

The Making of a Peace Museum Tradition: Case-Studies from Japan and Cambodia

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SUMMARY

The hosting in November 1998 of the 3rd International Conference of Peace Museums, provided an opportunity for international dialogue and professional discussions on the subject of peace museums. That this important conference adopted as its title the theme of “exhibiting peace” in the museum world- pointed emphatically to the links that were being made between the network of peace museums and the wider museum community. The conference, which was conducted across a number of venues in Japan, has marked an important stage in the fruition of the peace museum concept, and the emerging public recognition of the terrain of the peace museum. This has been a gradual process and embodies the work of many individuals and their activities which have been conducted over a period of almost a hundred years. It is also proof of a significant change in public attitudes. Whether we speak of civic museums or public architecture, the commemoration of war has certainly out-numbered the celebration of peace as a subject for national and local government. Whereas there are relatively few countries that do not possess a war museum or some significant municipal monument commemorating war, peace museums have, until recently, been scarce. This paper will explore the emergence of the peace museum tradition and the issues which it raises for the wider subject of exhibiting peace. It will do so through the discussion of some case-studies drawn from Japan and Cambodia. These examples provide important evidence as to some of the problems and possibilities that arise in the creation of peace museums. The pattern of experience, and the public and political issues, vary greatly from country to country, as these examples will demonstrate. All of this has profound

implications for the role of the museum in individual countries. Linked to this analysis, the paper will also offer some observations on the wider subject of the making of a peace museum tradition.*

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1. The Peace Museum Tradition: Antecedents

It is certainly true that peace museums have a relatively short history—barely a hundred years. Nevertheless this history has not been without significance for the work of national museums in many parts of the world. Even into the twentieth century one could rightly observe that local government and municipal authorities have spent deeply on glorying past heroic war deeds but have invariably allocated only meagre funds for issues of peace¹). At the launch of the USA's first Peace Museum in Chicago in 1981, its founding director, Marianne Philbin regretted that while the country possessed many war memorials, “there has never been a museum in the US dedicated to...building peace”. It has certainly taken much independent initiative to pioneer developments in the presentation of peace. Such museums have a critical role in preserving this vital heritage. While we have gone to great lengths to preserve the material culture of war, we have devoted little space to the whole subject of peace and of peace culture²). Much more must be done to actively recover and exhibit the less tangible fragments of our society's history that might constitute “a culture of peace”. This challenge is all the more compelling in a country such as Japan with the tragic legacy of the Atomic bomb still formidably within living experience. The nightmare which haunted post-WW2 Japan is poignantly documented in Robert Jungk's monumental, *Children of the Ashes*, and cuts to the heart of the issue of museums of war and peace³). It raises the key question of how we portray the worst moments of our national pasts.

Japan provides us with great inspiration in the birth of the modern peace museums movement. It will also come as no surprise that the contribution to the maturation of the peace museums concept, owes so much to the creative work of Japanese peace museums and peace thinkers. It is entirely possible, and the Japanese have provided us with a prime example of this phenomena, that out of

the worst examples of war—we can forge a culture of peace. Indeed peace museums have part of their origins in the legacy of war. War Museums certainly have a longer history than “museums of peace”. Ironically too, the first of this phenomena that we now call “peace museums” were themselves preoccupied with war. Battle, and its humanitarian consequences, loom large in the themes of the precursors of what we now group collectively as “peace museums”. So the first “peace museums” might be understood to have been “frustrated war museums”—museums which their founders envisaged as “exposes of war”. This tradition has a continuing importance in the exhibitions of like-minded museums today. Such museums, and the modern “peace museums movement” have been preoccupied with a dialogue concerning how museums treat “war and peace”. That process has also been part of the Japanese experience and has ultimately produced the growth of peace museums and of civic peace projects across Japan. The important results of this phenomena can be traced all across present-day Japan. Their construction has not been without controversy, and the emergence of the Japanese peace museum phenomena has reflected (and sometimes accentuated) underlying political tensions.

The early days of the peace museum tradition might be likened to the first steps of a somewhat frail child. The walk was certainly determined but not always particularly steady. It is also valuable to note that the origins of the peace museum tradition owes much to the inspiration and activities of a collection of people. The earliest steps towards the creation of a peace museum concept lie in the activities of several individuals and a disparate set of institutions. These impulses can be traced to the late Victorian period. Before World War One, museums had been established which sought to preserve the history of peacemaking and to oppose the tragedy of war. During the twentieth century this tradition has developed and (equally importantly) has influenced “conventional museums”. In the past twenty years (especially in Japan, Europe and America)

there has been considerable interest in the peace museum idea and in a growing number of countries such museums have opened. The product of state, group or individual efforts- these museums have preserved a rich heritage of peacemaking which has co-existed alongside the history of war⁴⁾. However, precisely because of the historical attention devoted to national “deeds of war”, peace museums have far to go before they can equal- either numerically or in importance- the civic attention devoted to museums of war.

One can only hope that the future may lead to a more genuine understanding of the importance of embracing peace, and of the need to work constructively towards the elimination of war. This will probably lie somewhat in the future, but there is evidence indeed of commitment to that process and of a growing body of curators in national museums, including those noted for collections of militaria, who are thinking more seriously about the portrayal of the subject of peace. A good example is the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds which opened in 1996. This fine, modern museum is part of the network of Royal Armouries museums whose flagship is the famous Tower of London Museum, with all its colonial and military associations. The Tower site is one of the oldest museums in the world. The new museum in Leeds includes among its staff a peace curator, whose job it is to demonstrate and interpret the concern with peace which exists in a museum otherwise associated with arms and armour. Ostensibly this may seem like a “war museum” but the curators of the Royal Armouries are very serious about the issue of peace in the world today⁵⁾.

There is some, one would emphasise, “healthy” debate about where the peace museums tradition has its origins. It is also a matter of some contention as to which entity might be regarded as the first example of what is now defined as a “peace museum”. Opinions differ among writers, and indeed the concept itself is prone to such elastic definitions that it may be erroneous to apply a rigid label

on a phenomena which requires some flexibility in its classification. However, probably the first museum that was specifically envisaged as a “museum of peace” was the Hague Peace Palace, founded by Andrew Carnegie in the early 1900s to personify, “peace through international law”. It also accommodates such lofty institutions as the International Court of Justice, the Hague Academy of International Law and the famous Peace library. However, the Peace Palace is a notable exception to the vociferously “anti-war” emphases of the earliest peace museums. The first of this genre was Jean de Bloch’s International Museum of War and Peace, founded in 1902 in Lucerne, Switzerland. He had taken the view that, “war itself was the strongest testimony against war” but ironically the museum was destroyed by precisely the war it sought to prevent.

Ernst Friedrich’s famous Anti-War Museum, established in 1923 was also destroyed by the forces which led to the Second World War. Through photographs of mutilated soldiers and war objects, Friedrich had hoped to convey “war’s true nature”. Predictably, the Nazi government destroyed the museum, and Friedrich fled from Germany. In 1940, another peace exhibition he had established in Brussels, did not survive the German invasion⁶). It is unfortunate that these earliest example of “embryonic peace museums” came at precisely the time that Europe was about to go to war. They swiftly became the victims of the drift to conflict that their exhibitions had sought to prevent. Perhaps the best that can be said about these early precursors of the peace museum tradition, is that they helped formulate the peace museum concept.

The early days of the peace museum movement are shaky indeed, and one should not over-estimate the degree of progress that was possible in the difficult times that faced the proponents of the movement. Indeed the same inimitable “anti-war” message is kept alive by museums which have been established much later in the century. In Germany one thinks of Berlin’s Anti-War Museum under

the German Anti-War Museum Society; and the Peace Library and Anti-War Museum of the German Evangelical Church, both formed in the early 1980s. One also notes the Bridge at Remagen Peace Museum founded in 1980 on the famous “war bridge”; and of the Anti-War House which opened at Sieverhausen in 1981. The Caen Memorial Museum, and the World Centre for Peace, Freedom and Human Rights at Verdun (which commenced in 1988 and 1993, respectively) are both constructed on twentieth-century battlefields. They thus continue this tradition of a symbolic concern with opposing war. We should also note the Lindau Peace Museum, which dates to 1980. Funded by Pax Christi and the Lindau authorities, and marking the meeting point of three countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland)-the museum documents the tragedy of war⁷). It is a remarkable museum whose very location makes it a living example of the co-operation and contacts that is possible between nations. The Lindau Peace Museum embraces the very concept of international togetherness as we reach the end of the 20th century and the new millennium. One hopes that the war that it so comprehensively documents will never be seen again. The Lindau Peace Museum is certainly a powerful indictment against the use of violence in the international political system.

2. Peace Museums: A Process of “Enlargement”

It is worth observing that the “peace museum” concept has experienced a process of “enlargement” with many new kinds of museums finding their way into the generic category. Indeed in the maturation of the peace museum idea it is impossible to generalise about “typical institutions”. Their creation has varied widely from country to country, and has often reflected regional experiences or the personalities of individual founders. It is clear that peace museums are a phenomena which encompass a wide range of diverse museums and institutions. For that reason, it is very important that such entities should be

regarded as part of a large umbrella which can be as inclusive as possible. It is, however, possible to offer some broad observations about trends in the creation of “peace museums”. First of all, there are museums that actually have “peace” in their title, and are dedicated to peace education through the visual arts. This would certainly include Chicago’s Peace Museum, and indeed more than twenty-five museums across the world. This preoccupation spans issues of regional peace (such as Germany’s Peace Museum Meeder, commemorating the peace associations of this border town)-to the global emphases of the League of Nations Museum in Geneva. It also incorporates the search for peace “within peoples” as in the desire for harmony among Koreans, expressed by the Yi Jun Peace Museum in Holland. Its founder has been lobbying for the establishment of a Korean Peace Museum strategically placed on the border between north and south Korea. It is hoped that this museum, whose proposed site will be close to the de-militarised zone, might encourage Korean peace.

Then there are “issue-based” entities which have been formed in response to specific events. There are quite a number of Japanese museums of this type that we might regard as being “peace related”. These would include Liberty Osaka, with its focus on peace and human rights; the Shokokumin Museum in Nagasaki with its concern for the fate of children in war-time Japan; the Okunoshima Poison Gas Museum on Okunoshima Island with its appeal against the production of poison gas and for everlasting peace; and the Usui Peace Memorial Center with its comprehensive exhibitions opposing the use of war. Also of special interest are Naruto City’s “German House” which preserves records concerning the humanitarian treatment shown to German prisoners of war on the prison camp Bando; the Takamatsu Civic Culture Center with its exhibitions against war and fostering international peace; and the Fukuyama City Human Rights & Peace Museum with its collections depicting the Fukuoka Air Raid and the struggle for human rights and peace. These themes of international

peace and human rights are also reflected in the Mirasaka Peace Museum of Art, the Himeji Peace Center, and the Sakai City Peace & Human Rights Museum⁸⁾.

The category of “issue-based” museums is a very wide-ranging one and would include museums of the holocaust (such as Yad Vashem in Israel) and the interpretative centres at the many former concentration camps (such as those at Dachau in Germany, and Auschwitz in Poland). In Japan one would also note the Holocaust Education Center in Tokyo, and several other smaller initiatives dealing with holocaust issues in Japan. These entities too deserve to be treated as part of the all-encompassing culture and traditions of the peace museum movement. The idea of “issue-based museums” is certainly a potentially wide one. Under the category “issue-based” one would also include museums dealing with nuclear war (such as the peace museums in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Just as the battlefields of Flanders became equated with the dawn of a new era in war, so too have Hiroshima and Nagasaki assumed a symbolic place in the nuclear age. Of particular note is the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum which opened in April 1996 and which offers a radical re-interpretation of modern Japanese history. Predictably, the new museum has outraged many on the Japanese political “right”. In contrast, and indicating how issues from the war are still alive in Japan-Tokyo’s Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead project, says little about Japanese militarism or about the lives of the occupied Asian peoples. It is unlikely that the Tokyo venture will find the confidence of peace researchers who will see it more as a “war museum” than one of peace. This underlies continuing sensitivities in Japan concerning museums of war and peace. This sensitivity may indeed underscore some of the limits and possibilities in the promotion of the peace museum idea. It certainly points to the reality that peace can be a highly political concept, and that it is seldom remote from the realpolitik of regional or international society.

What might count as an “issue-based” museum is a recipe for an exceedingly expansive cake. It is undoubtedly clear that “issue-based” museums encompass a potentially wide and heterogeneous field. Among other “issue-based” facilities one might include museums of genocide, such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh⁹). Then there are museums which focus on the general humanitarian nature of individuals or groups of individuals, such as the Florence Nightingale Museum in London, or the International Red Cross Museum in Geneva. Included in the exhibitions of the latter are the index files of the International Prisoners of War Agency, compiled during the First World war. Then there are a set of museums one might loosely define as, “museums of non-violence”- notably the collection of Gandhi museums dotted across India, and with satellite entities in Europe, Australia and the USA. It might also include museums dedicated to particular non-violent campaigns, such as the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, which explores the American Civil Rights movement. Finally, it can be argued that any museum which concentrates on peace issues has the potential to serve as a “museum of peace”. It will, of course, be realised, that certain museums “cut across” definitions, and fall under a number of these categories. Take for example, Austria’s Franz Jagerstatter House, preserving the memorabilia of the famous conscientious objector who opposed the Nazi regime. It could be regarded as an “anti-war museum”, as an “issue-based museum” or indeed as falling under the “humanitarian” category. It is clear that the peace museum idea is a potentially encapsulate one¹⁰).

What might constitute a “peace museum” and the complexities of the issue of “peace” is particularly well illustrated by two recent Japanese case-studies- the project for Tokyo’s Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead, and the completion of Nagasaki’s new Atomic Bomb Museum. These two ventures have (in their unique ways) proven controversial examples that are illustrative of the

conflicts in modern Japanese society and politics. They shed important light on what might constitute a peace museum in Japan and how many post-WW2 issues remain as yet unresolved. For these reasons, they are interesting cases that might encourage useful discussion about the nature of the peace museum movement in present-day Japan, and some of the problems which it faces. These case-studies point to the challenge which peace museums are seen to constitute to the political situation in certain countries. In Japan, the subject of peace is a highly politicised one, and continues to generate both academic and public debate.

3. The Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead, Tokyo

An aspect of the political nature of the debate about peace and peace museums is reflected in the case-study of this new project in Tokyo. The proposal for a “Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead” in the Japanese capital, has proven something of a litmus-test both for current Japanese thinking about WW2 and for the peace museum idea in Japan. Arguments concerning the assumed “title” of the facility are central to the controversy, since it is not clear whether the project is conceived as a “war” or as a “peace” museum. The use of the word “peace” in the title is encouraging, but the “peace” that is envisaged by the Museum seems to be based on a very-focused view of the Second World War. There is a strong element of militarism about many of the proposed galleries, and the emphasis on war paraphernalia is hardly encouraging. Consequently, the project has been dubbed the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall” which locates it in the “war museum” tradition. At any rate, the construction of what is essentially a “national war memorial” is now an international issue. It is perceived by many international commentators as a “left-over” of the war-time generation, and an “acid-test” of the underlying “rightist politics” of that generation. By others, the venture is seen as contributing to the perpetuation and

even the renewal of these “war-time sentiments” among the Japanese public today.

The Welfare Ministry envisaged the Museum as an imposing structure in central Tokyo’s historic Chiyoda district. Significantly, this zone includes the Imperial Palace, and the famous Chidorigabuchi War Dead Cemetery. Also adjacent is the Kudan Hall- a former “Soldiers’ Hall” of the Japanese imperial army which is now owned by the Japan Association of War-bereaved families. This is the very centre of “rightist” territory in Tokyo, wherein are many of the “sacred cows” of Japan’s “right-wing” political tradition. It is exactly the place one would imagine might be chosen for the site of a project like the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall”. Since the 1960s the Japan Association of War-bereaved families has undoubtedly assumed a “rightist-orientated” nationalistic platform, and has persuaded the Ministry to make the museum a national project. Mr Sakae Suehiro, vice-president of this politically influential group, served on the project examination committee, and publicly contends that Japan did not engage in acts of “aggressive war”. This is determined political ground indeed and underscores the place of the museum world in the context of Japanese politics. One might regard Mr Suehiro’s remarks as illustrative of the political and intellectual content that seems to form part of the planning strategy of the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall”. It remains to be seen how these ideas might find their way into curatorial programmes and exhibitions.

There does exist an essentially “rightist” challenge to many aspects of the Japanese peace museums movement, if it can be regarded as a distinct entity. This has its manifestations not only in public criticisms of individual museums and staff. It is also reflected in physical and verbal intimidation by “rightist” groups, of individual museum curators and their associates. It is also worth

noting that a past President of the Japan Association of War-bereaved families, former Prime Minister Mr Ryutaro Hashimoto, supported the nationalising of Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine- with its symbolic associations of the Japanese "war effort"¹¹). This shrine is close to the proposed "Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead". The exhibits for the national museum document the suffering of "some three million persons". Interestingly, this is exactly the quoted figure of "Japanese war dead". Little is said about the dead of other nations, about the lives of occupied Asian peoples, about the experiences of the so-called "comfort-women" or about the victims of "forced labour". Yet these topics are impressively exhibited elsewhere in Japan by such innovative galleries as the Osaka International Peace Center and the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. It seems that the "Basic Plan" of the museum is to "renew in the minds of the Japanese people their mourning spirit over the war dead..." Mourning is a natural human sentiment but the objects of mourning should not be exclusively Japanese. One hopes that these natural sentiments might be broadened so that they might be seen to reflect a wider concern for the grief occasioned by war.

It is particularly regrettable that the "peace aim" of the "War Dead's Memorial Peace Prayer Hall" is negligible since the concept of "peace" is neither explicit nor implicit in its programme. The "Basic Plan" does not officially propose to "glorify" the wars in which the "war-dead" had fought, but may do so latently. Equally, the project is likely to antagonise Japan's Asian neighbours who might have expected a facility which would foster international co-operation. The debate continues and is unlikely to be dampened by the efforts of recent Japanese administrations to placate the demands of neighbouring countries for "war reparations". It is interesting that some of the militaristic themes which were quite explicit in the plans for the "Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead" are directly challenged in several Japanese museums which deal with military issues. These would include the Saiki Peace Memorial Hall Yawaragi

with its preoccupation with public reflection on peace; the Oka Masaharu Memorial Peace Museum in Nagasaki- which delicately treats but implicitly opposes the aggressive action of Japanese forces; and the Peace Museum for the People which, by portraying the suffering of soldiers, hopes for the coming of world peace¹²⁾.

There can be little question that the issue of presenting peace, cuts to the heart of the debate about war guilt and the pressure for atonement. Just as the Smithsonian's failed 1995 exhibition on the Enola Gay indicated the strength of the USA's veteran lobby- the debacle occasioned by this project, illustrates the gulf which splits Japanese society on the issue of war responsibility. These matters have yet to be genuinely confronted, and the project has exposed the paralysis in attitude which exists among conflicting "interest groups". The proposed facility has enormous potential in addressing the tragic legacy of war. Sadly, it seems unlikely that the impulses impacting on this project would permit its metamorphosis into a peace museum. If indeed it is ever genuinely realised, the museum is likely to enshrine memories of the Japanese "war dead" at the expense of exploring "global peace". It seems very far from the efforts of those in both prefectural and private peace museums that have been working to disseminate a culture of peace¹³⁾. This is unlikely to afford much comfort for those in the Japanese peace museums movement who have struggled to give genuine focus to issues of peace and peace culture.

An understanding of the context in which the "Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead" was promulgated, is vital in order to realise the currents of Japanese political opinion on this subject. In *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, former Smithsonian director, Martin Harwit, elucidates the impact of his proposed exhibition on Japanese public opinion¹⁴⁾. Harwit shows how in 1994 and 1995 (when the exhibition was being prepared) the Japanese press,

including *The Japan Times*, focused on such issues as whether the Enola Gay exhibition would support the call for a global ban on nuclear weapons. The entire episode points to the importance of this issue in Japanese society and to its political ramifications. Despite apparent progress during their meetings in Japan, the full implications of the controversies generated by the Enola Gay project, did not hit the headlines until the exhibition was in its final phase, and had ultimately to be abandoned. It is against the strength of feeling in which issues of war and peace are viewed in modern Japan, that one must consider the fate of the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall”. These views are also implicit in the excellent recent collection produced by the Japan Peace Museum and the Japan Confederation of A and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations, *The Nuclear Century: Voices of the Hibakusha of the World*. This important book looks at the past fifty years from the perspective of the nuclear sufferers, the *hibakusha*, in a message to the twenty-first century that, “we must never allow the horrific realities portrayed in these pages to be repeated anywhere ever again”¹⁵. It is difficult to find images and sentiments that might offer a greater juxtaposition with those of the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall”. Tragically, the “War Dead’s Memorial Peace Prayer Hall” project could yet prove to be a symbol of both the resilience and the divisiveness of Japanese public opinion on many subjects germane to the war.

4. The New Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum

The Nagasaki International Cultural Hall, predecessor of the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, was constructed in 1955 to exhibit articles and photographs illustrating the tragedy of the Atomic bombing. A fine account of the Hall’s history is given in the classic study, *Nagasaki Speaks: A Record of the Atomic Bombing*¹⁶. More recently, the extensive array of documents and photographs which the International Cultural Hall exhibited over so many years

have been re-printed in a number of new collections including the feature-catalogue of the new museum, *Records of the Nagasaki Atomic Bombing*¹⁷⁾. An interesting personal perspective on the events described in these materials is offered by Dr Mieko Higuchi's *Footprints of Nagasaki*¹⁸⁾. These unique and often emotional sentiments, provide important insight that might help us better understand the impact of the exhibits and accompanying captions which are included in the new museum. There has been some criticism that the massive display of Atomic Bomb memorabilia which was characteristic of the International Cultural Hall has been too easily abandoned in favour of a modern "high-tech" approach. Many older visitors have doubted the impact of the modern technology that this museum has embraced, and suggested that the photographs they remember from their high-school visits to Nagasaki were more dramatic. It is difficult to resolve this debate, except to say that the new museum has proven extremely popular both with Japanese and international visitors. While it has been criticised as resembling too much "a Sony play-station" it has also been profoundly praised by many visitors, across all age-ranges.

The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum marks a remarkable departure in the portrayal of issues of war and peace in Japan. It represents one of the most important developments on these issues in recent years. In April 1996 this substantial new museum was opened with three main exhibits which cover the atomic bombing on Nagasaki, Japanese war-time policy, and the period from the nuclear arms race to Japan's post-1945 peace movement. These materials are also very well illustrated in the accompanying guide-books and illustrative resources available at the museum. There is much that is highly educational for all age-groups. The various "content" issues are interestingly elaborated in the *Records of the Nagasaki Atomic Bombing* guide, which provides a very effective "over-view" of the principal museum galleries and its collections. In one gallery a vapourised clock-its hands halted at the moment of the bombing- symbolises

the destruction of civilian life. This section also includes a full-scale replica of the ruined walls of the Urakami Catholic Cathedral. This is a moving and highly effective reconstruction which offers great insight into the destructive power of the Atomic Bomb. The exhibits are quite sparse on physical heritage but extremely well adapted as “true-to-life” representations which are educationally appealing to a wide range of age-groups and public audiences.

The Atomic Bomb Museum followed an enormous effort of planning and debate about its presentation of the events which destroyed Nagasaki. The museum is inspired by Mr Hitoshi Mutoshima, a former mayor of Nagasaki—who was once attacked by a right-wing thug because of his utterances about Emperor Hirohito’s “war responsibility”. Mr Mutoshima hoped that the museum would place the bombing of Nagasaki in an objective historical context. Mr Shuichi Kato, Prof Ikuro Anzai and Prof Junichiro Kisaka supervised the preparation of the exhibition depicting the activities of Japanese military forces in the Asia-Pacific theatre prior to the Atomic bombing¹⁹). They were convinced that the museum must make reference to Japan’s aggression in order to promote international understanding. Significantly, in March 1996, “right-wing” extremists objected to the inclusion of a photograph of the Nanjing Massacre, and soon after the museum’s opening, demonstrations via loud-speaker cars were conducted at regular intervals by “right-wing” organisations. This does much to point to the vociferousness of the Japanese “right wing” parties and their unease concerning the subject of peace. Peace is seen in their eyes as about capitulation and apology, and this is highly sensitive indeed to their political constituency.

The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum is one of the most modern of its kind in Japan. The museum’s discussion of the nuclear arms race and post-WW2 peace activism is based on recognition that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki opened the nuclear age. Data on nuclear weapons, the arms race and

the global peace movement are complimented by a “Question and answer corner” which allows visitors to research nuclear issues by computer. Video screens also illustrate both nuclear testing and the grisly fate of nuclear victims across the world. A pleasant contrast is provided in the form of the local music of the island peoples. However the museum’s sensitive account of the history of these indigenous peoples includes the important caveat that it is precisely such island communities that have suffered so tragically from nuclear tests.

The themes exhibited in the “island peoples” exhibition provide an interesting “cross-over” from the historical tragedy of Japanese experience in a city like Nagasaki. These exhibits are vital in the Nagasaki museum’s relating of the tragedy of the A-Bomb in Japan to the wider panorama of nuclear destruction. Since its opening, the new Nagasaki museum has attracted approximately 100,000 visitors a month. The feed-back from visitors has been very positive and despite the continued criticism vociferously expressed by the Japanese “right wing”, the museum has found an important place in the curriculum of the Japanese school system. It comprises an important peace education centre and is home to a variety of peace-promoting activities covering the Nagasaki area. The new Nagasaki museum is of greater importance than even its impressive, modern facade can convey. It marks an important step in Japan’s fundamental re-interpretation of WW2 and of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This process has not been without controversy but with this pain there has also come healing. The Nagasaki Museum might be viewed as part of a nation’s emerging sense of dialogue with the ghosts of the past. One hopes that this process will ultimately prove therapeutic.

5. The Cambodian Past and the Legacy of Genocide

Cambodia offers an interesting case-study for examining the emergence of a culture of peace in a society which has experienced such untrammelled violence in its recent past. It is well known that during the 1970s Cambodia suffered the “so-called” zero years of the Khmer Rouge who seized power in May 1975 with a determination to re-fashion their “Democratic Kampuchea”²⁰. This long period of political and social turmoil was followed by economic neglect and international isolation. The result was to reduce the Cambodian population to the status of one of the poorest countries in the world. It is not surprising that Cambodia has proven such a desolate region for the development of human rights. Sadly, human rights were absolutely obliterated during the genocidal years of the Khmer Rouge²¹. It has taken considerable time since the nightmare of the 1970s to re-establish public confidence in legal safeguards and notions of human rights in this country. It is not surprising that the activities of the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC), which commenced work in the region on March 15, 1992 reflected such a pervasive concern with human rights and peace. The protection and advancement of human rights are explicit in the Declaration on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia, which was brokered by international efforts in the Paris Peace Accords of 1991²². UNTAC’s specific commitment to human rights development was absolutely essential to the success of the United Nations operation in this unfortunate country. Scarred emotionally and physically by almost four years of Khmer Rouge rule, Cambodia is a testimony to the tragedy of political conflict and human destructiveness. The measures that were conducted under UNTAC’s mandate are extremely important, but ultimately it is Cambodian society which must confront the task of nurturing and sustaining a human rights culture. The last couple of years have shown the impact of international action in promoting democratic structures which might allow a human rights culture to

grow. If that culture is to be genuinely popular, it must have its genesis in the sentiments and lived realities of the Cambodian people. The experience of 1993 yields concrete evidence that Cambodian society has the potential to leave the tragedy of its recent past behind.

During the fatal years of Khmer Rouge rule (between April 1975 and the beginning of the Vietnamese occupation in late December 1978) Cambodia endured probably the most violent of modern revolutions. As thousands were executed in interrogation centres and in the “killing fields”, government policies that were based on economic folly, plunged a whole society into appalling poverty. Many hundreds of thousands died from disease and starvation due to ruthless socio-economic policies. Thus Cambodia was a deserving recipient of one of the largest UN exercises yet to be conducted. The creation of UNTAC and its supervision of Cambodia’s elections in May 1993 constituted one of the most expensive UN operations to date. UNTAC subsequently withdrew in August 1993, leaving a basic UN infrastructure in place. Since then, world interest has focused on the possibilities of healing Cambodian society, which still bears deep physical and psychological scars from continued political troubles. In that process there is a very real need to confront the hated icons of the country’s brutal past so that Cambodians can find in those symbols, the genesis of a culture of human rights and peace. More complex are the accumulated memories of the genocidal regime of the 1970s. As symbols of these years, places like the Genocide Museum at Tuol Sleng and the “killing fields” near Phnom Penh are probably the most tangible legacies of Cambodia’s violent past. They constitute physical evidence of one of the greatest human rights tragedies of modern times.

It seems probable that under the Khmer Rouge a greater proportion of the population died than in any other revolution in the twentieth century. Many of

the victims were of the Lon Nol elite. However the majority of deaths were not part of an elimination of the Cambodian old order but were merely symptomatic of the desperate efforts of the regime to secure itself against potential opposition. To do that, it created a massive torture machine, sanctioned extra-judicial killing, and, ultimately, genocide against religious and minority groups. The result was to set in motion a policy of repression which fed upon itself. As the regime became obsessed with opposition it began to fear even its most trusted members. Soon even the most zealous party stalwarts “fell under suspicion”. At the centre of this policy of repression and security were the official interrogation centres which were located in Phnom Penh and the provincial towns. The largest of these centres was Tuol Sleng, the infamous S-21 compound, which was opened in April 1975. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in 1979, the Khmer Rouge left behind them at S-21 a massive record of systematic human rights violations which recorded the deaths of nearly twenty thousand people.

By the late 1970s the regime had become paranoid about its own survival. The symptoms of this paranoia litter the makeshift graveyards of Choeng Ek and the other “killing fields”. The material which the Khmer Rouge interviewers left behind them in their interrogation compounds is extremely revealing about the progress of their regime as it lurched towards virtual self-extinction. At a very early stage the regime supremos had begun to suspect even the most outwardly loyal of the party faithful. This momentum was increased as rumours of a coup and periodic outbreaks of opposition intensified the operations of centres like S-21. The typewritten summaries of the confessions made in S-21 illuminate the political pathology of the regime. This was an operation in which the actual confessions were merely the utilitarian function of a system obsessed with self-security. The result of each interrogation was predetermined before it began. No one was ever proven innocent when they found their way to S-21. The purpose of the interrogation centres was to reassure the regime hierarchy that

it could indeed protect itself. The centres were, first and foremost, manifestations of the paranoia which characterised Democratic Kampuchea.

6. Tuol Sleng: The Challenge of National Reconciliation

There can be little dispute that what happened during the KR period should be used to assist the process of national reconciliation and conflict resolution in Cambodia rather than for maintaining revenge or political advantages. The three main genocide areas in Cambodia were Prey Sor prison, the principal “killing field” at Choeng Ek, and Tuol Sleng. Prey Sor prison was a former Headquarters of the KR’s secret police, which was moved to Tuol Sleng soon after the KR occupied Phnom Penh. Tuol Sleng was a High School during the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes and then became the Headquarters of the KR secret police. The facility was used to detain political prisoners for questioning. In 1979, Tuol Sleng was turned into the Tuol Sleng Museum of Cambodian Genocide by the State of Cambodia (SOC). Prey Sor is still used as a prison while Choeng Ek and the Tuol Sleng museum are accessible by the public. At the museums people can see the broken skulls and bones of the victims and the various tools used to torture them.

S-21 was the largest and best-organised of the network of interrogation complexes which dotted Democratic Kampuchea. A significant number of the deaths at Tuol Sleng occurred in the wake of a suspected coup attempt by moderates in the ranks of the Khmer Rouge. The result was a dramatic purge in which from January 1977 onwards those suspected of conspiracy were brutally executed. Soon torture became a way of life. In particular the search was intensified all over the country for university-educated people. The result was the wholesale elimination of innocent people who happened to have some contact with the intellectual world of the western past. It was an enormous endorsement of mass

murder. The correspondence between the chief officer of Tuol Sleng and the standing Committee of the Party indicate that these activities were sanctioned by the highest political authorities of Democratic Kampuchea. The victims were carefully processed via confinement to iron beds on which they were tortured with electrical shocks. A “proof-positive” of the extremes of institutional paranoia is that four out of five prisoners at Tuol Sleng were actually Khmer Rouge supporters. Its chief of torture, “Brother” Duch, led two hundred interrogators in an operation in which thousands were tortured into making preposterous confessions such as “that they were agents for the CIA, the KGB or the Vietnamese”²³). Ing Pech, one of the few survivors, recalls that when Duch indicated that someone had to be re-educated, that meant they would be “crushed to bits after torture”. Then the arrest photographs were displayed on the ground floors where Cambodians could come to search for news of missing relatives. Some detainees who died during torture were buried in mass graves in the prison grounds; the majority were clubbed or stabbed to death at Choeng Ek.

Another S-21 survivor, Haing Ngor, remembers Tuol Sleng thus: “It became a symbol of Khmer Rouge atrocities, just as Auschwitz was a symbol of the Nazi regime”. It therefore represents a monument to human rights violations and the calculated social destruction of a society. The past few years have seen a gradual confrontation of this most tragic period of Cambodian history. Today Tuol Sleng Museum is a frightening exhibition of what a people can be forced to endure. Open for public eyes are the individual cells on the ground and first floors and also the mass detention sectors on the second floors. The tiny cells encourage empathy with the ghastly last hours of their occupants. Many of the beds have shackles fitted while in the corridors are the cages that accommodated the scorpions used as instruments of torture. In other rooms are the equipment of beatings and whippings—in all a terrible arsenal of flails and batons.

This is a twentieth century museum-piece of brutality more reminiscent of the medieval world than of the human rights violations of the 1970s. The primitive brutality underlying much of the suffering that occurred at S-21 is all the more disturbing. The interrogators had to physically interact with their victims in the close confines of the interrogation compounds. The psychological consequences for those sucked into the workings of S-21 must also have been grave. Ultimately, the interrogators themselves fell victim to the regime's paranoia. The buildings that were S-21 today offer disturbing evidence of the worst features of the Khmer Rouge years.

In the genocide museum which has been opened in Phnom Penh, the images of Khmer Rouge destructiveness are ubiquitous. Here Pol Pot busts mingle with the paraphernalia of incarceration, electrification and water-torture. Alongside these are the torture scenes painted by Heng Nath, another survivor of S-21. The brutal security regulations of the establishment stipulate that, "while getting lashes or electrification you shall not cry at all... for you are a chap who dare oppose the revolution". No less forbidding is Tuol Sleng's facade, especially the upper floors of building C, which were shrouded in barbed wire to prevent suicides. The blood of S-21's victims still stains the cells but perhaps most moving of all are the rows of photographs of the many who died during interrogation. Some of these unfortunate people show the knowledge that they are soon to die. Their faces are mangled by the pain of interrogation. Others seem unperturbed as if the Angkar has fooled them with that characteristic Khmer Rouge trick of offering "re-education", generally a euphemism for execution.

The remains of S-21 portray one of the most heinous genocides of the twentieth century. In Tuol Sleng are the ghastly memorabilia of the murders of all classes of Cambodian society, from the most affluent to the poorest peasants. There is paraphernalia relating to politicians such as Hu Nim, Minister of Information,

whose forced confession is displayed alongside those of foreign victims such as the American journalist, James Clark, and the Australian tourist, Lloyd Scott. In contrast, there are the personal belongings of many plebeian Kampuchians who did not leave much record of their stay at Tuol Sleng and who came with few possessions. Their shoes and the heaps of prisoners' clothing are piled-up 'Belsen-like' as part of the display. But even the poorest prisoners left a tangible record since each victim was systematically photographed upon arrival and the death was carefully registered. Like the Nazis the Khmer Rouge were meticulous in keeping records of their activities and these show how, as the revolution reached its heights of insanity, it began devouring its own children. During its worst phase, S-21 claimed at least a hundred victims a day²⁴).

7. Exploiting the Past: The Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh

S-21 was the largest and most carefully documented of a network of interrogation centres that existed at regional and district levels across Democratic Kampuchea. It was the only centre that systematically photographed its victims due to the problems of ensuring photographic facilities in the countryside. The testimonies of survivors indicate that similar centres operated in communes throughout the country. The mass grave-sites still scar present-day Cambodia. Choeung Ek (where almost nine thousand skulls have been counted) was the burial ground for Tuol Sleng. The histories of Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek are thus inextricably linked. The result is an enormous physical legacy of human rights abuse, genocide and atrocity. At Choeung Ek a memorial stupa was erected floor by floor in 1988 in the form of a traditional Cambodian pagoda, consisting of human skulls assembled on glass cases. The result is a painful record of human suffering in which the skulls of the victims are themselves the final testimony to the trauma they endured. Between 1975 and 1978 about 17,000 victims were transported to the extermination camp where they were blud-

geoned to death in order to save bullets. The grounds today still exhibit fragments of human bone and pieces of clothing scattered around the disinterred pits.

Choeung Ek was exploited for several years by the previous Vietnamese-installed government in their political stance *vis a vis* the Khmer Rouge. In practice, the Hun Sen administration has adopted a similar strategy. Yet the potential of Choeung Ek as a vehicle of reconciliation for Cambodian people is enormous. Indeed Choeung Ek could become a symbol for world society of the tragedy of human destructiveness and the necessity of human rights education. The genocidal years of the Khmer Rouge have been used as a political platform by the Cambodian establishment in order to justify the exigencies of their own governance. It is regrettable that the former Phnom Penh Government has in recent years exploited Tuol Sleng as an instrument of propaganda to boost its popularity by focusing hatred on its predecessor. This is all the more exasperating since most of the leaders of that Vietnamese-installed government, including Hun Sen and Heng Samrin, had been at one time Khmer Rouge officers. Tuol Sleng's propaganda today is the voice of those who have conveniently left behind them their past associations with the Khmer Rouge. There is also a strong political undertone behind the Memorial Stupa's dedication to those who died during Cambodia's year zero and the years which followed. The introductory panel at the entrance describes this period of history as, "more cruel than the genocidal act committed by Hitler's fascists...they wanted to transform Kampuchea people into a group of persons without reason...who always bent their heads to carry out Angkar's orders blindly..."

The Phnom Penh administration have been quite adroit in exploiting S-21 and Choeung Ek. Political manoeuvres of this kind are not unusual. A comparable case is Vietnam's War Crimes Museum in Saigon. However there is a necessity

for Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek to play their part in a process of consensus-building in Cambodian society. Interrogation centres and concentration camps have been re-cast as “museums of peace” in other countries. In Cambodia these camps cannot remain pawns in the power games of the political elite. This is vital if Cambodian society is to advance beyond the wretchedness of its recent historical experience. Cambodians have a saying about the horrors of their recent past: “We were all conspirators—we were all victims”. It is time that Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek become symbols of an unrepeatable tragedy in Cambodian society so that the survivors can find forgiveness and hope in what remains. Perhaps this can be part of a broader social and mental process that may take Cambodians at last beyond their ‘Killing fields’. In assisting with that transition, the programs designed by the UN and others have made an important contribution to the new Cambodia²⁵).

8. Promoting Reconciliation in Cambodia Today

The recent Cambodian elections were conducted against the backdrop of potential conflict within the political system, with the consequent risks of electoral intimidation and organised violence. There was certainly evidence of political tensions and some arrests of opposition party activists during the election campaign. It seems that these actions were primarily perpetrated to the advantage of the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) but it is difficult to calculate the scale of these activities. It is clear that many of the problems inhibiting the development of genuine access to democracy and human rights, and which had been targeted by UNTAC during its mandate, remained unresolved. It is worth noting the immediate background to the July 1998 elections. Following a brief power-struggle orchestrated in July 1997, Cambodia’s second prime minister, Hun Sen, took effective control. The dismissal of Prince Norodom Ranariddh as first prime-minister was widely condemned, although the international commu-

nity continued a strategy of co-operation with Hun Sen's administration. It was obvious that Hun Sen's style was essentially dictatorial and that he was exploiting the past violence of the KR as a technique to secure political legitimacy.

Inevitably, the Hun Sen administration moved against the democratic opposition. The episode in which Hun Sen began a crack-down against opposition politicians has been euphemistically called "the July events". Nevertheless, there has been a gradual application of pressure from the international community which extracted guarantees from Hun Sen of which the election was a logical outcome. The key to Cambodian politics at this time lies in the relations between the CPP under Hun Sen, and the two alternative forces of FUNCINPEC (the royalist party of Prince Ranariddh) and the Sam Rainsy Party. The CPP and its two rivals are bitter political enemies as a result of bloody civil war during the 1980s in which FUNCINPEC was allied with the Khmer Rouge against the Hun Sen regime. The national elections conducted in 1993 under the supervision of the UN, resulted in an uneasy stand-off. FUNCINPEC, with the largest number of seats, shared cabinet with the CPP in a coalition—each jostling for power. Sam Rainsy, a former FUNCINPEC finance minister, later split with Ranariddh to form his own party. On 30 March 1997 he almost died in a grenade attack which killed nineteen people, and which he blames on Hun Sen forces. This terminated a political rally outside the Silver Pagoda, drawing international attention to the worsening confrontation within the governing coalition. Cambodia is still stalked by the bodies of those who died during the regime of the KR, and by the politics that emerged from those years²⁶). Events such as these encourage people to "re-live" the fears of the past.

Whatever the final results and the post-electoral negotiations, the current Cambodian government is likely to be as unstable as the last. It is in this context of uncertainty and continued political violence that the July election must be

viewed. That is not to suggest that there has been no large measure of political achievement. The election appears to have been generally well conducted, and the National Election Commission (NEC) performed many aspects of its function with efficiency. The international community can certainly feel that it has made a significant contribution to the promotion of democracy in Cambodia. Nevertheless, it appears that the result of the election has been to continue the overt tension that exists in the Cambodian political system. It would have been naive to assume that the election would be capable of transforming the political imbroglio that is Cambodia today. However, the experience has further exposed both politicians and the Cambodian people to the democratic process, and may contribute to the continuance of respect for democracy. It is too early to say what will be the consequences for Cambodian politics, but one hopes that it will be possible for Cambodian society to build on the experience of July 1998 and that it has done something tangible to encourage a culture of respect for human rights and democracy that can be nurtured for the future.

Another crucial factor is the continued absence of sufficient political will to promote healing, reintegration and reconciliation. The current Cambodian political system has been inherited from the KR years where trust and openness were impossible. Cambodian politicians fail to show real action from their promises to work for justice and peace. “The National reconciliation for peace” is often cited as a maxim by Cambodian political leaders but their behaviour is in complete juxtaposition to these lofty words. Political attitudes are closer to the idea that “shifting...from power to powerlessness is the death of everything, even life”²⁷. Actually, this fear, which is common in the Cambodian situation today, can be understood because the culture of violence is still strong, and similar brutality to that perpetrated by the KR is still used today to intimidate or even to execute people. Those who used to be in power, are never sure that their opponents will tolerate them when they become powerless—therefore they

must try as hard as possible to maintain power in order to survive. Cambodians need to learn from the past, and to move beyond the Khmer Rouge years so as to construct a climate of mutual respect and contribute to a pattern of trust and openness. This will help to create activities to promote peace and reconciliation. Otherwise, the brutality of the Khmer Rouge will keep haunting Cambodia forever. Somehow they must extricate themselves from the “ghosts of history” that still people the Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh. They must truly find the resolve to move from a culture of violence to a culture of peace²⁸). One hopes that if Cambodians can genuinely find this spirit, Tuol Sleng may one day become a Museum of Peace. It will thus shed the propaganda of its past and become a centre of national reconciliation and healing.

Conclusion: The Making of a Peace Museum Tradition

The remarkable growth of the world-wide peace museum movement is ample evidence of the continuing dialogue concerning “museums of war and peace” in Japan and elsewhere. As the author writes, plans are well under way for a new African Peace Museum in Kenya, and a national peace museum in the United Kingdom is a real possibility. Across all continents, news arrives on a weekly basis of fresh initiatives that might fall under the “peace museums umbrella”. A similar trend can be found in the increasing support for ambitious programmes of civic peace architecture²⁹). Moreover, many “conventional” galleries and museums have in recent years chosen to prioritise their exhibitions to include materials directly related to peace and to the peace movement. It is a salient point, however, that what distinguishes “war museums” from “peace museums” lies less in the physical heritage and the content of the museum- than in the approach of the curators. It is also encouraging that the museum world and the museum public, have probably never been more responsive to the “peace museum” idea. This is certainly evidenced by the remarkable strides taken towards the creation of peace museums in Japan³⁰). It is also confirmed by the

burgeoning global interest in peace movements and peace museums, and in the increased governmental support for their construction in many countries.

In this context, the 3rd International Conference of Peace Museums has done much to spread the idea of “exhibiting peace” into the world of the regular museum³¹). It is obvious from the two Japanese examples of the “Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead” initiative and the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, that these projects continue to attract political controversy. Japan remains as divided over the issue of peace as it does over the memories of war. This is a real challenge for the peace museum tradition in this country. Similarly, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia has yet to become a symbol of national reconciliation. Cambodia must struggle to forge a tradition of peace and reconciliation from the wounds of a tragic past. This is no easy task, and it will undoubtedly take time. Nevertheless thinking about issues of war and peace can be helpful in promoting a dialogue that might lead eventually to a culture of peace. There is much cause for encouragement as we shift from a culture of war and violence to one of peace. As Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO has said, “not only is a culture of peace both feasible and indispensable...it is already in progress”³²). There can be little dispute that peace museums, with their goal of promoting peace culture through the visual arts, are implicitly and explicitly, part of that cultural process.

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