

Topics of Historical Memory in Japan

War Apologies

“Memory, Apology and International Reconciliation”

Jennifer Lind

November 21, 2008

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Jennifer-Lind/2957>

“Memories and Aporias in the Japan-Korea Relationship”

Alexis Dudden

April 5, 2010

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Alexis-Dudden/3337>

“The Comfort Women, the Asian Women’s Fund and the Digital Museum”

Wada Haruki

February 1, 2008

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/2653>

“Neo-Nationalist Interpretations of Japan’s Annexation of Korea: The Colonization Debate in Japan and South Korea”

Mark Caprio

November 1, 2010

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Mark-Caprio/3438>

In demanding apologies for specific war crimes, many are often seeking a larger admission: an apology for starting and conducting a misguided war of aggression. Nevertheless, in media all over the world, we often encounter the claim that Japan “has not apologized” for its war and war crimes. Although this is not entirely correct, there are sound reasons why Japanese apologies have been dismissed as “insincere.” The articles in this section look at the rising significance of apologies in international relations in general and, in the words of Jennifer Lind, the “relationship between historical memory and international reconciliation.” Alexis Dudden focuses directly on the issue of apology in recent Japanese-Korean relations while Wada Haruki examines debate over an apology specifically to the comfort women. He also introduces the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF), which was founded by the Japanese government as a way to manage the disagreement over the politics of reconciliation in Japan. Through the AWF, the Japanese government indirectly apologized to the former comfort women and offered reparation, although the actual funds came from the private sector rather than the government. Many comfort women considered the Japanese government’s decision to work through a semi-public organization an insincere scheme to evade direct apology and compensation. In the end, most comfort women refused to accept any money from the AWF. Mark Caprio addresses later debates in Japan concerning an apology for colonizing Korea, an issue that received renewed attention in 2010, the 100th anniversary of the annexation of Korea to Japan. At this time, many neonationalists rejected the need to apologize and instead emphasized the achievements of Japanese colonial rule. The colonization of Korea, they also stress, was accepted by other nations at the time.