

Abstract

The Imjin War (壬辰戰爭), the military conflict between Japan, Korea and China during the years 1592-1598, counts as one of the most important „shared“ historical experiences in East Asia during pre-modern times.

In this presentation I will consider the Imjin War in it's role as “*lieu de mémoire*” (“realm of memory”) or in other words: as a focal point of East Asian historical consciousness after 1945.

No one who has seen the statues heroes from the Imjin War standing all over Korea, has visited the Japanese museum on the conflict in Kyūshū or has ever read a popular Chinese internet novel on this topic could seriously deny the fact that even today this military conflict is a very powerful focal point of historical memory throughout the region. It still continues to shape the perceptions of the (heroic) self and the (antagonistic) other.

In order to analyse how the Imjin War has been reflected in the cultures of remembrance in Japan, Korean and China since the end of WW II, I will take a look at representative examples from such fields as history textbooks, museological exhibitions and film productions in East Asia.

It is not my aim to find some kind of „historical truth“ or take sides with one particular point of view in the sensitive field of history education, but rather to explore the topic from the perspective of cultural sciences.

The paper is primarily aimed at facilitating a critical, but constructive reflection on how the events are told, what kind of narratives are presented to the „captive population of schoolchildren“, the visitor of museums and the viewer of historical television series or movies.