

Symposium | Trauma : [Symposium 64] The long-term effects of the Asia-Pacific War and its transmission across generations in individuals, collectives and societies

🏛 Sat. Sep 27, 2025 10:40 AM - 12:10 PM JST | Sat. Sep 27, 2025 1:40 AM - 3:10 AM UTC 🏛 Session
Room 5 (Conference Room A)

[Symposium 64] The long-term effects of the Asia-Pacific War and its transmission across generations in individuals, collectives and societies

Moderator: Koh Eugen (University of Melbourne), Tadashi Takeshima (Taisho University)

[SY-64]

The long-term effects of the Asia-Pacific War and its transmission across generations in individuals, collectives and societies

Koh Eugen², Tadashi Takeshima¹, Shin Kurumizawa³ (1. Taisho University (Japan), 2. University of Melbourne (Australia), 3. Hananotani Clinic (Japan))

[SY-64-01]

The transmission of Second World War Trauma across generations

*Eugen Koh¹ (1. University of Melbourne (Australia))

[SY-64-02]

The Impact of the Asia-Pacific War on Suicide and Mental Health Policy in Japan

*Tadashi Takeshima¹ (1. Taisho University (Japan))

[SY-64-03]

Transgenerational transmission of responsibility of perpetrator

*Shin Kurumizawa¹ (1. Hananotani Clinic (Japan))

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[SY-64] The long-term effects of the Asia-Pacific War and its transmission across generations in individuals, collectives and societies

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Keywords : Asia-Pacific War、transgenerational trauma、long term effects

80 years after it ended, the Asia-Pacific region is still experiencing the long term effects of the war that left some 30 millions dead and many more millions injured. The transmission of the impact of the war over generations in individuals has been conceptualised as transgenerational trauma. Its long-term impact on collectives and society may be conceptualised as cultural trauma, where the way people feel about themselves, behave, and relate to one another as a group has been changed by their shared experience of the War. This symposium is on the long term effects of the Asia-Pacific War and its transmission across generations in individuals and collectives and societies.

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[SY-64-01] The transmission of Second World War Trauma across generations

*Eugen Koh¹ (1. University of Melbourne (Australia))

Keywords : War、 Cultural trauma、 generations

Even though 80 years and three generations have passed since the end of the Second World War, the long-term effects of that war remain. In individuals, the psychological effects of the trauma of one generation affect the development of their children and grandchildren – we call this phenomenon transgenerational trauma. In groups and society, the impacts are embedded in their social, collective or shared consciousness - which is their culture – causing cultural trauma. *Cultural trauma can be defined as the distortion or destruction to a culture resulting from widely shared experiences that cannot or have not been processed.* These changes affect the behaviour of individuals and large groups, including social institutions and processes, and government policies and operations. The impact of cultural trauma on a country can continue for generations if it remains unexamined and unaddressed. This presentation highlights the potential long-term impacts of the war through cultural trauma and discusses a unique project to address them in Japan, through a series of interdisciplinary symposia involving over a thousand participants over 7 years, and the subsequent formation of the Japanese Society for Interdisciplinary Studies on the Long-Term Effects of War (J-SISLEW).

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Moderator: Koh Eugen (University of Melbourne), Tadashi Takeshima (Taisho University)

[SY-64-02] The Impact of the Asia-Pacific War on Suicide and Mental Health Policy in Japan

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Keywords : suicide、 mental hospital bed、 Asia-Pacific War、 long-term effect、 mental health policy

Japan experienced three waves of suicide increase after the Asia-Pacific War. The first wave was around 1955, when suicides among young people who had experienced drastic social changes before and after the war increased sharply. The second wave was around 1985, and the third wave was from 1998 for about a decade. The second and third waves were characterized by a significant increase in suicides among the same generation as the first wave. The first national law regarding mental healthcare in Japan was the Psychiatric Patients Custody Law of 1900. This law permitted private confinement and was inadequate in terms of medical care. To address this, the Mental Hospital Law was enacted in 1919, but many psychiatric patients remained in private confinement. With the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War, the number of psychiatric beds decreased due to war damage and other factors. After the war, with the approval of the GHQ, the Mental Health Law was enacted in 1950 through a private member's bill, abolishing private confinement and requiring the hospitalization of psychiatric patients in psychiatric hospitals. The 1954 National Survey by the Ministry of Health revealed a severe shortage of psychiatric beds, leading to the establishment of national budgetary provisions for the establishment and operation of psychiatric hospitals, resulting in a rapid increase in mental hospital beds, which is known as the "psychiatric hospital boom," with a sharp increase in the number of hospital beds. The post-war surge in suicide deaths, the rapid increase in mental hospital beds, and the delayed development of community care are all considered to be part of the negative legacy of the Asia-Pacific War. It cannot be denied that the war had a significant impact on mental health policy in Japan.

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Moderator: Koh Eugen (University of Melbourne), Tadashi Takeshima (Taisho University)

[SY-64-03] Transgenerational transmission of responsibility of perpetrator

*Shin Kurumizawa¹ (1. Hananotani Clinic (Japan))

Keywords : cultural trauma、taboos、Transgenerational transmission、responsibility of perpetrator

War is not fought only on the battlefield. Within a nation, any thoughts, feelings, or intentions that interfere with the conduct of war are suppressed as evil and must not be spoken of. Culture is only allowed to conform to the needs of a nation at war, and anything that does not conform is deemed unacceptable and cannot develop. Trauma is encapsulated in its culture, and the taboo of not being able to speak about that trauma perpetuates in it. Even after war ends, if the taboos formed during the war are not resolved, cultural trauma remains and continues to influence the minds of post-war people. This is the transgenerational transmission of cultural trauma. When taboos are touched upon, not only the experiences of victims but also those of perpetrators remain unspoken, contributing to the formation of cultural trauma.