



Universität
Zürich^{UZH}

Historisches Seminar, Master of Advanced Studies in Applied History

«An Abundance of Memory and a Fear of History: how war crimes trials divided East Asia»

Prof. Dr. Barak Kushner (University of Cambridge)

Contrary to popular belief, Japan did not lose one war in 1945 but three. War crimes trials in East Asia were therefore more complex than their Western counterparts because the Europeans strove to maintain colonial law in regions where they struggled to reimpose control, while professing adherence to international law.

Defining imperial defeat as well as victory were issues very much still up for grabs in the immediate aftermath of Japan's 1945 surrender. Assigning blame and responsibility for the war and Japanese war crimes, while managing that historical debate in court, became a lynchpin to short and longer term geo-political stability.

The French Historian, Benjamin Stora, noted in his 2020 analysis of Algeria-French historical debates about their seven year war that over the last few decades history has come to serve a different master and his line of analysis is cogent for East Asia as well. Conservatives on all sides of the Sea of Japan have grown increasingly less interested in investigating what historically had actually occurred and more concerned with proving that they had been correct in the past.

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