

In an interview with Japanese magazine *Voice*, former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) said that Taiwan did not fight in the Second Sino-Japanese War, because at that time Taiwan was part of Japanese territory, and Taiwanese were fighting for their mother country — Japan. The statement was strongly condemned by members of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), with the Presidential Office demanding an apology and KMT legislators planning to amend the law to deprive Lee of his privileges as a former president.

From the perspective of historical accuracy, following the Qing Dynasty government's decision to cede Taiwan to Japan under the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Taiwan became part of Japan and Taiwanese became Japanese citizens. Although this made many Taiwanese unhappy, Japan did indeed rule Taiwan for half a century.

During World War II, 80,000 Taiwanese joined the Japanese Imperial Army and fought in the war, with more than 30,000 of them losing their lives. Most Taiwanese did not participate in the War of Resistance Against Japan, and this was the experience of the older generation who were born and bred Taiwanese, so Lee was perfectly right in what he said.

However, not everyone in Taiwan these days is born and bred Taiwanese; there are also hundreds of thousands of Mainlanders who came here when the KMT army retreated from China after losing the civil war in 1949. In addition, the KMT made its eight-year war against Japan the orthodox collective memory of Taiwanese by imposing its version of events on history curricula.

It has commemorated its war against Japan every year, and this year — trying to highlight its key role in the war against Japan — it held an expanded ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat. The memory of the War of Resistance Against Japan does in fact exist in Taiwan.

Different versions of history coexist in Taiwan, so it is only natural that there are divisions. The memories of all are valid. The ethnic integration that has taken place since 1949 has meant that people with different backgrounds and ideas about the past are living within the same borders. Although the KMT attempted to brainwash the public, it has not been able to obliterate the experience of the Taiwanese people.

KMT's futile obsession with history

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Tuesday, 25 August 2015 07:48

Turning history into a political football forces people to choose sides and is a consequence of Taiwan's long-standing insincerity regarding history and politics. Not investigating key events, judging statements from the perspective of political correctness, introducing politics into school textbooks, and distorting or giving fragmentary explanations have obfuscated the unique backgrounds and experiences of ethnic groups and created a lopsided view of history.

This is the reason for the long-standing enmity between ethnic groups and it has also contributed to generational conflict.

Mainlanders' experiences of fighting Japan and the experience of Japanese rule among those born and bred in Taiwan do not incorporate the whole of modern Taiwan's collective memory.

The attitude toward Japan among young Taiwanese is based not only on school textbooks, but also on information gleaned from magazines, movies, music and the Internet, and also perhaps on visiting the country. Using Japanese names such as Masao Iwasato — Lee's Japanese name — or Buntetsu Aoyama — a reference to Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je's (柯文哲) name — to attack public figures in a bid to win votes might be an attempt to stir up anti-Japanese sentiment among older KMT supporters, but such extreme measures can only lead to a dead-end.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2015/08/25](#)