

Symposium | Trauma : [Symposium 59] Cultural Responses to WW2 in Japan: Interdisciplinary Reflections and Intercultural Dialogue

🏛 Sat. Sep 27, 2025 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM JST | Sat. Sep 27, 2025 12:00 AM - 1:30 AM UTC 🏛 Session
Room 6 (Conference Room B)

[Symposium 59] Cultural Responses to WW2 in Japan: Interdisciplinary Reflections and Intercultural Dialogue

Moderator: Yuki Imoto (Keio University), Kai Ogimoto (Sagami Women's University) Discussant: Koh Eugen (University of Melbourne)
Discussant: Eugen Koh (University of Melbourne)

[SY-59-03] On the Myth of "Izanaki and Izanami": Mythological Thinking and Inability to Mourn after WW2 in Japan

*Kai Ogimoto¹ (1. Sagami Women's University (Japan))

Keywords : inability to mourn、 Japanese mythology、 social unconscious、 war responsibility、 psychoanalysis

The German psychoanalysts Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich applied S. Freud's theory of the process of mourning to their analysis of postwar German society. The Mitscherlichs pointed out that the German people had not begun to mourn the loss of Adolf Hitler, their highest authority. In their manic rush to economic activity, they considered that by not even beginning the work of mourning, people had failed to confront the crimes of genocide, such as the invasions and holocausts (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1967). The author believes that this structure also occurred in Japan, where "Inability to mourn" the loss of the Emperor as a living god after WW2 may explain the collective mode of reaction postwar Japan, including the country's inability to accept the atrocities it has committed (Ogimoto & Plaenkers, 2024).

Mythology is one way to explore the social unconscious: "Society behaves as a cohesive entity under the influence of myths and stories, and iteratively repeats the themes described in the myths and stories" (Hopper & Weinberg, 2011). Psychoanalyst Osamu Kitayama analyzes Japanese mythology "Izanaki-Izanami-story" in Kojiki (Kitayama & Hashimoto, 2009). The myth is a tragedy in which two couple gods cannot mourn the other's loss and blame each other. The male god never reflects his commitment to humiliation towards the female god. He does not take responsibility.

What the author has learned from experience of training and practice in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is that when emotionally loaded persons come face to face, the guilt or shame of perpetration is easily projected onto the other person. Facing one's own evil or sadism requires a safe space where one is allowed to take the time to explore it and not be shamed or asked for formalistic redemption.