

## Hiroshima Memory Debates and Japan's Pacifism

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*I. Introduction: Memory and Pacifism*

Japan is a self-proclaimed "peace-loving" country. A majority of the Japanese people pride themselves in being citizens of "peaceful and industrialized country" that rose from "the ashes like a phoenix." As the primary source of Japan's national pride, Japanese pacifism needs to be situated within unresolved entanglement of the present glory and past shame. Post-war Japan emerged as a world economic power benefiting from an externally imposed pacifist ideology, whereas the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki served as the historical precursor of its anti-nuclear pacifist movement. Somewhere between these two evolutionary trajectories, Japan's soul-searching into the troubling past has fallen into mnemonic oblivion.

Often being compared to Germany, Japan has been the subject of numerous inquiries about its ambivalence toward the past (e.g., Field 1997). Japan's multiple identities for having been the aggressor in the Asia-Pacific, the victim of indiscriminate U.S. bombing and the pacifist advocate makes an interweaving of morality and memory an intriguing enterprise. Why would memory have anything to do with morality? Memory is often about contemporary interpretations of the bygone era, whereas morality is assumed to stand the test of time. Should pacifism, a meta-ideology, remain as time- and context-defying moral principle, peace as a sub-concept is open to transmutations. The Hiroshima experience reminds us that the definition of peace is dictated by the changing contextual and temporal specifications. The human race woke up the appalling

possibility for self-annihilation because of Hiroshima. The classical definition of peace, absence of war, lost validity. The unprecedented progress in science and technology was translated into the pressing need to protect ourselves from our own destructive potential. An ominous era began with the atomic bombs (Hiroshima Heiwa Bunka Center 1991).

Can a group claim moral authority when its ambivalence towards the past sins is a target of unresolved grievance? Is the experience of victimhood sufficient enough to exonerate Japan from its past sins and grant it a leadership? Japan's Hiroshima is an ideal site to explore the complicated interweaving of contested morality and unsettled memory.

*II. Pacifism and the "Hollow Center"*

Describing Japanese mind, Isao (2007: 59) writes that: "The psychologist Kawai Hayao has proposed the concept of the 'hollow center' as the key to the Japanese mind. Beginning with the Japanese mythology, he claims that the structure of Japanese culture, society and human relations are [sic] characterized by the emptiness at the center. When forces confront one another on either side of this empty center, the emptiness serves as a buffer zone that prevents the confrontation from growing too intense." Kawai (2006: 3-11) continues to assert that aesthetic principles takes up a higher priority in the Japanese mind than the pursuit of moral aspirations. The cultural constructs of *tatemae* (appropriate front) and *honne* (honest feelings), for instance, are situated in the vacuous center which filters out acute moralistic sentiments. The Japanese perform contextually appropriate actions without accompanying the genuine feelings. If the assertion that "to remember (*se souvenir de*) something is at the same time to remember oneself (*se souvenir de soi*)" has a certain validity (Ricoeur 2004: 15), how does memory work at the

empty center in Japanese mind? The difficult past is better to be avoided than directly confronted. The acts of remembering can constitute an assault on the perceptual aesthetics, while the act of forgetting can be functionally self-preserving. The efforts to search for and give meaning to the shameful past lose its appeal. As the “hollow center” filters out the unpleasant engagement of remembering one’s own sins, difficult memory gets transformed into unusable past in the national memory.

The Japanese assessments of the past have been in a constant flux. As the circumstances involved in preparing, prosecuting and ending the war remain to be unearthed (Hasegawa 2005), the interpretations of the war are often ideologically loaded (Sono 2005; Watanabe 2006). The ideological pendulum swings between the Right and the Left has been presenting the opposing views of the war (Dower 1997), and the public opinion has been accordingly split in assessing the war (Fukuoka 2007). The Left spearheaded by the progressive circles such as the Asahi Newspaper and Iwanami Publisher continue to push for the war compensation and war responsibility issues. The Ienaga history textbook trials show the tenacity of the Left with the multiple lawsuits launched against the government. The Right, on the other hand, has been a strong advocate of Japanese nationalism. The successful 2007 revision of the Fundamental Law of Education opened a way to instill patriotism and accentuate the Japanese identity in the school curriculum. Tsukurukai, an association of conservative historians and journalists, has published their version of history textbook, *New History Textbook*, to counterbalance the Left’s narratives. The conservatives believe in teaching more about Japan’s glory than its shame. Despite such ideological divide, the Japanese history is rich with the accounts

of strategic compromises between political rivals. With tactical innovation as an option, ideology and issues belong to two separate and yet mutable dimensions.

As a country with eight million divinities, the Japanese ambivalence at the “empty center” does not cause perceptual confusion. Pervasive cultural norms permit simultaneous multiple contrasts. The Japanese worldviews, for instance, interpret divinities as “a superior and mysterious force of either creative or destructive character, which resides in natural elements, animals, and certain human beings; it causes ambivalent feelings of fear and gratitude and is the focus of ritual behavior” (Kodansha 2005: 139). As the context dictates the character of a manifested deity, the ebbs and flows of time determine the contemporaneous war-related memories. The multiplicity housed in Japanese mind is not a post-modern phenomenon per se. While post modernism of the Western origin discusses multiple truths as opposed to the Truth in order to deconstruct underpinning power structure, its antithetical proposition is to challenge the binary opposition and the dogmatic truth claim within the Judeo-Christian tradition. The overriding tone in search for divine intentions in human sufferings is non-existent in Japan (e.g., Downey 2003; Kraft 2002; Zimmerman 2004). The war testimonies mainly focus on personalized guilt for having survived the meaningless deaths (Lifton 1993: 81-4). The wrong in one context can be the right in another, for the Japanese acceptance of multiple truths accommodates situational variations. The interpretive flexibility undermines the stringent moral judgments of the past.

Japan’s modes of behavior during contemporary history can be summarized as survival, adaptation, and success. When confronted by the western colonial powers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan quickly adapted itself to the geopolitics of imperialism by

becoming an imperial power itself (Ishida 2000: 11-43; Saaler and Koschmann 2007). After defeating China and Russia, it aggressively acquired colonies in Asia. As an extension of its territorial expansion, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in strategic miscalculations leading to its unconditional surrender in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings (Takaki 1996; Walker 1997; cf. Hasegawa 2007). Ironically, the defeat set the stage for a period of phenomenal economic growth placing Japan to the second place in the world economy.

With the Peace Constitution as the ideological backbone of its mercantile pacifism, Japan succeeded on the grand scale. Yet “making it” is not necessarily a moralistic enterprise. What it takes is situational awareness, diagnosis of self-interests and strategic marketing of competitive advantage. As Japan’s historical trajectory is often attributed to a Social Darwinistic modality (Ishida 2000: 11-43), the nation’s colonization of the less powerful was an “inevitable” course of events. So was Japan’s “subjugated independence” to the U.S. after defeat. Drawing on “the survival of the fittest” paradigm, Japan ascended in the global market by finding its own competitive niche as a country “with poor natural resource endowment and abundant skilled laborers.” Japan’s mercantilist pacifism, located at the “empty center,” has not been a moralistic quest.

### *III. Hiroshima’s A-bomb and Pacifist Japan: Identity Transformations*

The Hiroshima atomic bombing was a decisive event inaugurating Japan as the torch-bearer of anti-nuclear pacifism (Buruma 1994: 92; Igarashi 2001; Yoneyama 1999),<sup>1</sup> and the sense of victimization was the definitive moral impetus behind its new identity. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, unprecedented in kind and massive

in scale, served as a powerful tool in exempting Japan from its war responsibility. Japan became more of a victim of the US brutality and less of the victimizer in Asia-Pacific. Japan’s ideational transformations constitute the core of its pacifist leadership (Kim 2000).

Debates about Japan’s pacifism are usually cast in terms of *realpolitik*. Realists argue that the U.S. nuclear umbrella is the impetus behind the nation’s economy, and the Peace Constitution is its bullet-proof shield in the global military theater (Yoshida 2007). Katzenstein (1996: 196-7) summarizes the realist views as follows: “Japan was destroyed in the Pacific War, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki became powerful symbols of that destruction. The American Occupation reorganized Japanese politics, and for half a century thereafter American troops stationed in Japan and the U.S. nuclear umbrella protected Japan. Under the Pax Americana Japan grew rich, and so the discredited militarist tradition had no allure for the Japanese public. Japan defined security in economic and political terms and resisted all attempts to make military policy more important---exactly what one would expect.” In other words, pacifism delivers economic prosperity, and Japan has gained wealth at the price of victimhood. But such analyses fail to help us see the multiplicity of Japanese pacifism. Japanese pacifism has had many faces amid domestic political bipolarization and flux in the international milieu. Pacifism as meta-ideology defies situational compromises of core contents, and yet the Japanese pacifist movement has been transmuting per contextual changes.

The victim mentality among the Japanese began to be internalized through master post-war narratives such as school textbooks. The accentuation of ordinary people’s pain and suffering during the war relegated Japan’s acts of aggression to mnemonic margin.

The pedagogical contents after the war further deepened the victim mentality among the general populace by attributing responsibility to the Emperor and the military government. The first post-war history textbook, *The Country's Footsteps*, represented a radical departure from the pre-war pedagogical guidelines issued under the Imperial Rescript on Education. Emphasizing democratic values of egalitarianism and human rights, the textual narratives of the first pre-war textbooks alluded to the government's accountability for having started the war and causing great hardship on the people (Gluck 1993: 68). Ordinary people "duped" by the leaders were victims, and they should be exempted from the war responsibility. The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal (1946-48) effectively put an end to the debates by focusing on a limited number of top wartime leaders. Chukyo Shuppan's *A Bright Society* in the 1950s was also vehement in blaming the military and state abuse of power resulting in massive human casualties. Another publication during the same period, Kyoiku Shuppan's *Japan and the World* was the first to include narratives about the Hiroshima-bombing. It described Japan as the "first country to receive the tragic damage of atomic bombs" (Orr 2002: 84). From then on, educational materials linked Japan's atomic victimization to its "unique" moral leadership in "building world peace" (*Ibid.* 85).

The sequence of identity transformation from genocide victim to pacifist hero, however, has gaps in terms of temporal, empirical and moral aspects. As for the temporal gap, the public nuclear awareness did not immediately follow the bombings. With the banning of all materials on the atomic bombings by Supreme Commander of Allied Powers, the general public was kept in the dark about Hiroshima and Nagasaki until the early 1950s (Dower 1999: 412-3; Gluck 1993: 66).<sup>2</sup> Due to imposed silence, Japan's

pacifist anti-nuclear movement did not begin until the 1954 Bikini Incident (Mizumoto 2006: 18). The crew of a Japanese fishing vessel, Lucky Dragon, was exposed to fallout from a U.S. hydrogen bomb test on the Bikini Atoll near the Marshall Islands on March 1, 1954. One of its 23 crew members died of radiation poisoning.

Thereafter, amid heightened awareness of nuclear weapons, the Japanese public began paying attention to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their effects. Ubuki (1999) reports a thrice-fold increase in the number of *hibakusha*'s<sup>3</sup> testimonials printed by the Japanese media after the Lucky Dragon incident.<sup>4</sup> An editorial in *The Asahi Newspaper* of August 6 1970, the 25th anniversary of the Hiroshima-bombing, linked Japan's pacifist nationalism to the Lucky Dragon incident:

[We] the Japanese who were exposed to nuclear weapons three times, in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and, in 1954, on the *Daigo Fukuryu-maru* [Lucky Dragon], did not reduce these experiences to matters of racism or anti-Americanism, but rather reflected at the level of all humanity and worked toward the anti-war and nuclear weapons ban...The demand to ban war and nuclear weapons which grew out of experiences with the nuclear weapons should have become the central pillar of new Japanese nationalism, based on Peace Constitution. It could have been much like the nationalism developed at the time of the French Revolution, based on freedom, equality and fellowship, which aimed toward international ideals (*The Asahi Newspaper*, August 6 1970).

The furor over the Lucky Dragon incident continued to deepen the sense of victimization at the hands of the Americans. For the commemoration of the 1973 anniversary of the Hiroshima-bombing, *The Asahi Newspaper* carried the following editorial:

We must not spend the anniversary day of the atomic bombing merely as a day of memorial and ceremony. The Japanese were made into victims of American nuclear [weapons] three times, including the Lucky Dragon exposure to the [hydrogen bomb test] in the Bikini atoll. Today must be the

day to appeal to the entire world [to recognize] the cruelty of nuclear weapons and renew our commitment to keep working toward the abolition of these weapons in the name of humanity (*The Asahi Newspaper*, August 6 1973).

It was a fisherman's death from the exposure and contaminated tuna that drove Japan's pacifist awareness home.

Japan did not emerge as a pacifist country immediately after the war. In the early 1950s Japan went through bitter in-fighting among bureaucrats and power elites on its future directions. Prime Ministers Hatoyama Ichiro (1954-55) and Kishi Nobusuke (1957-58) were purged after they failed to seek rearmament. They tried to defy the Peace Constitution out of resentment toward the U.S. and fear of expanding Communism in Asia. They were not the firsts who attempted to rearm the country. The post-war Yoshida Cabinet (1949-1954) also tried to rebuild the army only to renounce the proposal later in the pursuit of economic benefits under U.S. tutelage (Dower 1993: 208-41). During the same period, Japan became surreptitiously involved in the Korean War (1950-53). It dispatched thousands of transportation and logistics experts under U.S. and U.N. command, and Japanese constituted two-thirds of the ship support crew at the port city of Incheon in South Korea (Katzenstein 1996: 197). The Japanese conglomerates also cashed in on the Korean War by providing UN forces with pre-existing dual-use technology. Japan's Peace Constitution of 1946 was the product of external imposition, not the result of self-reflexive soul-searching.

The biggest loophole in Japan's pacifist leadership derives from the history of victimizing others. Its own provocation of war and the existence of foreign *hibakusha* pose a dilemma to its moral authority. The total numbers of *hibakusha* in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 159,283 and 73,884, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Of the total, the majority of foreign

*hibakusha* were Koreans at the approximate numbers of 50,000 in Hiroshima and 20,000 in Nagasaki. They had been conscripted to work at military supplies factories. Despite a series of lawsuits filed against the Tokyo government by the Korean *hibakushas* seeking medical relief, it was not until 1990 that the Japanese government finally took steps to assist them. A total of four billion yen was allocated as Humanitarian Medical Treatment Funds. The 1990 measures, however, did not settle issues involving foreign *hibakushas* who subsequently left Japan.<sup>6</sup> They are still denied benefits for all practical purposes. Despite their advancing years, they are required to travel to Japan to receive medical attention. Litigation continues at various local courts to this day.<sup>7</sup>

Amid the heightening sense of nuclear victimization in the aftermath of the Lucky Dragon incident, the Korean victims were still invisible. A Japanese *hibakusha* stated, "All the Japanese victims were also aggressors towards the Korean A-bomb victims. And yet, we did not care to consider them as one of us."<sup>8</sup> A former prefectural government official continues by saying that "The Japanese are self-absorbed people. We take our own pains and suffering the most seriously while being dismissive of others' misery."<sup>9</sup> Sil Geun Lee, President of the Council of Atom-bombed Koreans in Hiroshima Prefecture, describes the double victimization of Koreans exposed to the atomic bombs: "Why do you think tens of thousands of Koreans had to suffer from the A-bombs in Japan, even though they did not start the war? Without Japanese colonial rule in the Korean peninsula and the fact that Koreans were brought forcefully to Japan, few Koreans would have suffered from the A-bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To put it plainly, Korean A-bomb victims were created by Japanese aggression and colonial rule in the Korean peninsula. Many Japanese people do not acknowledge this fact" (Hiroshima

Peace Institute 2007: 2). The deeply ingrained victim mentality was not seriously visited until 1985 when the City of Hiroshima announced its plan to renovate the Hiroshima Peace Museum.

#### *IV. The Hiroshima Debates: Milieu and Compromises*

With victimhood defining Hiroshima's place in Japan's pacifism, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is the authoritative commemorative site (Nelson and Olin 2003: 3-4). Hiroshima tells its story to local, national and international audiences through exhibits seeking to help visitors "get in touch with history" (Barthel 1996: 9). Since its opening in August 1955,<sup>10</sup> the museum has been the space of contention on what to present and how. The debate was most divisive during the period between 1985 and 1994. The thorniest issues were the proposals to include narratives about Hiroshima's past and the installation of the "*Kagaisha* [Aggressor] Corner."

##### *The Milieu*

Japan in the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a sudden explosion of interest in the past and Asia (Orr 2002). Major domestic changes were the 1989 death of Showa Emperor and the end of Liberal Democratic Party's 38 years of rule. The popular taboo on the war responsibility was also eased accordingly. Salient changes in the international environment were also taking place. The "Japan bashing" by the U.S. was shifting the bilateral relations. The emergence of Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) alerted Tokyo of Asia's rising importance. The rising cacophony between the U.S. and Japan, and the increasing status of Asia resulted in a series of policy and attitudinal changes.<sup>11</sup>

The Japanese memory terrain was no exception in this. When a public opinion survey, a most effective indicator of the presentist interpretation of the past, asked to assess Japan's warfare from the Meiji period to 1945, 48 percent of respondents answered that it was a "history of aggression" while 25 percent disagreed. When asked whether Japan's military expansion against other countries was "unavoidable," the responses were almost evenly divided with 40 percent agreeing and 42 percent disagreeing.<sup>12</sup> The Japanese were also showing a remarkable situational awareness of Asians' perceptions of them. A *Mainichi Newspaper* survey of December 1988 asked why the Japanese were perceived arrogant by other countries. A majority of 33 percent attributed this to Japanese pride for economic successes followed by 30 percent who pointed to Japan's contemptuous attitude toward other Asians.<sup>13</sup> Among the major policy changes at the time were extending apologies. Several Japanese prime ministers and the Emperor apologized to Asian countries for Japan's past aggression. On Prime Minister Hosokawa's apology in 1993, 53 percent of respondents support it and 25 percent disapproved, according to a *Yomiuri Newspaper* poll.<sup>14</sup>

The scope of debates about the war was expanding, but within the context of political bipolarization. Leading politicians and Cabinet members continued to make offensive remarks about the war both on and off the record (Orr 2002: 178). Masayuki Fujio, the newly appointed Education Minister in the Nakasone Cabinet, remarked that "killing people in war is not murder in terms of international law" and that the Tokyo War Crimes Trial "cannot be considered just." He also equated Japanese visiting Yasukuni Shrine with Chinese visiting Confucian temples. Fujio further claimed that the

Nanjing Massacre was a fabrication (*Bungei Shunju* 1986). Despite the noticeable changes in the milieu, the “true believers” such as Fujio resisted the war responsibility.

Deeply divided over the past, the situational context determines whose voice gets to be heard. Hiroshima’s museum renovation project was a telling case in point where competing voices of the war vied against each other. Given the variations in Japanese local politics, the Hiroshima experience cannot be generalized to other locales. The contention over Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was about how the traumatized city wished to be remembered in its story-telling narratives.

#### *The Kagaisha [Aggressor] Corner*

The museum was a popular tourist spot attracting more than one million visitors each year even before the renovation project started. Many schools, especially those in the Kansai and Tokyo areas, chose Hiroshima for their field trips. In 1985 the City announced a plan to renovate the museum “expand the exhibit space” and “augment the fragile edificial structure.” As the plan was publicized, several citizens’ groups such as “Hiroshima for World Peace” and “Anti-Nuclear Association for Peace Movement” called for the exhibit inclusion of Hiroshima’s military role in Japan’s colonial past. Groups with progressive agendas wanted the City to amend the public understanding that Hiroshima was an innocent victim of the A-bomb. Amid growing public interest in the project, the director of the Mayor’s Office asked the Exhibit-Planning Committee members for their “advice for the new exhibit contents which were appropriate to convey the truth of the atomic bombing and appeal for world peace” (*The Chugoku Newspaper*, 7 August 1985). The Committee consisted of 12 opinion leaders from local universities, media and the Board of Education. In the spring of 1987, *The Chugoku Newspaper*, the

local newspaper, reported the City’s accommodative attitude toward the four citizens groups requesting that the City exhibit “the history of aggression.” The groups were also reportedly pointed out that the current museum exhibit focused only on Hiroshima’s victimization and, was therefore incomplete in presenting an objective representation of the past to future generations. They insisted that the new museum must include narratives on Hiroshima’s past as a major military base with crucial transportation logistics facilities and as a center of arms production. As the debate over the contents of the exhibit became heated, the museum became the focus of “memory wars.” The war seemed to be in favor of the progressive cause. In July 1987, the Director of Mayor’s Office announced a plan to include the City’s past as a military base in the museum renovation project.

But developments took an unexpected turn in August 1987 when local Korean *hibakusha* support groups such as “Korean Atomic Bomb Victims Association of Hiroshima” made a request to the City to include narratives not only about Hiroshima’s past but also about the suffering of Korean *hibakushas*. On hearing the request at a committee meeting, one committee member expressed a concern that Hiroshima’s military past should not be construed to justify the atomic bombing. Another argued that Hiroshima Peace Museum should not be a war museum. Therefore, it should not depict Japan’s history of aggression (minutes of the meeting, Hiroshima City, September 3, 1987). Two months after the meeting, the City began considering the inclusion of narratives on Japan’s past aggression. Such consideration had two main objectives: to explore Japan’s war responsibility in Asia, and to contextualize the Korean *hibakushas*. When the local newspaper reported that the City had decided to install a “*Kagaisha* [Aggressors] Corner” in the new museum (*The Chugoku Newspaper*, 11 November 1987),

the conservative groups such as the “Japanese *Hibakusha* Association” and the “Association of Bereaved *Hibakusha* Families” reacted strongly. “The conspiracy” to classify “our fellow countrymen” as “victimizers,” argued one conservative City Council member, “would leave a deep scar on Japanese children” (Record of Regular Council Meeting, November 1 1987). Others opposed the plan for its “politicization” of the museum, which was “supposed” to be a “sacred site” for the *hibakusha* and their families. The museum renovation project ignited a memory war along deeply bifurcated ideological lines. The conservatives tried to bury Hiroshima’s strategic importance during the war, while local peace activists and Korean *hibakushas* tried to shed a light on the dark side of Hiroshima history.

The City under mounting pressure from conservatives found itself forced to re-consider the installation plan. After a meeting with citizens groups in November 1987, the City declined to hold further meetings with them because the officials were “scared of right-wing nationalists.” The Council members also believed that holding further meetings with the progressive groups could hurt their own election prospects given the conservative citizenry. With the progressives thus losing ground, the City decided to withdraw the original plan to install the “*Kagaisha* [Aggressors] Corner” at the expanded museum space.

The following spring in March 1988, when faced with inquiries about the controversy, the City stated that its political position on the war was congruent with that of Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita who had remarked that “Whether the war in the Pacific was a war of aggression or not should be determined by historians of the future generation.” Again, this statement prompted strong reactions from both sides. In

April-May 1988, during a Committee meeting, a City official briefed the Exhibit Committee on the pros and cons of having a “*Kagaisha* [Aggressor] Corner.” He said: “The City of Hiroshima needs to take into consideration possible reactions from the visitors regarding the exhibition contents on Japanese aggression. What if they considered the atomic bombing as an inevitable outcome? That interpretation would contradict our intention to convey the Spirit of Hiroshima; moreover, we are afraid that such interpretation would disturb the souls of A-bomb victims. Hiroshima has a responsibility to convey the ‘truth of atomic bombing’; therefore, we plan to exhibit Hiroshima’s ‘historical facts,’ such as its role as a major military base and an education center, at the new museum” (The 1993 City official document). In May 1988, the Committee officially decided to drop the idea of building a “*Kagaisha* [Aggressor] corner” at the new museum.

The progressive experiment to press on with revisiting Hiroshima’s past was confronted with strong resistance from the conservative factions. The actors fought with the opposing interpretations of the unfortunate past. There was a parallel in their interpretations of Hiroshima’s place in national history and the meaning of collective suffering. An interviewer remarked that “the progressives’ arguments sounded as if all the innocent people died in vain. It was too much for the bereaved families to bear....we just could not insult the dead like that...they were the innocent victims” (Interview, 25 November 2007). As the memory debate was getting too divisive, the City conveniently adopted the evasive policy lines of the central government: historical judgment belongs to the future generations, not the contemporaries. The “hollow center” permits the moral



compromise for the sake of communal harmony. Conflict is better to be avoided than resolved. Japan's pacifism entails ambivalence.

#### *The Progressivism in Continuum*

Even after the City made a concession to the conservatives regarding the *Kagaisha* Corner, the local government pressed on to accommodate the Korean victims. The progressive City Mayor and former journalist with *The Chugoku Newspaper*, Mr. Takashi Hiraoka, acknowledged the existence and the suffering of foreign A-bomb victims in the 1990 Peace Declaration:

We strongly appeal to the government of Japan to use the Survey of Atomic Bomb victims in promptly instituting a systematic program of support of the *hibakusha* grounded upon the principle of national indemnification. At the same time, we earnestly hope that positive efforts will be made to promote support for those *hibakusha* resident on the Korean Peninsula, in the United States, and elsewhere, and we rededicate ourselves to the cause of peace (The City of Hiroshima, August 6 1990).

The local newspaper continued to carry opinion pieces that informed the public of Japan's past aggression and war responsibility. It also emphasized the unique role that Japan has to play for the cause of world peace:

Japan inflicted much suffering and grief upon the people of Asia Pacific under its colonial rule, occupation, and battles during World War II. Bitter memories still live inside those people. Moreover, we must not forget that these acts were carried out in the name of "peace" and "justice." Instead of dispatching the Self Defense Forces, Japan can contribute to the international community, for example, by providing medical treatment for victims of nuclear tests and waste, which has already been initiated by Hiroshima, but can be an undertaking of the atom-bombed state (*The Chugoku Newspaper*, 6 August 1991).

After the Japanese government's first public acknowledgment in 1991 of the existence of Korean *hibakushas*, the City again issued a call to address the suffering endured by foreign, especially Korean, A-bomb victims: <sup>15</sup>

Japan inflicted great suffering and despair on the peoples of Asia and the Pacific during its reign of colonial domination and war. There can be no excuse for these actions. This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Pacific War. Remembering all too well the horror of this war, starting with the attack on Pearl Harbor and ending with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we are determined anew to work for world peace...we earnestly hope that forthright efforts will be made to promote support for those *hibakusha* resident on the Korean Peninsula, in the United States, and elsewhere. We call upon the government of Japan to do more in all of these areas (The City of Hiroshima, August 6 1991).

#### *The Theme Panel*

Five years after the City dropped the idea of installing a "*Kagaisha* [Aggressor] Corner," the City convened a meeting of the Panel-Writing Committee in March 1993, which was in charge of supervising the rewriting of the East Building panels at the new museum. The Committee had seven members, mostly historians, from the local universities. During the meeting, members argued that it was not Hiroshima's place to bear all responsibility for Japan's war-related wrongdoings. When convened again three months later, the Committee devoted itself solely to a debate on "how to combine the truths about the bombing" (i.e., Hiroshima as a military base) and the "Hiroshima Spirit" (i.e., Hiroshima as the leader of pacifism). While some advocated an "objective manner" in approaching the painful past, others expressed concerns about the implications that "The atomic bombs liberated Asia from Japan's aggression." The difficulty was how to simultaneously link Japan's aggression to Hiroshima's victimization. The Committee

decided against “a victim vs. an aggressor” dichotomy of the City’s past (minutes of the meeting, City of Hiroshima, June 7 1993).

In the fall of the same year, September 1993, Mayor Hiraoka intervened in the Committee proceeding, suggesting that the theme panel title be changed from “Hiroshima and the War” to “Hiroshima Before and After the Bombing.” Before the motion, one of the Committee members proposed this idea to the Mayor. This action reflected the change in Japanese public opinion away from a focus on Japan as victim to a greater consciousness of Japan’s pre-war and wartime aggression (minutes of the meeting, City of Hiroshima, September 10 1993). A January 1994 *Chugoku Newspaper* article reported that the “Hiroshima Before and After the Bombing” section would be included in the new museum exhibition. Unlike in 1987, the article did not provoke public outrage. Due to the City’s continuing progressive efforts in the intervening years, the citizens became more aware of Japan’s acts of aggression during the war. Most importantly, the consensus on the panel re-writing was an end-result of a tacit compromise between the two ideological camps. Since the progressives had lost their cause to install “*Kagaisha* [Aggressor] Corner” in 1988, the conservatives conceded on the panel writing in 1994<sup>16</sup>.

The East Hall of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, formerly the Peace Memorial Hall, “the Space for Learning,” was opened in June 1994 after ten years of planning. The new panel texts are much more explicit in acknowledging Japan’s past aggression and victimization of other peoples:

In 1931, the Manchurian Incident led to the Japanese army’s engagement in armed conflict in China. By 1937, the incident had become a full-scale war between the two nations. In 1941, a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor hurtled Japan into the Pacific War (World War II), allied with the Axis powers.

Following military orders, many Hiroshima factories shifted production from consumer to military goods. People’s lives grew increasingly austere, and many civilians were mobilized at the front or in military factories. Among them were tens of thousands of Korean and Chinese forced to work for the Japanese (Panel A2201, “Hiroshima in the Showa Period and during War”).

The National Mobilization Law of April 1938 led in July 1939 to an outright order to mobilize available workers. Workers in private corporations were forced to work in military factories, including Koreans and other ethnic minorities. Thousands of people throughout the prefecture were drafted to work at such locations as the electric power plant in northern Hiroshima Prefecture and military factories in the city. Many forced laborers survived extremely harsh working conditions only to die in the atomic bombing (Panel A2203b, “Forced Labor Program for Ethnic Minorities”).

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum continues to attract many visitors from all over the world. In 1993, 1.39 million people visited the museum; in 1994, the number was 1.41 million; and in 1995, it reached 1.55 million.

Hiroshima memory interweaves culture, politics and morality. As the memory shifts per context, Japan pacifism has been altering its manifestations (Sasaki-Uemura 2002). As pacifism at the “hollow center” selects moral principles depending on situation, it should be redefined as ‘pacifist movement.’ An ideology maintains its ethical foundations being relatively independent of strategic calculations, whereas a movement fluctuates with political opportunity structure (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995). Political facilitation activates movement, while political repression quells activism. Activists engage in various tactical innovations after weighing the costs and benefits of making challenging actions (Jenkins 1985). The controversies regarding the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum are a story of political compromise as a form of tactical innovation, being distant from the core of pacifist ideology. Its trajectory reveals ups and downs of activist’s voices within the shifting milieu of municipal and national politics.

## V. Conclusion

Japanese see a nation as an organic entity whose ability to respond to the changing environment determines its quest for adaptation, survival and success. For being a country of identity fragmentation and ruptured memories (Kim 2000), the act of sincere mourning and experiencing remorse could be too much of a strain on its “empty center” (Conrad 2003: 85). The contemporary history of Japan escapes Connerton’s (1999: 6) observation that “It is not just that it is very difficult to begin with a whole new start, that too many old loyalties and habits inhibit the substitution of a novel enterprise for an old and established one.” Our inquiry into Japanese memory shows the need for contextual sensitivities. Chung (2006: 271), however, caveats that “possibility by universal, objective standard of morality, all moral reasoning risks being reduced to a discussion context, situation, and feeling...while ethics seeks to be rational, objective, and universal, it also require concrete, historical, and relative social contexts for critical reflection. To emphasize contextual appropriateness, however, should not mean to ignore the question of the principled good or the right. Contextual situationalism is likely to be more attentive to objective circumstances, more empirical-minded, and more inquiring.”

The debates over the Peace Memorial Museum demonstrate the interactive processes of recollection involving shifting socio-political milieus and actors of different dispositions. The controversies over the museum renovation project illuminate two dynamics in Hiroshima’s memory. One is the City’s ideational tension between shameful past and moralistic present. The Hiroshima of past aggression bears today’s banner of the “Hiroshima Spirit,” and the City had to strike a balance between the two contrasting

selves. Another dynamic is political bifurcation and subsequent compromises. Political bifurcation originates from the passionate belief in an ideology, and that is a moral exercise. Making a compromise, on the other hand, is an act of strategic calculations for the sake of peaceful co-existence, and that is a utilitarian consideration. Had the discursive trajectory of the museum renovation been both moralistic and utilitarian, foundational ethics of pacifist ideology would have become less of a confusing concept. Japan’s pacifism risks being reduced to a situational *modus operandi* rather than a strict moral principle. This paper on Hiroshima memory argues that Japanese pacifism can be better defined as ‘pacifist movement’ which rides the tide of political opportunity structure than an ideology of foundational ethics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pacifist movement before the 1945 bombings was mostly anti-war and anti-militarism.

Four leading groups of pacifists were literary intellectuals (e.g., Tayama Katai and Yokino Akiko), liberals (e.g., Yoshino Sakuzo and Ozaki Yukio), Christian leaders (Kashiwagi Gien and Yabe Kiyoshi) and Socialists (e.g., Sakaito Shihiko and Kataya Masen). For more details, see Hiroshima Peace Culture Center 1991.

<sup>2</sup> SCAP categorized all printed and media publications into 30 types. It banned dissemination of all information about SCAP, the Tokyo Trials and Allied Powers. On the domestic side, information about war propaganda, the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and feudalistic remnants such as Samurai virtues was also banned (Dower 1999: 412-3).

<sup>3</sup> *Hibakusha*, used as an original noun, is a Japanese word for atomic bomb victim.

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- <sup>4</sup> Of the total of 964 *hibakusha* testimonials, about one third (249) were printed before the hydrogen bomb fallout incident and the remainder (715) appeared thereafter.
- <sup>5</sup> The total number killed due to the atomic bombings is difficult to estimate due to the circumstances of the event. Many of those who survived the bombing and radiation exposure have since died, and it is sometimes not possible to determine whether those deaths were the result of radiation exposure or of natural causes (The Cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1979: 27).
- <sup>6</sup> About 15,000 from Hiroshima and 8,000 from Nagasaki returned to Korea at the end of the war, but about 5,000 and 2,000 from respective cities chose to remain in Japan (Nakamura 2006).
- <sup>7</sup> Interview, 16 March 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview, 15 February 15 2007.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview, 11 November 11 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> With the passage of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Reconstruction Law in 1949, construction of the original Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall began the following year. Construction of an annex, the Hiroshima Memorial Museum, began in 1951. The Hall, “devoted to the issues of peace and culture,” was opened to the public in May 1955. Since its opening, the museum had more than 53 million visitors (*The Japan Times*, June 10 2006).
- <sup>11</sup> A Harris Poll taken in November 1989 shows that 57 percent of the respondents agreed that the U.S. was trying to bully Japan on trade issues, while 27 percent disagreed (*Index to International Public Opinion 1988-1989*: 197, quoted in Fukuoka 2006: 133).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

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- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.
- <sup>15</sup> The same message continued until the 1994 Declaration of Peace which stated: “We must obviously never forget Japan’s war against and colonial domination of other nations of Asia” (The City of Hiroshima, August 6 1994).
- <sup>16</sup> Interview, 29 November 29 2006.
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