colonisation, but definitely large part of East Asia was divided into sphere of influence by colonial masters. Japan an East Asian country itself joined Western Powers in this scramble for colonies and occupied large part of East and Southeast Asia. Japanese occupation and atrocities were condemned by Indian nationalist leaders who were themselves fighting for India's independence. Indian leaders led by Gandhi denounced Japanese invasion and occupation of East Asia and Southeast Asia. In the post

Independent India, Chinese invasion of 1962 and India's humiliating defeat is etched in the memories of Indians, who have not forgotten it even after more than sixty years. If India has bitter memories of Chinese betrayal, then India has very cordial relations with Koreans and Japanese. Indian mediation was welcomed by both the Koreans during Korean crisis of early 1950s. India and Japan have entered into strategic partnership in the US sponsored Quad. Indo-Pacific term, where India occupies central position has been coined by former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe. India has close economic relations with all East Asian countries of China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. Despite strained relations and bitter memories, Sino-Indian trade and investment are booming. On certain global issues such as multilateral trade talks, environmental issues and restructuring of Bretton Wood institutions, India and China are on the same page. Sino-Indian ties are characterised by conflict and cooperation shaping their bilateral relations and attitudes.

The present paper aims to address the following questions:

- How bitter memories of 1962 war are shaping bilateral Sino-Indian relation?
- Why despite bitter memories, Sino-Indian trade and investment are booming?
- Why despite rising trade and investment, India and China have not been able to reconcile their disputes and differences?
- Why Quad despite Indo-Japan strategic convergence is not making much headway?
- Despite enormous Indo-Japanese and Indo-Korean goodwill, India-Japan and India-South Korea trade are insignificant in comparison to Sino-Japan, Sino-South Korea and Sino-India trade?

These and related questions related to memories, acknowledgement, remembrance and reconciliation will be answered in the proposed paper.

Chetan TOKAS (University of Delhi) – *Indian Diaspora in Japan during the Colonial Period and their Interconnectivity with India*

The Indian diaspora in Japan during the colonial period from late 19th to mid-20th century was relatively small but significant in their cultural, commercial, and nationalist linkages with India. The presence of Indian Diaspora in Japan had a major influence of British colonial rule in India and growing anti-colonial sentiments. Emergence of Japan as a major power in Asia after the Meiji Restoration was another feature of growing Indian Diaspora in Japan.

The Indian Diaspora community in Japan primarily comprised of students, traders and intellectuals. They primarily belonged to Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Bengal and Gujarat regions maintaining active anti-colonial networks. Japanese victory of Russia had inspired many Indians with hopes of resisting the Western imperialism. Students from India were also drawn to Universities of Japan primarily after the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905.

Japan had become a centre for Indian nationalists in exile. Rash Behari Bose was married and settled in Japan. He played a major role in organizing the foundation of the Indian Independence League. The Indian National Army (INA) with the support of Subhas Chandra Bose drew supports from earlier Indian migrants and nationalist establishments in Japan during the World War II.

The Pan-Asian Buddhist revivalism had a major contribution of scholars from India engaged with their Japanese counterparts. Buddhist monks contributed to maintaining frequent exchanges. Diaspora traders had also maintained contacts with their families and business associates in India with an influence on their cultural ideas.

The small Indian diaspora in Japan during the colonial period was deeply entrenched in cultural, commercial and nationalist interconnectivities. Activities of Indian Diaspora in Japan during the colonial period contributed to India's freedom struggle and other Asian solidarity movements. The research paper prepares to explore memorialization and interconnectivity of

Indian Diaspora in Japan during the colonial period.

SECTION II: SINOSPHERE

Jiabin SONG (Vytautas Magnus University) – *The Incompatibility between Confucianism and The Communism – A Study on The Changing Role of Confucius in The People Daily's Official Discourse (1949-2019)*

This paper aims to shed light on the problem of why Confucianism is not compatible with Communist ideology. By chronologically analysing the changing in the depictions and discussions of Confucius' role in China's biggest state-owned mass media – People's Daily's ("人民日报") over past seven decades (1949-2019), dialectically comparing it with the record of Confucius' original teaching, the researcher found there are significant incompatibilities between the official communist ideology and Confucius' idea. The findings of this research highlight certain mutual negations between the official proletariat reason and that of Confucius on their respective tenets.

Lukasz STACH (Jagiellonian University) – *Holding out for a hero? War heroes as a tool in shaping collective memory, and build or enhance national identity. The case of WW2 war heroes in Japan, the Philippines and Singapore*

Despite the fact that World War II ended 80 years ago, this period has had a profound impact on the memories of the nations involved in this terrible conflict. In Europe, people still remember the war atrocities and genocides and celebrate their national heroes who fought bravely in numerous bloody battles. The same is true in East Asia, where memories from 1937–1945 still play an important role in shaping national identities and international relations, especially between China and Japan, and South Korea and Japan. They are also used to build or enhance national identities.

The presentation aims to analyse the chosen case studies: Japan, the Philippines and Singapore. Why Japan, the Philippines and Singapore? Japan, as an aggressor and state, which committed horrible war crimes from 1937-1945, may have difficulties in using WW2 war heroes as a tool in enhancing the national identity. Moreover, Japan could easily find other war heroes from earlier periods of its history. The Philippines are a different case: as a US colony, it was invaded by Japan in December 1941, and Filipino soldiers fought alongside the US to repel the Japanese assault. After the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, Philippine guerrillas fought the Japanese until they surrendered. The Philippines gained independence in 1946 and, as a post-colonial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, needed something (or someone) to unite society. Finally, Singapore — a British strategic outpost occupied by the Japanese from 1942 to 1945 — became an independent state in 1965. Does Singapore have any war heroes from the Second World War? Or did it create them and use them as a useful tool, e.g. in education? The presentation will analyse these case studies and illustrate how war heroes are used in state politics.

Alevtina SOLOVYEVA (University of Tartu) – *Secret, Sacred and Punishing: How the Soviet Atheism Lost the Battle to the Sacred Landscape in Mongolia*

In Socialist Mongolia (1921-1991), the attempt to overcome religion was also undertaken towards sacred places. Worshipped sacred sites and religious objects faced special raids of communist representatives, plundering, and vandalism. These places also were forbidden for visits, veneration, and even discussion by local commoners. The sacred landscape was pushed aside by the official culture, it was marginalised but did not vanish. Holy places got new secret status and new conditions for narrative and ritual practices.

Narratives about failed attempts to destroy worshiped places and terrifying punishments of the party representatives are prevalent in folklore. Such narratives are included in the place lore and oral history of local areas and settlements. Moreover, till nowadays these stories keep popularity among different generations and represent the most respectful miracles and strong

evidence of the power of Mongolian land and its divine protectors.

The paper focuses on the forms of collective memories about the soviet time's traumatic events, reflections and discussions in Mongolian folklore of the conflict between two different ideologies, state and traditional/national, embodied in the plot of a confrontation between a party member, atheist, and a representative of the supernatural, sacred and demonic loci. My research is based on field materials collected during annual expeditions to various regions of Mongolia (2006-2024).

Barbora KILIKEVIČIŪTĖ (Vilnius University) – *Contested Collective Memory in Post-Handover Hong Kong: Identity, Protest, and Historical Narratives*

This paper explores the contested nature of collective memory in post-handover Hong Kong, examining how identity, protest, and historical narratives have become sites of political and cultural struggle. Since the 1997 handover from British to Chinese sovereignty, Hong Kong has experienced ongoing tensions between local and national identities, particularly in the wake of large-scale protests in 2014 and 2019. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from memory studies, political science, and cultural analysis, the paper investigates how different actors—including the Hong Kong government, Beijing authorities, civil society groups, and grassroots activists—have sought to shape public memory through education, commemorative practices, media, and urban space. It argues that collective memory has become a key battleground in the contest over Hong Kong's autonomy, history, and future, revealing deeper conflicts over belonging, legitimacy, and the meaning of "One Country, Two Systems." By analysing the dynamic interplay between memory and resistance, this study offers insight into the broader role of historical narratives in identity formation and political mobilization in contested societies.

PANEL III “ALTERNATIVE MEMORIES OF THE WAR IN JAPAN: WARTIME RESISTANCE, OKINAWAN CIVILIANS, SIBERIAN INTERNMENT, AND SUGIHARA CHIUNE”

(convened by Gundė DAUKŠYTĖ, Heidelberg University)

Memory of the Second World War in Japan is a multifaceted and complex topic harnessing scholarly attention worldwide. Numerous studies have tackled the intricate issues of commemoration at the Yasukuni Shrine, controversies surrounding wartime forced prostitution, and the space that the atomic bombings continue to occupy in Japanese collective memory. Yet there remain aspects and particular experiences of the war that have not been addressed by English-language scholarship to date. This panel is a collection of just four such topics. The first paper will offer a new look on wartime resistance on the Japanese islands. The second paper will address civilian memories of the Battle of Okinawa. The third paper will focus on the memory of cultural diversity in Japanese accounts about the internment in the Soviet Union. The final paper will present how Japanese visitors of museums today approach and interact with institutionalized memory of Sugihara Chiune. Together, these presentations question the idea of resilience of memory by offering cases studies of war memories that have thus far been overshadowed and had to fight, with varying degrees of success, for their place in Japanese collective memory of the war. Thus, this panel approaches resilience not as an inherent quality of wartime memories but as a product of continued effort and struggle, as evidence of individual agency, and as confirmation that society's relationship to its past is always shaped by the goals of the present.

Alice WITT (Heidelberg University) – *Portrayals of resistance of ordinary people on the home front in Japan during the Second World War*

When the topic of collective memory of World War II on the home front in Japan is brought up, mostly themes such as victimhood, endurance of hardships, and overall, passivity of ordinary people seem to be the dominant narrative. However, contrary to widespread opinion, depictions of ordinary people resisting the policies of the wartime government or exhibiting

behaviour that did not conform to the system can be found in various sources. Ordinary people were more than just passive victims of the circumstances and took an active part in the war effort, and, as Yoshimi Yoshiaki has pointed out, consciously supported the war. This paper, however, wants to focus on memories of acts of nonconformity and resistance which are various but all too often not straight-forward.

In the accounts of Japanese war participants who resisted, interestingly, one's own act of resistance is often downplayed and can only be recognized as such through methods of precise text analysis. In these accounts, police repression is emphasized more than acts of rebellion against the authorities. On the other hand, organizations that demand compensation from the state for victims of the Peace Preservation Law emphasize the 'resistance' of these victims, although not all the people who fell victim to this law actively resisted.

It is necessary to analyse how such depictions of historical events affect the resilience of collective memory and to what extent this is politically utilized. What impact do these various portrayals of memory of resistance have on collective memory, and what does this tell us about the resilience of collective memory? This part of the panel aims to understand the different ways "resistance" on the Japanese home front is depicted, the role this topic plays in collective memory of the war, and how memory of resistance is utilized for contemporary gains.

Alexandra VALDEZ (Heidelberg University) – *A Past Unresolved: Survivor Accounts of the Battle of Okinawa*

This paper will interrogate the concept of "resilience" of memory through Okinawan civilian experiences of the Battle of Okinawa (1945) published in *Okinawa-ken Shi* (1971). Rather than a story of resilience, these accounts and how they have shaped memory of the battle and the Asia-Pacific War in Okinawa and Japan reveal a memory that is both fragmented and fragile within the larger landscape of contested memory within Japan.

Employing the framework introduced Akiko Hashimoto's *The Long Defeat*, which identifies three dominant narratives of war memory in Japan—victimhood, heroism, and perpetration—Okinawan memory demonstrates that these narratives are complex and intertwined. Survivors appear as victims of both enemy and friendly troops as well as willing and unwilling collaborators of the Japanese Empire. The testimonies include accounts of coercion, violence, hunger, and the uneasy roles civilians played in navigating competing demands for patriotism and survival.

These particular accounts, recorded on the eve of Okinawa's reversion to Japan and amid persistent U.S. military presence that lasts to this day, suggest that the act of remembering is not enough to create lasting and resilient memory. Though recording is a first and vital step in preservation, such memories can still fade. The passage of time, competing narratives, and the perceived needs of the present can render these memories, though written in black and white, prone to being forgotten.

However, the fragility of Okinawan memory does not undermine its value but rather highlights the unresolved nature of war memory, particularly in a place where American bases remain eighty years after the war and Okinawan voices are side-lined in favour of larger geopolitical considerations. The question then is how memory can be made more resilient in spite of the forces working against it.

Gundė DAUKŠYTĖ (Heidelberg University) – *Cultural Diversity in Japanese Testimonies about the Siberian Internment*

In 1945, more than half a million Japanese servicemen were captured in northeastern China and Korea and taken into Soviet captivity. Due to harsh conditions, forced labour, and neglect, about ten percent died in the Soviet Union and those who returned to Japan, brought back many bitter memories about the so-called "Siberian internment." These memories are recorded in more than 2,000 published testimonies which reflect not only the internment itself but how the authors

saw, experienced, and remembered the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) more broadly. This paper explores representations of the USSR in Japanese internee accounts published in the last eighty years, with a focus on how they depict cultural diversity inside and outside the camps. This particular approach draws attention to the fact that the Soviet Union was a multicultural empire spanning across the Eurasian continent, which, at the end of the war, had absorbed nearly 4 million prisoners of war from likewise ethnically diverse armies of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. At the heart of this presentation lies the question, how resilient is memory of the cultural Other? Do Japanese former internees recall their Chinese, Korean, and other non-Japanese comrades in arms? To what extent did Japanese internees have contact with the locals and how do they depict the many peoples of the USSR? Analysis of first-hand accounts shows that the cultural diversity of the Soviet Union and its camp system did not escape Japanese internees, and memory of the cultural Other exhibits surprising resilience even decades later. Will it remain steadfast as the last eyewitnesses pass away, and the new generation takes up the task of keeping the Siberian internment relevant to the Japanese collective war memory? Or will the cultural Other fade in retellings that favor exclusivist notions of Japanese national trauma and victimhood?

Hikari BUN (Heidelberg University) – *Popular Japanese perception of Sugihara Chiune*

As part of my PhD project about Holocaust reception among Japanese people, I research on some examples of remembrance of Sugihara and his act as one of case studies, in which Japanese people get to know the Holocaust. I conducted interviews with Japanese visitors to the museums that feature Sugihara and his act: the Sugihara House in Kaunas in Lithuania, the Sugihara Chiune Memorial Hall in Yaotsu town in Japan, and the Tsuruga Museum in Tsuruga city in Japan. Through the responses from those interviews, I will discuss the resilience of the popular narrative of Sugihara's act. In such popular narrative, Sugihara is portrayed as a hero who saved Jews from the Nazi persecution by issuing Japanese visas and at the same time, he sacrificed his career and well-being of himself and his family by acting against the government's instruction. The interview responses reveal how such a straightforward portrayal of Sugihara remains powerful, even though historical research suggests different aspects. The interview responses also suggest that such portrayal of Sugihara might be tied to the popular victimhood memory of the Second World War among the Japanese: the military was responsible for the war and aggression, and the civilians were the victim of the war. Sugihara could be easily incorporated in such existing victimhood narrative of the war as a rare hero in wartime Japan who did not succumb to the military government.

SECTION III: KOREA

Karolė MIULLER (Vytautas Magnus University) – *Japanese colonial trauma in Korea and its perception in collective memory through history education*

The Japanese colonial period has resulted in deep-rooted collective trauma in Korea, significantly shaping both bilateral relations between Korea and Japan as well as the self-perception of the Korean people. Despite the past, realities of the global world order, trilateral relations involving the United States, and the shared security threat posed by North Korea have compelled South Korea and Japan to set aside the still 'unresolved' historical disputes (on Korea's end) in order to cooperate under current geopolitical circumstances. This paper, therefore, examines how the colonial past is portrayed in South Korean history education and by exploring the narrative that are communicated to students. This study analyses a selection of middle and high school history textbooks, complemented by six half-structured interviews with history teachers and one interview with a foreign specialist in the field of Korean history. This qualitative approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which historical memory is shaped and transmitted through education. Applying the framework of historical trauma in collective memory, this research identifies the key events and themes that form the core of the narration. In doing so, it sheds light on the underlying sentiments and

contemporary perceptions of the colonial experience in South Korea. Ultimately, this study reveals not only how the colonial period is represented in history education, but also how these representations serve as a mirror reflecting the ways in which the trauma of Japanese colonialism continues to be perceived and internalized in Korean society today.

Pranjali JAISWAL (Independent) – *Haenyeos: Cultural and Economic Roles of Jeju’s Sea Women*

This paper examines the cultural and economic roles of the haenyeo—the free-diving women of Jeju Island—as a lens to understand the intersection of gendered labour, local governance, and cultural preservation in South Korea. Traditionally marginalized in mainstream political discourse, haenyeo represents a unique form of matrifocal labour and ecological knowledge deeply embedded in community-based resource management. Through a critical analysis of historical records, government policies, and international recognition mechanisms such as UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage designation, this study explores how the haenyeo have transitioned from informal labourers to emblematic figures of Korean cultural identity. It also highlights the shifting political economy of their practice in the face of modernization, tourism, and demographic decline. The paper argues that the haenyeo embody a form of everyday resistance and agency, challenging dominant narratives of economic development and gender roles, while also serving as strategic actors in local and national cultural governance. By situating the haenyeo within broader debates on cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and gender politics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how localized traditions are negotiated within global frameworks of recognition and political legitimacy.

Shalini MITTAL (Bennett University) – *Silenced Survivors: A Review of Gender-Based Violence in Wartime East Asia and the Politics of Forgetting*

This paper synthesizes existing literature on gender-based violence in wartime in East Asia, with a specific focus on the experiences and marginalization of “comfort women” within a broader landscape of wartime sexual violence in China and Korea. Sexual and gender-based violence was manifested through the institutionalization of military sexual slavery and wartime rape targeting women from China, Korea and other occupied regions. However, recognition and remembrance of this trauma is contested in postwar East Asia. The paper highlights the political forgetting and sanitization of this trauma through state-sponsored discourses, in historical textbooks and public memory. This erasure is manifested in the ongoing controversies over school curricula, official apologies and restitution efforts. The analysis explores the richness of documented evidence and scholarly interpretations to consider how the trauma suffered by “comfort women” and other victims has been remembered, marginalized and sanitized. Placing these published testimonies within the context of national memory and reconciliation, the review highlights the multifaceted dynamic relationship between survivor testimonies, historical accountability, and the persistent politics of amnesia in East Asia. This paper has several practical implications. The paper highlights the need to revise school and university curricula to include survivor centred narratives of wartime gender-based violence. Findings of the present study can provide insights to inform reparative justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions and official apologies, that prioritize survivor voices. The insights will help the NGOs and advocacy groups to strengthen campaigns for recognition and restitution. The paper also offers guidance for conflict-sensitive diplomacy in East Asia, encouraging historical accountability in international relations. Additionally, it supports training programs for educators, civil servants, and media professionals on ethical representation of trauma, contributing to more empathetic public discourse and intergenerational awareness.

Alexander ROTARD (University of Leeds) – *The Imperial Gaslight: Japanese Propaganda, British Silence, and the Erasure of Korea Past and Present*

The year 2025 marks a series of key anniversaries in Japan–Korea relations, including 120 years since Korea’s loss of sovereignty under the 1905 Eulsa Treaty, 115 years since Japan’s formal annexation of Korea in 1910, and 80 years since Korea’s so-called “liberation” in 1945. These

milestones underscore the enduring legacies of Japanese colonialism and the complex, often contentious, historical relationship between Japan and the Korean peninsula. Yet in the United Kingdom—and much of the West—public awareness of these issues remains strikingly limited. In contrast, British enthusiasm for Japanese cultural products has surged, driven in part by Japan's cultural diplomacy initiatives such as the Cool Japan Policy. This paper investigates the disparity between Western consumption of Japan's cultural output and its relative disinterest in Japan's colonial past, focusing particularly on the UK context.

It argues that this disconnect is not incidental but the result of a long history of image management, beginning with Japanese imperial propaganda and continuing through contemporary cultural diplomacy. Through a reassessment of the role played by English-language media—particularly the propaganda activities of Zumoto Motosada—this study explores how Japan strategically shaped Western perceptions to justify its colonisation of Korea and erase Korean sovereignty from international discourse. It further examines how postwar soft power initiatives perpetuate these dynamics, crafting an appealing yet apolitical image of Japan for Western audiences.

Bridging historical and international relations scholarship, the paper highlights how propaganda, cultural diplomacy, and orientalist assumptions have combined to obscure colonial violence and defer accountability. Ultimately, it calls for a more critical engagement with cultural consumption and its political dimensions, arguing that Britain's failure to reckon with these issues not only perpetuates historical injustice but contributes to the ongoing tensions in Japan-Korea relations.

Eugenio De ANGELIS (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) – *Chronicles of Resilience: Memory and Belonging in Yang Yong-hi's Pyongyang Trilogy*

The Japanese colonial period and the abrupt end of World War II, with Japan losing all its colonies overnight, left a profound mark on the former colonial subjects. This is particularly true to the over 600,000 Koreans who remained in Japan after the war. These individuals swiftly lost all their rights and were subsequently marginalized, pushed to the fringes of society. Known as Zainichi Koreans, this community has historically striven to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage amidst pervasive discrimination. A lesser-known yet pivotal event in this history is the repatriation project, which, from 1959 to 1984, saw over 90,000 Koreans — regardless of their upbringing — sent to North Korea. This complex and often overlooked chapter, frequently obscured by geopolitical tensions between North and South Korea and Japan, has recently gained prominence through the cinematic works of Zainichi director Yang Yong-hi.

Yang, whose own family was profoundly impacted by the repatriation project (with her brothers in Pyongyang and her parents in Osaka), explores themes of family, homeland, memory, and resilience in her "Pyongyang trilogy," comprising two documentaries and one autobiographical fiction film made between 2006 and 2012. Her works meticulously chronicle the profound suffering of families torn apart by the repercussions of Japanese colonialism and subsequent displacement. She powerfully depicts the plight of individuals who, over time, feel alienated from both Japan and Korea, giving voice to those repatriated with little knowledge of their destination and unable to communicate with loved ones left behind. Yang's cinematic endeavours serve as invaluable acts of remembrance and deeply personal documents. Through them, she processes her own pain, ultimately seeking to forge a space where a sense of safety and belonging can finally be found.

Hyungsun KIM (Konkuk University) - *Jeju as an "Imagined Homeland": Migration Experience of North Korean 'Repatriators' in East Asia*

During and after the Cold War, a group of people had to flee from Jeju Island to Japan, then to North Korea, and eventually return to Jeju, their hometown. They were involved in the Jeju April 3rd uprising, which was a resistance against the South Korean government that pursued

division of the Korean Peninsula since 1945. Their migration to Japan as a means to survive the state violence only resulted in oppression and discrimination by former colonizers—Japan—and forced them to move to divided motherland—North Korea. The motherland's hospitality was only temporary; monitoring and discrimination against Koreans from Japan intensified within the Pyongyang's monolithic leadership system and forged hostility against their capitalistic elements. Imagining their homeland, they fled the country and returned to Jeju Island, located southernmost part of South Korea.

Referring to the interviews with these actors, this paper analyzes how the experience of North Korean 'Repatriators' was shaped by the two historical contexts—the division of the Korean Peninsula and the Cold War. Their migration experience turned Jeju Island into an "Imagined Homeland," which they believed as an ultimate destination. This research helps understand the historical trauma of these actors. They went through multiple transnational migrations caused by the Korean division and the Cold War. Unlike other migrations under the neoliberal world order, these actors crossed different borders to navigate peculiar conditions in East Asia. Moreover, this paper highlights the agency of North Korean 'Repatriators,' who sought better lives beyond the national borders between the two Koreas and Japan. Although their journey toward the "Imagined Homeland" was doomed to failure due to the extended division system in the Korean Peninsula, the author seeks the possibility to reconstruct their migrations as an attempt to overcome the unending division in the Korean Peninsula and the growing nationalistic tension within East Asia.

PANEL IV "THE DIFFICULT HOUR OF THE GODS: POLITICS, RELIGION, AND OPPOSITION TO "CULTS" IN KOREA, JAPAN, AND TAIWAN"

(convened by Massimo INTROVIGNE, University of Turin and CESNUR)

In 1967, American religious historian H. Neill McFarland devoted a book that soon became famous to what he called the "rush hour of the gods" in Japan. He argued that new religious movements (NRMs) were experiencing a much larger success in Japan and other East Asian countries than in the West. After the 1995 sarin gas attacks of Aum Shinrikyo gave NRMs a bad reputation in Japan and beyond, some scholars argued that "the rush hour of the gods" had ended. After the assassination in 2022 of former PM Shinzo Abe in Japan by the disgruntled son of a member of the Unification Church who wanted to punish him for his cooperation with the religious movement, and spectacular police raids and legal actions against several religious movements in Korea following the 2025 political elections, it may be argued that the situation is now reversed. There is a "difficult hour of the gods," as East Asia is emerging as a relevant centre of the international opposition to "cults." The session goes beyond present-day problems, exploring past issues at the crossroads between politics and religion, such as those connected with the Vietnam War in Korea and the attempt by the Kuomintang to control popular forms of devotion, such as Guanyin's, in Taiwan. From these precedents of memory, the session will move to contemporary campaigns against "cults" across East Asia and the resilience required of devotees whose very right to exist as members of specific religious organizations is put in doubt.

Yu-Chen LI (National Chengchi University) – *Neither Buddhist nor Daoist: The Ambiguous Status of Guanyin in Taiwan*

The diverse images of Guanyin (Avalokitesvara) caused the localization of its worship and the well-known case of its transformation from male to female appearance in China. In Taiwan, the worship of Guanyin Buddha emerged by the 1740s, and the number of its temples has overwhelmed those of all other deities to this day. Japanese Buddhist schools emphasized Shakyamuni Buddha, and the KMT government presented Taiwan as "an authentic rescuer of Chinese Buddhism." As the image of Guanyin Buddha in Taiwan differs from that in Buddhist monasteries, its spread still relies on distributing its statues to branch temples and the temple network of Mazu (one of the most popular goddesses). However, the term "Guanyin Buddha" "disappeared" after 1949, being replaced by the name "Guanyin Pusa" (Avalokitesvara).

In contemporary Taiwan, Guanyin's religious identity is very confused. Some Buddhist scholars view it as a Daoist deity, but ironically, Daoist temples do not worship Guanyin Buddha or Guanyin Pusa. Anthropologists even created the term "Buddhist body with a Daoist essence."

This paper will investigate the politics of Guanyin Buddha's ambiguous identity through the changing official temple registration systems in the last century and the dominance of Buddhist monastics under Martial Law (from 1949 to 1987). Hopefully, this case will shed light on how official standardization movements change the popular identities of specific deities.

Chih-Che TSAI and Yowting SHUENG (National Chengchi University) – *The Other on the Vietnamese Battlefield: Anti-War Reflections in a Korean Pastor's Vietnam War Memoir*

This paper examines Korean pastor Jung Myung-Seok's Vietnam War memoir *War Is Cruel: Love and Peace* as a rare anti-war testimony from an East Asian conscript. Unlike dominant U.S.-centric Vietnam War narratives, Jung offers a bottom-up reflection rooted in Christian ethics and firsthand trauma. Mobilized under Park Chung-hee's regime, Jung critiques South Korea's participation in the war and deconstructs the "frame of war" that glorifies violence and erases individual suffering. Through personal recollections, including a transformative encounter with a North Vietnamese soldier, Jung transcends Cold War binaries and proposes a theology of just peace. His rejection of military medals and denunciation of state violence underscore a broader humanitarian critique. Quite irrespectively of subsequent events concerning Jung, including his founding of a large church and recent sentencing and detention for sexual abuse, this study places the pastor's narrative in dialogue with global pacifist traditions and East Asian memory politics, arguing for its interest in reshaping the historiography of the Vietnam War and restoring marginalized Asian voices.

Massimo INTROVIGNE (University of Turin and CESNUR) – *Christian Opposition to "Cults" in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan*

While secular humanists dominated the anti-cult movements in the United States and Europe, East Asia's situation has always been different. There, opposition to "cults" has been largely promoted primarily by Protestant pastors and laypersons. Even most (although not all) "deprogrammers" have been Protestant pastors, which has never been the case in the West. China has a long tradition of opposition to "xie jiao" (movements promoting "heterodox teachings"). Although fighting "xie jiao" is regarded as a task of the state, nationalist China mobilized Protestantism to fight "cultic superstition." Even in the contemporary People's Republic, pastors of the government-controlled Three-Self Church play a key role in mobilizing Christians against the "xie jiao," and in promoting the cooperation of Chinese pro-regime religionists with anti-cultists in other countries. In Korea and Japan, although also enrolling left-wing secular intellectuals and lawyers, the anti-cult movement and deprogramming have largely been Protestant affairs. The Kuomintang mobilized Christian churches loyal to the regime to support its crackdown on "cults" during the Martial Law era in Taiwan, just as it co-opted pro-government Buddhists. Today, Taiwan is a beacon of religious liberty compared to other East Asian countries. Yet, the effects of anti-cult campaigns conducted in Korea and Japan are felt there as well.

Rosita ŠORYTĚ (European Federation for Freedom of Belief) – *Deprogrammed Apostates and Atrocity Stories About Korean and Japanese "Cults"*

The recent years' spectacular campaigns against "cults" in Japan and Korea have relied mainly on what American sociologists call "atrocity stories" by "apostates" who have left specific religious movements, including Providence and the Unification Church, and claim to have been their "victims." "Apostates," as used by sociologists of religion, is not a derogatory term, nor is it a synonym of "ex-members." It identifies the minority of ex-members who turn into militant opponents of the group they have left. Most ex-members quietly continue their lives and are not "apostates." The process of converting ex-members into apostates typically involves

their socialization into an anti-cult subculture. Those who were forcibly “deprogrammed” to leave their religious movement—a practice banned by courts of law in the U.S. and the European Union since the past century, but which has been declared illegal in Japan only in 2015 and is still going on in Korea—have the best chances of becoming apostates. The paper mentions the case of the deprogrammed members of the Unification Church in Japan who filed lawsuits against it, which became a key element in the proceedings for the dissolution of the church after the assassination of Shinzo Abe, then examines the international fame of an Australian deprogrammed ex-member of Providence, Liz Cameron, who has emerged as a vocal opponent of her former church.

Patricia DUVAL – *“Public Welfare” and Religious Liberty in Japan: The Case of the Unification Church*

Japan desired to regain prestige amongst the international community when it adopted its new Constitution after World War II. It is committed to protecting fundamental rights, particularly the right of Japanese people to freedom of religion or belief. However, Japan has kept a significant limitation on this right in its laws and Constitution to this day, in the name of “Public Welfare”. Based on this vague and arbitrary notion, the Japanese authorities are now on the verge of dissolving the former Unification Church, a religious corporation that has gathered around 600,000 followers in Japan. After endorsing the “deprogramming” of its members for half a century and letting the media hype label it anti-Japan due to its Korean origin, the government is now preparing the disbandment of all its assets while the High Court has yet (July 2025) to rule on the case, certain as it is of the outcome of the appeal. To pursue their fight for their right to exist, the Japanese members of the Unification Church would need an extraordinary capacity for resilience.

SECTION IV: JAPAN

Aya KIMURA (Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine) – *Balancing Narratives in Peace-Themed Exhibition Partnerships: A Japanese-Lithuanian Museum Collaboration*

The increasing global polarization necessitates multiple perspectives in peace-building efforts, particularly in museum narratives. While war museums typically emphasize local contexts, international collaborations in exhibitions can broaden visitors' perspectives. This study examines the balance of narratives in cross-cultural museum collaboration through a case study of "Surviving Siberia: The Story of Lithuanians in Exile," an international peace-themed exhibition held at Japan's Memorial Museum for Soldiers, Detainees in Siberia, and Postwar Repatriates (October 2024-January 2025).

The research employed semi-structured interviews with curators from both the hosting Japanese institution and the co-organizing National Museum of Lithuania to investigate how museums balance narratives when preparing international exhibitions. Using Qualitative Content Analysis of transcribed interview data, the study identified three key themes: single-oriented narrative development, diplomatic intentions, and logistical complexities.

Findings reveal that the Lithuanian side predominantly shaped the exhibition's narrative framework and core concept from the initial planning stages. While diplomatic channels, specifically ambassadors and cultural attachés, facilitated the initial project proposal, the substantive development was carried out by the museums. For the hosting Japanese institution, its smaller scale and limited experience with international loans posed significant administrative challenges in managing complex loan documentation. This highlights a broader consideration for war museums, which are often smaller institutions with less administrative capacity. Despite these challenges, the asymmetric narrative balance was accepted by the Japanese institution for two primary reasons: the proposed narrative's legitimacy and the exhibition's placement within a designated space following the museum's permanent exhibition, which already represented the local perspective comprehensively.

This case study demonstrates how successful international museum collaborations can accommodate asymmetric narrative control while maintaining institutional integrity through strategic exhibition placement and narrative complementarity.

Jingran HUANG (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) – *Memorializing the Japanese Emigration in Manchuria: Monuments, Statues and Museums in China and Japan*

Since the Mukden Incident in 1931, Japan sent over 300,000 farmer-settlers to its puppet state-Manchuria. When Japan's defeat became imminent in August 1945, these settlers were forced to flee for their lives and fend for themselves amid hunger, disease, and attacks from both Soviet soldiers and local Chinese residents. Many were captured by the Soviet army, interned in Siberia, and subjected to forced labour for years before they were repatriated to Japan. In addition, during the evacuation from Manchuria, numerous Japanese children were left behind and subsequently adopted by Chinese families. These children came to be known as Japanese war orphans.

This presentation introduces four commemorative sites related to this history. Two are located in China: The Name Walls in Fangzheng County—originally built in memory of the deceased Japanese settlers but later removed after criticism from official media and replaced with a name wall of Chinese foster parents; The Statue of a Chinese Foster Parent located at the 918 Memorial Museum in Shenyang. The remaining two are in Japan: The Memorial Museum of Japanese Emigration to Manchuria in Iida City, and the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum. All the sites mentioned above highlight specific aspects of this history and integrate them into the local memory construction.

While the monuments in Fangzheng County reflect the resilience of local memory and its negotiation with state power, the statue in Shenyang integrates the foster-parent narrative into grand national discourse. In contrast, the carefully constructed narratives at the Japanese museums illustrate the contested and controversial war memory in Japan. Following a visual introduction to these four sites, this presentation will explore the dynamic relationship between local and national memory and examine how the museums negotiate the complex role of Japanese settlers—as both victims and perpetrators.

Loris ZEVRAIN (University of Milan) – *Narrative and Counter-Narrative: Mishima Yukio and the Role of Literature in Japan's Historical Memory*

As East Asia continues to grapple with fractured memories of war and imperialism, Mishima Yukio's work offers a particularly vivid lens through which to explore how literature can intervene in the politics of remembrance. His oeuvre provides a powerful example of how literary narrative can challenge, reshape, and complicate national memory. In fact, in a postwar Japan marked by the trauma of defeat and the rise of a pacifist narrative, the author formulates a striking counter-narrative, one that confronts dominant memory culture not through revisionism, but by dramatizing the emotional and symbolic tensions left unresolved in Japan's transformation.

Rather than passively reflecting history, Mishima's works actively engage with its aftermath. Themes such as sacrifice, honour, the beauty of death, and the spiritual void of modernity become tools through which he explores the rift between Japan's imperial heritage and its postwar identity. In doing so, he offers a radically aestheticized and politically charged vision of memory, one that both fascinates and unsettles.

His own death, staged as a ritual act of protest, intensified the resonance of his literary project. It blurred the lines between author and performance, literature and political gesture, leaving behind a legacy that continues to provoke polarised responses. Indeed, his reception — admiring, dismissive, mythologising — reveals how deeply unsettled Japan's relationship to its past remains.

By examining Mishima as a counter-narrative voice, this paper highlights how literature can intervene in the negotiation of collective memory, challenge official narratives, and expose their emotional and ideological blind spots. This approach sheds light not only on Japan's memory politics but also on broader processes of remembrance and reconciliation in East Asia's post-traumatic landscape.

Nataša Visočnik GERŽELJ (University of Ljubljana) – *Pacifism in Japan – Historical Evolution and Contemporary Perception*

Pacifism in Japan is a complex and deeply rooted concept shaped by historical trauma, cultural values, and constitutional law. It is most prominently symbolized by Article 9 of Japan's post-World War II constitution, enacted in 1947, which renounces war and prohibits the maintenance of military forces for purposes of aggression. This clause, influenced by the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and guided by Allied Occupation policies, became the cornerstone of Japan's postwar identity as a "peace state." Historically, Japan's pacifist turn marked a stark contrast to its militarist past, particularly during the Meiji and imperial eras, when expansionism and military prowess defined national policy.

Throughout the postwar period, pacifism was both a legal principle and a popular sentiment. Grassroots peace movements, particularly in the 1950s and 60s, mobilized citizens against nuclear weapons and U.S. military bases, reinforcing a national consciousness centred on peace. However, Japan's security alliance with the United States and the creation of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954 introduced ambiguity into the pacifist framework, fostering ongoing legal and political debate over the limits of self-defence.

In contemporary Japan, pacifism remains a powerful, though contested, ideal. While many Japanese continue to support the constitutional renunciation of war, geopolitical tensions—particularly with China and North Korea—have prompted debates on constitutional revision and expanding the role of the SDF. The 2015 reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow for collective self-defence marked a significant shift in Japan's pacifist posture. Nevertheless, pacifism continues to shape Japanese identity through cultural expressions, education, and diplomatic rhetoric emphasizing peace, nonviolence, and international cooperation.

Today, pacifism in Japan is imagined as both a moral stance and a political principle under pressure, reflecting the country's ongoing negotiation between historical memory, national security, and its aspiration to be a global advocate for peace.



Kaunas City

With around 300 thousand inhabitants, Kaunas is one of the most significant cities of Lithuania. It is situated at the heart of Lithuania, at the confluence of the rivers Neris and Nemunas. Once the provisional capital of Lithuania during the interwar period, Kaunas is famous for its colourful history, impressive modernist architecture, remarkable Old Town and rich cultural heritage. Nowadays, it is a fast-growing modern city that became a leading regional centre of business, industry, science, studies and culture.

Kaunas is a hometown of six universities and is often called as a city of students. VMU stands out as the stronghold of liberal and social arts studies not only in Kaunas but whole of Lithuania. With more than 100 students in both BA and MA programs focused on China, Korea and Japan, VMU is also the leading university in East Asian studies in the Baltic Region. The main coordinating unit of Asian studies at VMU is the Centre for Asian Studies: <http://asc.vdu.lt>

Kaunas is also of great significance for its relation to the Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara, who lived in Kaunas during the 1939-40 period, and who issued his famous Visas for Life, thus saving thousands of Jewish lives, who were able to escape holocaust via Soviet Union and Japan. Many places that are directly related to this story can still be found in the city. Among them are the former Consulate of Japan (so called Sugihara House), Metropolis Hotel, Kaunas Railway Station, etc. Recently Kaunas City has developed the so-called Sugihara Route, which includes the majority of objects related to Sugihara and Japan.

Venue

The conference will take place in Vytautas Magnus University's building located at the very centre of Kaunas – Putvinskio str. 23: <https://goo.gl/maps/ETP5z2aNjz8kaVFJ8>



Accommodation

We kindly ask all participants to book accommodation by themselves. There are numerous hotels or apartments close to the conference venue that you can find through [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), [agoda.com](https://www.agoda.com), [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) or other accommodation booking websites. Here are several suggestions indicating walking time to the venue:

Low price (up to 50 Eur per night): Kaunas Apartments (8 min.), Hostel Lux (8 min.)

Medium price (50-100 Eur per night): Metropolis (7 min.), Best Baltic Kaunas (8 min.), Moxy Kaunas Center (9 min.), HOF Hotel (9 min.), Kaunas City Hotel (10 min.), Best Western (18 min.)

High price (over 100 Eur per night): Radisson Hotel Kaunas (5 min.), Hotel Kaunas (10 min.)

Transport

If you arrive via Vilnius International Airport, first you will have to reach Vilnius train or bus station (both of them are next to each other). You can do that by taking train, public transportation bus or taxi. After arriving to train or bus station, you can either take a bus to Kaunas (leaves around every 30 minutes; timetables can be checked at <http://www.autobusubilietai.lt/>) or a train (less frequent than buses, timetables can be found at <https://bilietas.lt/link.lt/>).

If you arrive via Kaunas International Airport, you can reach Kaunas city centre by bus that leaves once or twice every hour (timetables can be found at <https://www.stops.lt/kaunas/#bus/29/a-b/734/en>).

Within Kaunas you can use either public buses (basic information at <https://www.kvt.lt/en/>) or taxi.