

# The Shaping of Japan's Collective Memory in Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*

Raisa Akmalie and Shobichatul Aminah

## ABSTRACT

Historically, the collective memory of Japanese society was shaped through narratives created by the authorities. The mechanism of power in the formation of collective memory can be seen through the process of censorship as a tool used to erase certain public perceptions during the Meiji period to the beginning of the Showa Period. The preservation of power in the hands of Japan's elites created control of the people in terms of what they should know, remember, and act according to the narration that fitted the agenda of these elites. This paper examines the process of the shaping of collective memory in Japan prior to the three periods from Meiji to early Showa. This study uses a novel by Yoko Ogawa titled *The Memory Police* as a sites of memory to examine the shaping of collective memory in Japanese society. This paper is a qualitative research and uses Foucault's theory of power and Michels' theory of elites, as well as Nora's notion of sites of memory as theoretical framework. The research found that all of these aspects of power mechanism in a form of censorship in those three periods of Japan's past and the role of elites that used their influence to eradicate informations contributed to the shaping of collective memory. Moreover, *The Memory Police* as a novel came as a sites of memory that belongs to the society that tried to resist and contest the official narration of Japan's collective memory.

**Keywords:** Censorship, Collective Memory, Power, *The Memory Police*.

**Published Online:** May 12, 2023

**ISSN:** 2736-5522

**DOI:** 10.24018/ejsocial.2023.3.3.426

**R. Akmalie**

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

(e-mail: raisa.akmalie@ui.ac.id)

**S. Aminah \***

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

(e-mail: shobichatul@ui.ac.id)

\*Corresponding Author

## I. INTRODUCTION

Memory contains stored informations. As a study done by Foong and Chandran (2020), memory could not be simply understood as a storing machine, but a way to acknowledge and combining new informations (Foong & Chandran, 2020, p. 101). Similar to the former explanation, Nicole Maurantonio (2014) emphasized that memory is understood as a bridge between a phenomena that had happened in the past with what we have and experience in the present (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 222). In other words, memory is a method to understand situations, informations, and circumstances that took place in the past and how to accomodate those conditions in the context of nowadays. A study of memory was famously known and presented by Maurice Halbwachs (1950) in which he claimed that once an individual born in this world, they belong to a community that raise and live with them. In other words, they will live according to the norms, values, and beliefs that the community shapes them to be. That is where the conception of collective memory was constituted (Whitehead, 2009, p. 126).

Collective memory is an idea in which some events in the past had shaped a certain community to think, act, and perceive the events in a certain type of way. Usually, collective memory is what appeared as an official memory. In that case, the official memory belongs to a group of people that possess power and domination, and this whole thing was utilized in order to control what the former group want them to be. Collective memory is prone to be associated with the act of remembering. However, collective memory is not simply about remembering and revisiting. Collective memory is also associated with the act of forgetting (Maurantonio, 2014, pp. 230-231). Just like the act of remembering could be driven by the people in power, so does the act of forgetting. People in power could drive and mobilize the public to forget certain information that they think could not benefit them in the long run. To put it simply, collective memory is the end product of both the act of remembering and forgetting put in a work because both acts consist of control in which people in power could shape, create, and censor whatever happened in the past for the sake of what their stands to be in the present times. This is what Japan experienced for decades, and we could traces back from the time Japan decided to open their country; Meiji Restoration.

### A. Japan and Its Collective Memory

Meiji Restoration was a result of accumulated events in Japan's past that significantly shaped what Japan is today. The elites that was symbolized and represented by the name of emperor, used their authorities to justify their power and eradicate things that deemed to be dangerous to the legitimation of the elites. All of these were earned with the help of institutional forces which were a sort of invisible hands of the authority of the ruling elites to create a certain condition. This condition, simply explained, made the presence of the ruling elites could be felt in the mind of the people.

Japan's collective memory is an output of many measures that has been made, molded, reduced, and shaped to fit the agenda of the ruling elites. The people who rule will have a power over the collective memory, so does the control over the people's mind. However, there will be a group of people that resist and counter with a different perspectives from the official memory, in which these group of people will contest the official memory that has been created. This is exactly what happened in Japan, there is a contestation over the collective memory that try to eradicate the informations of Japan's crimes in the past and this contestation has not been over yet to this day (Dian, 2015, p. 366).

One of a complex tools of power could influence how society think and act according to the will of the elites is in the form of censorship. Education Ministry prohibited many books in 1882 that were condemned to be dangerous for the moral of Japanese society (Domier, 2013, p. 94). Around the time, police institution were deployed in every corners of the libraries to survey and control the publications, in which created limitations in the library which is supposed to bear many access to variety of knowledge (Domier, 2013, p. 98). When we discuss about censorship, we could not exclude the role of Public Security Preservation Law that was passed to implement in 1925, a year before Showa Period began. This law had a significant contribution to control the people and create a certain perceptions (Lucken, 2017, pp. 4-5).

These regulations were a proof that described how elites in power could forbid a particular informations to be shared in the name of morally dangerous materials. Society was forced to forget things that fit elites' agenda. The demand to forget in a form of censorship were a part of complicated process of collective memory shaping in Japan. Since Japan's collective memory underwent creating, recreating, shaping, and reshaping, the memory became inconsistent. Not only in regards to the events prewar, but also postwar. Thus, allowing Japanese society to have their own perceptions in seeing themselves as a nation.

### B. Reflection of Japan's Collective Memory on *The Memory Police*

The issue of Japan's collective memory could be seen in a novel that was written by Japanese Author, Yoko Ogawa. The novel, *The Memory Police*, describes events unfolding through first point of view. The novel tells a story of a young woman that lives in an island where the disappearances happen regularly as if people could not stop it if things suddenly 'disappears'. Uniquely, the people on the island become so accustomed with the phenomena thus make them feel like disappearances occur as something normal. Even if the things hold so many meaning to them, they could not remember clearly about those things that had disappeared. The memories associated with the disappeared objects felt like being stripped away from the core of their brain. If some objects are 'scheduled' to be disappeared, informations attached to those respective objects should be abolished. The Memory Police appears to serve the function to force the disappearances; collecting other objects containing informations about the said disappeared objects. The people that still remember or hide the 'disappeared' objects could get consequences to be captured by them (Ogawa, 2020).

The association between the context in *The Memory Police* and the collective memory of Japan could be connected by the author's background which is a Japanese descent. Ulrich Baer, cited by Anne Whitehead (2003) once stated that: '*understanding one event enables our consciousness in seeing the particular event in the historical and contemporary context where we stand at the moment*' (Whitehead, 2003, hal. 275).

In this case, the place where the author was born could shape the consciousness of that author to see themselves in the context of the past and the present in creating their masterpiece. Therefore, *The Memory Police* might have a close association to Japan's condition in the context of the past, author's background, the present which the author currently live and creating the story.

As what Nora (1996) and Confino (1997) stated about the sites of memory, *The Memory Police* could be understood as a memory sites in which the novel reflects an evidence of memory contestation which not belongs to the official, rather to the society sides as a form of resistance (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 8).

In this case, *The Memory Police* is highly possible to convey sensitive issues which belongs to Japan's history just from seeing the background of the author. The association could be seen from the phenomena that the text try to explain about the object eradication in order to create new realities.

Therefore, we argue that the plot of *The Memory Police* shows some issues about power mechanism that have a significant effect in memory shaping. In this context, the Memory Police utilize their power to eliminate something or someone that possess a threats or generally could create a disorder in society. This creates a system where the people of the island perceive the disappearances as something that is natural and normal and not be able to rebel against the system due to the the threats that are reflected in the presence

of the Memory Police. The plot portrays similar issues with what happened in Japanese society in regards to its collective memory which the government used tools of censorship in order to alter the realities that were being perceived by Japanese society towards the government and the nation. In this research, the novel of *The Memory Police* is assumed as a sites of memory which belongs to the society, not the officials.

This research discusses and describes about Japan's memory problem in which also being portrayed in the novel *The Memory Police*. In this paper, the discussion is solely focusing on the process of shaping collective memory of Japan in Meiji to early Showa (1926-1940s) Period using a tools called censorship. The discussion highlights the role of elite or actors in the government and the creation of police institutions. Lastly, all the context of the collective memory shaping is connected to the realm of *The Memory Police* novel as a sites of memory. The findings are analyzed using a conceptual framework of collective memory, alongside with Pierre Nora's sites of memory, Michel Foucault's mechanism of power, and Robert Michels' theory of elite.

## II. THEORY AND METHODS

As collective memory is a product made by the elites, the politics of memory is an act to utilize power to preserve the collective memory of a certain events in the past (Pletnia, 2020). We could safely use the term politics of memory when we include the notion of elites and power. This also comes in line with what Morgenthau (1948) proposed about power is that they never exclude the control of the mind and behaviour of people who rule over the ruled (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 13).

In accordance to the latter explanation about politics of memory, the politics itself can be understood as a struggle for power (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 13). When we discuss about power, we allude the reciprocal control of people with authority of the masses. In other words, power, which is what politics function to, is a psychological connection with people who implement it to the people who are implemented to (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 14).

The measures taken could be different from each regimes. One thing for sure is that, politics is a struggle for power and power is used to influence and dominate others (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 17). Similarly to what Morgenthau has explained, Michel Foucault also contributed to the study of power which a creation of internalized authority as a mechanism of power.

To make power functions as it is, there needs to be some discipline mechanism that creates binary partition which makes people belong to one side and other side. In the context of what Foucault explained, this binary partition divides people into whether normal or abnormal, right or wrong, dangerous or harmless. For that, implementation of power could be done because this partition creates control over the people and control their possible dangerous scheme (Foucault, 2020, p. 198).

As we talk about power, we also have to include the role of elites. We shall take a look at what Robert Michels constituted about the elites and its significance towards oligarchy tendencies. From Michels' analysis, power is conservative. In other words, the patterns of power are the same despite of the changing in government. Michels also confirmed and agreed with Pareto that even if the changing of government happened, the elites sometimes are still the same, or even fabricated to the new branding of government (Michels, 2001, p. 218). For Michels, elites, or the people who rules, are the minority that have an agenda to create a collective will of the masses. These minority is what Michels classified as an oligarchy. This oligarchy, or the elite that rules, could influence the masses to behave or act according to what the oligarchy wants. In this context, it's similar with how the collective memory is what the people in power try to create as they could influence the way the people act, remember, and forget.

Discussing about collective memory could not be separated from the explanation of the sites of memory. Based on Pierre Nora's thought, sites of memory is a vessel or place that have a function as a collective reminder for an events that had happened in the past (Gustafsson, 2019, p. 4). For Nora, sites of memory<sup>1</sup> is a complex concept that have many meanings which can be simple, artificial, ambiguous, and abstract. With these whole variety of meanings, the sites of memory that Nora mentioned could be in a form of places, sites, or a plot (Nora, 1996, p. 14). Confino (1997) stated that '*there is no right way to do memory*' (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 223). Collective memory could be seen in many sites of memory that could take form in media, pop culture, monuments, and journalism. This could create new understanding that memory could not only belongs to the official or the people in power, but also belongs to the society which sometimes have a different interpretation about the same events unfolding. This alone could create memory contestation between the elites (people in power) and the society (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 223).

<sup>1</sup> Nora used the term 'realm of memory', sometimes he used the term sites of memory. Although the meaning is the same with sites of memory, places of memory, etc. For this research, the term sites of memory will be used as to refer places and things that could ignite the remembrance.

This research is a qualitative study which use secondary data as a source of data collection. In this research, the focus of the study is to answer a set of questions:

1. How did the process of censorship could shape collective memory of Japan (Meiji-Early Showa)?
2. How did the roles of elites/actors contribute to the shaping of collective memory?
3. How could the plot of *The Memory Police* reflect Japan's shaping memory in regards to its collective memory?

The data were collected by first collecting the documents using relevant keywords from the research questions such as: (1) Meiji Period (1868-1912) censorship; (2) Taisho Period (1912-1926) censorship; and (3) Showa Period (1945-1950s) censorship. The assumption of using the keyword of *censorship* is because they were tools used to eradicate a certain perception of public. In the end, shaping collective memory.

Then, the data collection moved to look for documents to highlight the role of elite in those period using keyword such as: (1) elites in Meiji Government; (2) elites in Taisho Government; (4) elites in early Showa Period; (5) the role of elites; (6) policies implementation; (7) preservation of elites. The assumption is that those keywords could lead to the pattern of elites in Japan and how the elites used their influence to erase a certain informations in order to create collective memory as a final output of power mechanism. Also, how the elites preserve themselves from being a samurai to be a governmental elites.

The next step was to identify the plots in the novel of *The Memory Police* which resembles Japan's memory shaping in Meiji to early Showa Period. The assumption is that the plots that are displayed in the novel could signify the sites of memory from the society sides.

All the findings were analyzed using conceptual framework of collective memory and sites of memory by Pierre Nora, theory of power by Michel Foucault and theory of elites by Robert Michels in which many measures or tools could be taken by a group of people to gain power and once you got power, you could utilize it to alter the perception of people you ruled.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Meiji Restoration was a result of long disputes between the Tokugawa and the other clans that mostly located in three domains; Satsuma, Chosu, and Tosa. In the meantime, the bakufu system itself had already in the edge of its downfall. There were many reasons why the system reached their end. The rising wealthy merchants and the poverty of samurais led to the end of the system. The bakufu system was made to make the samurai on top of caste system while the others were positioned below them. The time of peace left samurais with no choice other than doing government jobs, and they were too arrogant to shift their occupation to the business field (Buruma, 2004, p. 21). As Commodore Perry and his Black Ships reached Japanese shores and demanded to establish trade relations, these conditions ignited the fire within Japan and ended up in another civil war that concluded the end of bakufu; bakumatsu.

In 1867, the leaders of the Chosu, Satsuma, and Tosa domains discussed a *coup d'etat* with the shogun. Sakamoto Ryoma, who acted as an advocate between these domains suggested to go with more peaceful way. Sakamoto then proposed that Japan should be ruled by '*a council of feudal lords, in which Tokugawa shogun could play a role*' (Buruma, 2004, p. 28). Sakamoto also proposed a new political system which there will be a constitution, two legislative bodies, and no caste system allowed in the new system (Buruma, 2004, p. 29). The draft of the constitution clearly stated that '*there cannot be two rulers in a land, therefore one must resign from the seat of power and return the justice for the one sole ruler*' (Buruma, 2004, p. 30). Although the initial plan was to make the shogun resign, the domains in the southwest could not forget the hatred they carried towards the shogun for centuries. The conflict could not be escaped.

The civil war started in 1868 to 1869, between the bakufu sympathizers and imperial armies which consisted of anti-bakufu samurai from the southwest (Buruma, 2004, p. 30). The war ended with the victory on the imperial armies' side. After that, the emperor moved to Edo and Japan began its imperial rule after centuries of the bakufu system.

These whole events were what constituted Meiji Restoration, which meant that Japan reformed as an old and ancient imperial rule, in other words, restoring the old-fashioned way of ruling way (Buruma, 2004, p. 35). Once Japan had undergone restoration, the elites who once were samurai did a comparative study to Western countries and decided to follow the West towards civilization and enlightenment. In order to be a more civilized nation, Japan needs to be unified as one nation and think of Japan as a whole organism, which the head was the emperor and the other structures in society as a limbs (Lucken, 2017, p. 5). One of other things that needed to be done to become a civilized nation was to filter all contents that were considered dangerous and destructive to the moral of the nation. Therefore, many policies were implemented to censor many public contents which initially planned to enrich the moral of Japanese society.

### A. Japanese Censorship (Meiji-Early Showa Period)

Japan underwent significant transformations after the Meiji Restoration. Many fields such as literature, arts, performances, and journalism, were reformed to fit the agenda of the new government. Many measures had been taken in line with the new agenda of *Bunmei Kaika* (Civilization and Enlightenment), one of them was censoring the dangerous materials that was believed could harm the moral of the society and later could hinder the process to be a civilized nation.

Censorship is simply understood as a limitation of creative expression that is done by the authorities towards the creators. However, censorship is not only understood as a state suppression. Both the creators and state sometimes contribute to the process of censorship (Hutchinson, 2013, pp. 1-2). In other words, the state could implement a legal framework by publishing a law to censor, and the creators who own the right of expression could still convey the field that they are passionate into within the legal framework. This is what is defined as self-censorship.

Censorship in Meiji Period was strict. Many of editors and publishers were held accountable for their actions if they decided to publish or print books that contains criticism towards the government or that were deemed destructive to the moral of people (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 4). If they were caught publishing materials that did not follow the agenda, they will held captive.

In 1872, the government of Meiji opened its first library which named Tokyo Library. The library served a function to education and culture development (Domier, 2013, p. 94). A decade later, Ministry of Education forbade some books that were deemed dangerous and morally destructive for society. Home Ministry also took a part in making categorizations of books into *Ko*, *Otsu*, and *Hei*. Books that belonged to *Ko* were books that could be publicly accessed. Books that belonged to *Otsu* were books that have morally destructive contents. Lastly, *Hei* was categorized for books that do not have educational materials (Domier, 2013, p. 94).

With this categorization system, all the books that did not belong to *Ko* or *Hei* will be labeled as *Otsu* and were all put in the storage room of the library. At this time, the filtration process did not involve any legal forces, even though there were many police that visited the libraries.

In 1908 and 1910, which marked a conflict between the anarchists and communists against the government which in government sides they endangered the politics of nation, Ministry of Education and Home Ministry decided to restrict more seriously towards the publications and books in the library.

Police institutions patrolled every library in each prefecture. This also came with the publication of Peace Preservation Law in 1925 or Public Security Preservation Law (Domier, 2013, p. 97). This law was mainly known as a law against the intellectuals. Many intellectuals had been arrested under this law and was condemned as thought criminals or ideological criminals (Mitchell, 1973, p. 318).

Japan in the 1920s reached social disorganization, following the Kanto Earthquake in 1923 leading to destruction and suffering. At these hard times, there were intellectuals and communists emerging which acted as a response of dissatisfaction towards the government. However, the government with the *kokutai* ideology which bounded to make the whole nation united thought that these groups of people could danger the nation. Another reason was that the ruling elites also thought that these intellectuals could danger their position in power. Therefore, this law was implemented to make police function became stronger and limit the mass movement (Mitchell, 1973, pp. 318-319).

Within this law, not only the communists and radicals were repressed, but also intellectuals, artists, people from religious groups suffered this law. At least there had been more than five thousands people arrested recorded from 1937 to 1941, which was in the early Showa Period, under this law within the thought or ideological grounds (Lucken, 2017, p. 11). One example that clearly explained how the government treated the thought criminals was when Nakai Masakazu was arrested to be a communist sympathizer. He was captured and imprisoned. The people who were imprisoned suffered sickness, torture, and lectures (Lucken, 2017, p. 12). Even when Nakai was freed, he was still under surveillance of the police, meaning that there was a limitation in the country towards the intellectuals (Lucken, 2017, p. 12).

Not only that, the polices actively filtered problematic books such as Leftist book or books about communism and revolution). In 1934, the law on library gave a library directors to took part in the process of filterization of dangerous books. Each of these directors had to select and control the books and reported them to the head of local police which of the books that belonged to the *Otsu* category (Domier, 2013, p. 98).

This implementation of power was done extremely to the point that if the staffs of the library were caught talking about communism thinking, they will be captured. If the director of a library saved a dangerous book, they will be captured and asked for the confirmation of the events, in the name of 'uncoordinative'.

Other than censorship in libraries, there was also a censorship in motion picture. In 1917, which was in Taisho Period, the Regulation on Motion Picture was implemented to give police institution an authority to control the behaviour of society. There were many chapters that gave a certain strictness towards how should the cinema works and how should the audience behave, even further to control the role of lecturer (Masato & Turzynski-Azimi, 1998, p. 14).

There were many things to control in this regulation, including categorizing age limits for the audience which made children not eligible for the leisurement of film (Masato & Turzynski-Azimi, 1998, p. 15). The regulation also controlled the narrators in silent film, which the narrators or *benshi* narrators must be licensed before they did their jobs. The government also went further to add an examination for acquiring the license (Masato & Turzynski-Azimi, 1998, p. 16). In 1925, the regulation became a national law called the Motion Picture Film Inspection Regulation and was under the authority of the Home Ministry. Every film must have been dealing with the screening process with a certain criterias in order to not harming the moral of society (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 5).

### B. Preservation of Elites in Meiji to Early Showa Period in Regards to Collective Memory

After the civil war ended, the Meiji government was established and the former ruler (Tokugawa) was depicted from the seat of power (Matsumoto & Okazaki, 2017, p. 11). With the regime change, there was a change in the elite structures. For almost more than 260 years Japan was led in a rigid and strict caste system, the Meiji Restoration reformed those systems, which allow non-elite people to have their own liberty (Matsumoto & Okazaki, 2017, p. 12). The political structures began to function. In 1885, the cabinet system was created and in 1889 the Meiji Constitution was implemented. In the following year, national parliament or national diet was established (Kitaoka & JICA, 2019, p. 2).

However, the regime changed was not exactly as eradicating the old elites into new ones. Although it's true that the Meiji Restoration was meant to reform the elites (in one of the goals of restoration) and ordinary people could participate in Japan's politics. However, Japan was still mostly ruled by the former leaders such as the ones who were samurai. Which made the feudal system still existed in a way after the restoration (Kitaoka & JICA, 2019, p. 2).

In 1873, the Home Ministry was established and Okubo Toshimichi was the first minister (Kitaoka & JICA, 2019, p. 9). The establishment of Home Ministry was crucial since it created new institutions such as police which could be seen in the censorship of libraries. This ministry was also a home of many policies in which every artists and intellectuals had to send their scriptures to them before they were performed or published.

The Meiji government members were selected as having a connection to the former regime. Especially the ones who were the opposition, the alliance of Satsuma-Chosu domains. New elites had also emerged, especially people that have a degree in law from University of Tokyo were considered appropriate candidate to become new government member. Moreover, in 1890 House of Lords was established as an effort to gather support from the former elite and as a gap filler that could benefit both old and new elites (Matsumoto & Okazaki, 2017, p. 13).

In other words, the elites in Meiji Period was actually a negotiation between the current existence of institutions to fit the agenda of the happening situation. Therefore, the existence of the former elite could be preserved and bargained in the new elite composition (Matsumoto & Okazaki, 2017, p. 14).

In 1927, Military Service Law was implemented and it was mandatory for young men to join the training. The system of this military service was that individuals must be trained in the place where their family originated from. But in 1943, there were some exceptions for students that plan or went to university to postpone their military service, signifying the preservation of the elites agenda of the Showa government. These people that postponed military service were the same people who wrote Japan's history, which in many ways could contribute to the shaping of the collective memory of Japan (Lucken, 2017, p. 4).

### C. An Effort to Alter Reality Through 'Disappearance': A Plot of The Memory Police

The author of *The Memory Police*, Yoko Ogawa, is a Japanese born in 1962. *The Memory Police* itself had been published for the first time in 1994 with the title *Hisoyakana kesshō* or *Dense Crystal*. In 2019, *Hisoyakana kesshō* was translated to English and with English title '*The Memory Police*' by Stephen Snyder (Foong & Chandran, 2020, p. 100)

The story itself takes place in an island, that is not mentioned where it is. The people of island lives regularly just like other human beings. One thing that makes everything odd and unusual is that there is a natural occurrence that happen in that island, and that is what the people in island call it as disappearance.

The disappearance, in this case, could not be defined as something that magically gone in its physical form. When something undergoes disappearance, the memory about the respective things slowly fading away. So, even if someone still have the things that has disappeared, the physical form are still there but the memory that associates them is fading or gone completely.

One thing about disappearance is that the people in the island never know the exact schedule about the disappearance. They just know if it's their guts telling them that 'there is a disappearance today'. It could be anything, it could be simple thing such as perfume, it could be flower such as rose, it could be a part of your body. Most important thing to point out is that the disappearance, as it is 'natural' occurrence, needs to be forced as well. There comes the function of the Memory Police to enforce the disappearance.

They will appear in the street, storming to someone's house, to a building; to get rid of all the things that contain informations that associate with the things that has disappeared. That also includes people that have ability to remember.

Why the do the disappearance happen and how could it happen is unsure and unexplainable. In chapter 4, one of the characters named R points out that the island run by a group of people that want things to disappear. If things do not go according to what they want it to be, they need to use force to do that as it is something unacceptable for them (Ogawa, 2020, p. 25).

Memory Police, a group of people that serve a function to enforce the disappearance, is the main topic in this novel. According to the description of Memory Police by the young woman, they are seen to wear dark green uniforms with heavy belts and black boots (Ogawa, 2020, p. 12). Even in the wintertime when the island people have difficulty to fulfill their needs in clothing, Memory Police are seen to wear snowboots (Ogawa, 2020, p. 100). Even their headquarter screams in luxury and elegancy. A young woman describes the headquarter as a building full of leather couches, crystal chandelier, heavy curtains, and even a maid to serve tea (Ogawa, 2020, p. 104).

As we can see that throughout the story, the people of the island do not want to mess with the Memory Police as Memory Police is an institution that have authority in imposing force, control, and violence in the island. No one could hide from them. The Memory Police would lurk around the town to eradicate those objects and things connecting to them. If something 'different' or peculiar happens, they might attract the attention of Memory Police. One messes with Memory Police never ends in a good place.

The main job of Memory Police, as indicated in the above paragraph, is to enforce disappearance by eradicating things that needs to be disappeared. As this is also emphasized by the young woman when the Memory Police came to retrieve and take away all of his father's works about bird (as bird has disappeared in the story) that whenever they *'find something considered dangerous -information containing bird- they will throw all of them recklessly to the floor'* (Ogawa, 2020, p. 13). Additionally is confirmed by the higher rank police in the Memory Police headquarter as well as he says *'Memory Police's purpose is to erase useless memories to make them gone quickly as it is believed that there is no point to hold on to them'*. He also mentions about the secret of memory is what they are trying to understand to protect themselves (Ogawa, 2020, p. 106). This is also something that is not mentioned in the story as we are all left to wonder, what exactly do they want to protect themselves from?

Although the disappearances occur naturally and people seem to not being able to remember the things that had disappeared (nor do they have the option to reject the system), there are some exceptions. Just because other people naturally forget, does not mean that it applies to everyone. There are some people that have ability to remember. Those people will be held captive by Memory Police. It is said for people who remember will only be asked for their cooperation to support the 'group of people in higher ups' effort in genetical research. But once they step foot inside the headquarter, they will not be let out alive. At least, that is what happened to the young woman's mother.

Talking about the people in higher ups, they never appear in the story. Only an honorable mention by R saying that the island is *'run by a group of men that wants to make things disappear'*. *If things do not go their way, they have to achieve it no matter what'* (Ogawa, 2020, p. 25). That is why they established Memory Police fifteen years before the timeline in the story occurred. We could safely say that in this story, Memory Police only serve as extended hands of those people in higher ups (or the elites in this case). The elites have the power to make everything works their way, even using the Memory Police as the extension of their authority. To create an internalized authority in the mind of people.

#### *D. Reflection on Censorship, Preservation of Elites, 'The Memory Police' Towards Japan's Collective Memory*

As Japan underwent a reformation of its political structures, it also came with a transformation of the elites. One thing unique about the transformation of elites in the Edo Period to Meiji Period is that the former elites still exist despite many new elites emerged. In other words, there had been a negotiation between the former elites to the latter elites so that the power could be evenly distributed to these hands of the ruler. This similarly goes with what Michels (2001) said that power is conservative, meaning that there was a new branding of the former elites to the new structures. It was confirmed as Japan created House of Lords (or House of Peers) to include the former elites in a seat of power and for the new elites to gain support from the former. Moreover, the structures of the elites that rule in Japan between Meiji to Early Showa also gave an oligarchy tendencies, which only minority of people led the majority of people. This also confirmed by the fact that despite caste system was demolished and people were given liberty, there was also limitation for ordinary people to rise to power and only a certain people could rise to power. One of the group of people that could rise to power were either from being a former samurai and intellectuals that graduated from Tokyo University. Only a minority of people that could lead thus made these people have a full control about the mind of people. This also what Morgenthau (1948) said that power is to dominate, influence, and control the mind of people that were ruled.

In Japan's case, these elites that comprised of minority although had many privileges to be on a seat of power could shape collective memory of the people. This shaping process was done by a power mechanism in a form of censorship.

In 1875, the institution that had a responsibility for censorship was Home Ministry. Home ministry even have their own forces in a form of police institution to patrol every move that the people did that considered as peace disturbance (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 5). Every publication or many script performances have to underwent supervision from Home Ministry. This was where self-censorship took play. Many creators censor their materials so that they could still create and do not break the law, which could cost much, financially and career-wisely. The police institution soon later be called as thought police since their responsibilities were increased in latter years to control almost every creations and publications that were made in those periods.

What could be highlighted from these three periods of Japanese society was that the censorship in each periods had different topics. The censorship in Meiji Period mostly dealt with press as the Press Regulation of 1883 tightened and became an imperial rescripts by the name of The 1887 Press and Publication Regulation (Hutchinson, 2013, pp. 4-5). In Taisho Period, the censorship dealt with limitation on media and film. In Early Showa Period (1927-1945), the censorship dealt with limitation on materials that were considered dangerous to the wartime regime (Hutchinson, 2013, pp. 5-7).

Let us go to the main discussion about our study here. Let us divide the analysis into three realms to make it easier. First, let us discuss about how censorship in Meiji to early Showa Period could constitute Japan's collective memory in the first place. As we go back to the concept of collective memory that has been mentioned, is a public perception of thing that happened in the past in the context of present times in which this perception was controlled by people in power that constantly shape and create those perception for their respected interests. Censorship came to play as a way for Japanese elites to control the society from the morally dangerous thoughts and materials, which believed to be a danger to the goal of becoming a civilized nation. Censorship as we know in Japan's history played a big role in these three periods to control the mind of the people, as well as to limit the radicals that could danger the legitimation of the ruler's power. In these said periods, we argue that censorship used as a tool to shape Japan's collective memory. Moreover, censorship limited the informations in a way that only the knowledge that favor the elite's interests could lived on. In other words, this method shaped what general public could only remember and make public forget things that were censored as they were considered dangerous.

With the help of institutional forces in a form of police institution, the presence of power and control could be felt to the mind of people that in the end also forced intellectuals, artists, and creators to self-censor themselves and made their creations fitted the narration as what the elite's interests said to be. In this case, you can imagine how many people tried to resist and criticize the elites but still got surprised because those critics were believed to create disorganization in the society. This is how power works according to the theory of power by Foucault. In his explanation about the model of prison called Panopticon, the disciplinary mechanism came to play as a divider between the good and the bad. After that, the help of forces came into the scene to create an internalized authority. In his explanation of Panopticon, the guard in charge of forces was placed in the center of the building to make power become invisible and present in the mind of the prisoners. Back to the deployment of police by the Home Ministry, the elites, we supposed, wanted to create this notions. First by dividing what is considered morally good and bad, therefore categorizing people that were causing disorganization into the bad side. Deploying police institution to force the invisible power as to create internalized authority, which power could be sensed to the heart of people. In this case, creating limitation in expression, thinking, and revolution. Thus, in the end leaving the public only knows what the elites wanted them to know.

In wartime period on libraries censorship, many books were collected by the police for they had materials in an *Otsu* category and all the staffs in libraries had to be careful in collecting and preserving books in hopes to get the knowledge could be accessed by the next generation. After the war was over with the Japan in a losing side, there were many books that were initially preserved by the librarians burned down together with the bombs and fires. Which, in the end, many informations and knowledge had disappeared from this world for eternity. This whole ordeal itself had helped in shaping how limited knowledge could be accessible for public, therefore shaping what should the society know and remember and what should not. In the end, that constituted how collective memory of Japan to be.

The unique things were about how the elites were being preserved in these periods. Just because the government changed did not mean that the system also went the same thing. Since the elites of the government consisted of samurai belonging to Satsuma and Chosu domains, we could understand that the feudal system, in a way, did not disappear completely. After these samurais rose to the seat of power, they had made constitution and policies which fit their agendas. As in line with what Morgenthau had said about power is that people with power could control the mind of people. By rising to power and had authority to create regulations that fit the interests of the elites, had a significant impact to the mind of people.



Same to the censorship policies, these elites had big contributions towards shaping the memory of people collectively as those policies were made for the people.

These elites, a minority group of people that ruled, were what Michels categorised as oligarchs. Even though in every policies, the emperor was put as a divinely character in which every things has to be in the name of the emperor, all the regulations were made and implemented by those in seat of government. Not to mention that the structures of the government, even though changed, has not completely disappear the old elites which in line with the analysis of Michels for the tendencies of oligarchy. That means, Japanese elites at that time were oligarchs that tried to control the mind of people by creating policies that fit the narration and agenda of those people in power. In which after the changing of the regime, the structures did not seem to change completely at all in terms of the actors in the government. With the structures that seemed to be in the same environment, the chance these elites or oligarchs control what should the people perceive and remember was substantial. If the elites themselves did not change, the power and influence that they have will remain. In other words, the control of these oligarchs had towards the shaping of memory stayed the same even though they underwent the changing of power. The power remained and stayed, so does their ability to create a certain perception of things they wanted people to remember and acknowledge.

Now let us move on to the realm of Yoko Ogawa's novel, *The Memory Police*. The novel had a similar plot that portrays what had happened in Japan's past. We argue that the *The Memory Police* could be classified as a sites of memory. From the author herself, which a Japanese, it is very possible for the author to write the condition of Japan's past in the context of the present times which the novel was written. The ambiguous settings such as place, times, unnamed characters, were probably an impact of the censorship itself. Since Japan see themselves as a victim of war in the present times, to present information that were different from what the public believed in would be controversial, in which the memory of war in Japan itself still undergoes contestation to this day. We argue that the reason the author did not mention the exact setting in the plot of the story is a way for the author to self-censorship herself so that she could in a way present the resistance of the current believe of Japan's past and the truth behind it through literature. Therefore, we believe that *The Memory Police* is a sites of memory that criticize what Japan did in the past that force the limitation of expression and control the mind of people.

Sites of memory itself based on Nora's explanation is a complex concept that could be in many forms and constituted many meanings. In addition to that, Confino (1997) also said that there is no right way to do memory. A similarity of units in Ogawa's novel which consisted of the internalized authority that came from the memory police, the disappearance of things, and the honorary mention of the elites that wanted the people to forget about things they desire to be. These units, we argue, are a reflection of Japan's past in the form of popular culture which comes from the society and bear some truth about the society itself. The novel, as a product of popular culture and did not come from the official side, has the possibility to resist and contest the narration of Japan's collective memory as a victim of war. In this case, the novel as a site of memory that gives another version of narration that differed from the official memory.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Japan's collective memory was a result of accumulated events that happened in the past that required the role of elites. Elites had control over collective memory and could preserve their power to keep their influence intact in order to implement policies that fit their agenda. One of the policies was censorship. Censorship created an internalized authority in which creators and intellectuals in the past were afraid to express their critics thus they had to self-censored their creations. However, *The Memory Police* came as a site of memory that showed contextual events about how Japan in the past dealt with memory through the eradication of memory. Without giving the exact setting in the story, it is indicated that self-censorship in Japan's past served timely consequences that still applied to contemporary Japan. In this case, even the author in post-war tried to be careful about what to express in the writings especially that serve sensitive issues such as Japan's past. *The Memory Police* showed how Japan's official narration could be contested by a novel as a site of memory.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- Buruma, I. (2004). *Inventing Japan: 1853-1964*. New York: Modern Library.
- de Jong, V. (2020). *The Art of Totalitarianism: A Critical Analysis of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, Joyce Carol Oates's Hazards of Time Travel and Yoko Ogawa's The Memory Police*. [Unpublished master thesis]. Utrecht University.
- Dian, M. (2015). Interpreting Japan's Contested Memory: Conservative and Progressive Traditions. *International Relations*, 29(3), 363-377. DOI: 10.1177/0047117815600932.
- Domier, S. H. (2013). Banned books in the hands of Japanese librarians: From Meiji to postwar. In R. Hutchinson, *Negotiating Censorship in Modern Japan* (pp. 93-111). New York: Routledge.
- Foong, S., & Chandran, G. (2020). (Re)Imagining "Dystopian Space": Memory and Trauma in Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*. *SARE*, 57(1), 100-122. <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/SARE/article/download/25288/11972/55851>.
- Foucault, M. (2020). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Fukuoka, K., & Takita-Ishii, S. (2022). Judging the past: Memory, others, and intergenerational responsibility among the Japanese youth. *Memory Studies*, 15(4), 798-826. [journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17506980211049901](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17506980211049901).
- Gustafsson, K. (2019). International reconciliation on the Internet? Ontological security, attribution and the construction of war memory narratives in Wikipedia. *International Relations*, 1-22. [journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0047117819864410](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0047117819864410).
- Hutchinson, R. (2013). Introduction: Negotiating censorship in modern Japan. In R. Hutchinson, *Negotiating censorship in modern Japan* (pp. 1-12). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kaiissar, J. (2021). *The Struggle of Memory against Forgetting in Lois Lowry's The Giver, Yoko Ogawa's The Memory Police, and Kazuo Ishiguro's The Buried Giant*. [Unpublished master thesis]. Brac University.
- Kitaoka, S., & JICA. (2019). *Seven Chapter of Japanese Modernization*. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from Japan International Cooperation Agency. Retrieved from: [https://www.jica.go.jp/dsp-chair/english/chair/modernization/ku57pq00002mpdct-att/modernization\\_chapter\\_01.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/dsp-chair/english/chair/modernization/ku57pq00002mpdct-att/modernization_chapter_01.pdf).
- Lucken, M. (2017). *The Japanese and The War: Expectation, Perception, and The Shaping of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Masato, H., & Turzynski-Azimi, A. (1998). The Origins of Censorship: Police and Motion Pictures in the Taishō Period. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, 14-23. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42800168>.
- Matsumoto, T., & Okazaki, T. (2017). *Mobility and Continuity of Political Elites over Phases of Regime Change*. [Discussion paper] The University of Tokyo.
- Maurantoni, N. (2014). The Politics of Memory. In K. Kenski, & K. H. Jamieson, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication* (pp. 219-236). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Michels, R. (2001). *Political Parties: A sociological study of The Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Ontario: Batoche Books.
- Mitchell, R. H. (1973). Japan's Peace Preservation Law of 1925: Its Origins and Significance. *Monumenta Nipponica*, 28(3), 317-345. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2383786>.
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Nora, P. (1996). General Introduction: Between Memory and History. In P. Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (pp. 1-20). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ogawa, Y. (2020). *The Memory Police*. London: Vintage.
- Pletnia, M. (2020). Internal pressure—Japan War-Bereaved Families Association and Its Influence on Japanese Politics of Memory. *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies (ejcjs)*, 20(3). [japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcs/vol20/iss3/pletnia.html](https://japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcs/vol20/iss3/pletnia.html).
- Whitehead, A. (2003). Geoffrey Hartman and the Ethics of Place: Landscape, Memory, Trauma. *European Journal of English Studies*, 7(3), 275-292. <https://doi.org/10.1076/ejes.7.3.275.27988>.
- Whitehead, A. (2009). *Memory: The New Critical Idiom*. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Raisa Akmalie** completed her bachelor degree in political science from Universitas Airlangga (Airlangga University), Surabaya, Indonesia in 2020. She is currently a master student in interdisciplinary Japanese studies, Universitas Indonesia (University of Indonesia).

During her undergraduate, she actively engaged in class teaching as a lecturer assistant. She assisted two classes in 2019, which were *Introduction to Politics* and *Political System of Indonesia*. During that year, she also became a department's journal editor; editing words that fit accordance to the Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*). She currently participates in collaborative research as a member of Cluster Research of Art, Culture, and Ethnicity, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia.

**Shobichatul Aminah** is an assistant professor at Department of Japanese Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia. She obtained her doctoral degree on Japanese literature at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, master on interdisciplinary Japanese studies at School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia, and bachelor of Japanese studies at Faculty of Cultural Sciences Universitas Gadjah Mada.

She has published several works including: (1) *Understanding An Unloving Parenthood Narcissistic Parenting Through Japanese Pop Culture* (RA Journal of Applied Research, Vol. 8 No. 8 published by RAJAR, 2022) as corresponding author; (2) *The Influence of the Jurnal 1980s American Pop Culture in Jojo no Kimyō na Bōken by Hirohiko Araki* (Journal of Japanese Studies Exploring Multidisciplinarity (JJSEMM, Vol. I No. 2, published by Dhaka University, July 2022) as a corresponding author; and (3) *Multiculturalism in Japan Halal Tourism: Localizing of Halal Concept* (Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, published by Routledge, August 2022) as a first author.

Dr. Shobichatul Aminah expertises in Japanese culture and literature. In the field of Japanese culture, her interest is on globalization and multiculturalism in Japan, while in the field of literature she is concerned with researching contemporary Japanese literature.