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Reiterated Commemoration: Hiroshima as National Trauma*

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This article examines historical transformations of Japanese collective memory of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima by utilizing a theoretical framework that combines a model of reiterated problem solving and a theory of cultural trauma. I illustrate how the event of the nuclear fallout in March 1954 allowed actors to consolidate previously fragmented commemorative practices into a master frame to define the postwar Japanese identity in terms of transnational commemoration of "Hiroshima." I also show that nationalization of trauma of "Hiroshima" involved a shift from pity to sympathy in structures of feeling about the event. This historical study suggests that a reiterated problem-solving approach can be efficacious in analyzing how construction of national memory of a traumatic event connects with the recurrent reworking of national identity, on the one hand, and how a theory of cultural trauma can be helpful in exploring a synthesis of psychological and sociological approaches to commemoration of a traumatic event, on the other.

Today, 60 years after the atomic bombing, "Hiroshima" occupies a prominent place in Japanese national memory and forms the core of the national identity that renounces war as a sovereign right. The Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima makes news headlines every August in the Japanese media, and more than 1 million people pay their visit to the Peace Memorial Park, the "Mecca of Peace," every year. It is therefore surprising to learn that "Hiroshima" was once almost forgotten in the aftermath of World War II. Japanese were able to commemorate "Hiroshima" as national trauma only after one Japanese fishing boat was struck by the fallout of the hydrogen bomb near Bikini Atoll in March 1954. But what caused this delayed register of "Hiroshima" in Japanese collective memory? How did the event of the H-bomb fallout transform commemoration of "Hiroshima?"

To answer these questions, I first assemble a theoretical framework for the study of collective memory that combines a model of reiterated problem solving and a theory of cultural trauma. Collective memory is part and parcel of collective identity because memory is a precondition for narrative construction of autobiographies by which we identify who we are. As historical circumstances change, we reconstruct our collective memory and redefine our collective identity. This recurrent reworking of collective memory and identity makes it possible for us to conceptualize the history of collective remembering as the reiterated solving of an enduring problem—how to remember the past so as to define identity of members of a collectivity—where earlier

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solutions set parameters for current competition among possible solutions. Moreover, a traumatic event has an important role in construction of collective memory and identity, for it violently disrupts processes of memory construction and shakes existentially the sense of who we are. It is therefore helpful to introduce a theory of cultural trauma into the study of collective memory and shed light on a sociopsychological dimension of the remembering. In particular, as we shall see, commemoration of a traumatic event is a critical case to test an analytical strategy of “multidimensional rapprochement” between psychological-individualist and sociological-collectivist approaches to collective memory (Olick 1999b). Thus, a theory of collective memory that incorporates reiterated problem solving and cultural trauma can give us new analytical leverage to study how commemorative practices build on one another and how a traumatic event plays out in memory-identity formation of a collectivity.

Within this theoretical framework, I examine the historical transformations of Japanese collective memory of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima between August 1945, when the atom bomb was dropped, and April 1957, when the Japanese state officially “nationalized” memories of the atomic bombing by providing medical care for A-bomb survivors (*hibakusha*), living testimonials of the event. I break down the 12 years into three periods in which actors articulated different solutions to the problem of commemoration of “Hiroshima” vis-à-vis Japanese national identity. I focus on how the earliest solution to remember “Hiroshima” as transnational affected subsequent solutions, and how actors succeeded in transforming the lock-in transnational commemorative path in conjunction with the contingent event of the H-bomb fallout in March 1954. I then show how the atomic bombing of Hiroshima became national trauma constitutive of Japanese identity by pointing out a shift from pity to sympathy in structures of feeling about the event. I suggest that this shift signaled the emergence of national trauma, converting Japanese from spectators of distant suffering to a community of wounded actors.

COMMEMORATION AS REITERATED PROBLEM SOLVING

One theoretical point of departure for this article is Jeffrey Olick’s (1999a) threefold model of collective memory. Olick considers three key dimensions: the politics, the history, and the memory of commemoration. The first dimension, the “politics of commemoration,” pertains to the present, conjunctural processes through which different social groups engage in the reshaping of collective memory of a given event. Here, “quintessential sociological issues of power, stratification, and contestation are central” (Olick and Robbins 1998:122). The second dimension is the “history of commemoration,” concerned with change in forms of communication that are available to construction of collective memory. Mnemonic representations are always constructed, circulated, and stored in particular forms, such as “narratives, pictorial images, textbooks, pamphlets, legal charters, wills, diaries, and statues” (Wagner-Pacifici 1996:302), and different forms structure a range of publics into which particular commemorative practices flow. The third dimension is the “memory of commemoration,” that is, “prosaic path-dependence” (Olick 1999a), which creates internal dynamics within the history of collective memory that constrain the present recommitment. “Once commemoration gets underway,” in other words, “it picks up steam; it operates by a logic and force of its own” (Schudson 1989:108).

This third dimension is a crucial innovation that corrects the strong presentist bias in previous work on collective memory (Halbwachs 1992). It is now widely accepted that the present interests of social groups cannot dictate reconstruction of collective

memory, for collective memory can only be reshaped within limits that are dependent on the past of commemoration (Coser 1992; Olick 1998, 1999a; Olick and Levy 1997; Schudson 1989; Schwartz 1982, 1991, 1996). In fact, invoking path dependence has become standard for sociologists of collective memory; for instance, Barry Schwartz, one of the leading figures in the field, argues “the earliest construction of an historical object limits the range of things subsequent generations can do with it” (1991:232). In a similar vein, Olick introduces the dimension of “prosaic path-dependence” in order to capture “the accumulated succession of commemorations” (1999a:383).

Nonetheless, it is precisely this third dimension of path dependence that I propose to modify with a model of “reiterated problem solving” (Haydu 1998). This is not simply because discussions of path dependence in sociology have been hampered by a lack of clear understanding of the meaning of path dependence (Mahoney 2000). More importantly, reiterated problem solving can be more efficacious than path dependence in studying mechanisms through which “succession of commemorations” accumulates through time, weighs on the present commemoration, and sometimes transforms its lock-in path in conjunction with a contingent event (Sewell 1996) by capturing complex interactions between structure, agency, and contingency in moments of remembering.

According to Jeffrey Haydu, this model of “reiterated problem solving” links

facts from different periods into larger sequences of problem solving. Periods are demarcated on the basis of contrasting solutions for recurring problems Continuities across temporal cases can be traced in part to enduring problems, while more or less contingent solutions to those problems are seen as reflecting and regenerating the historical individuality of each period. (1998:354)

From this problem-solving perspective, one of the main explanatory goals is to account for why at a given time actors pursued one solution—one particular way of commemoration—rather than another. In order to achieve this explanatory goal, a problem-solving approach considers how a solution at an earlier point in history sets a new historical direction and limits future choices.

At first glance, this resembles the notion of path dependence, but the former is distinct from the latter on a crucial point: conceiving outcomes at a given switch point in terms of problem solving forces us to pay greater attention to agency and subjectivity of historical actors. A problem-solving account can shed light on contrasts not only in the conjunctural workings of structures but also in social actors’ own understandings, that is, “how social actors constructed the problem and what solutions appeared to be realistic within each historical context” (Haydu 1998: 355). This greater focus of a problem-solving model on action is critical. If we conceptualize actions as events, we can examine them as points in time where underlying mechanisms and their interactions register their causal forces through the mediation of agency of human actors as problem solvers (Abrams 1982; Collier 1994; Haydu 1998; Sewell 1996; Steinmetz 1998). Thus, I suggest that a problem-solving approach can be analytically more potent to answer the question: “In what different ways can the remembered past constrain the present, and under what circumstances are such constraints transformable?” (Olick and Levy 1997:922).

This model of reiterated problem solving can be particularly useful in studying commemoration of a past event as a locus of articulation of national identity. As Olick points out, construction of collective memory is tied to delineation of group membership: “It is not just that we remember as members of groups, but that we

constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act (thus re-membering)" (1999b:342). More pithily, Max Weber once defined nation as a "community of memories" (1978:903). Memory is fundamental to narrative construction of who we are, our autobiographical selves. Accordingly, kinds of mnemonic representations of the past by which we define our social identities, who we are collectively, are constitutive of national grouping.

In the world of nation-states, collective memory becomes part of constant recuperation of nationalism. The tenacity of nationalism derives from its practices to define nation in terms of its "internal frontier" that constitutes the putatively invisible and elastic "essence" of a people, which enables perpetual redefinition of nation according to changing historical circumstances (Balibar 1991; Stoler 1995). The "essence" of national identity, such as "Japaneseness," is an "empty signifier" whose content can be resignified over and over again (Barthes [1957] 1987; Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001) through reconstruction of memories of who "we the people" have been. Here, this recuperative operation of nationalism into which collective memory is recruited can be conceptualized as reiterated problem solving, where actors select one way of remembering rather than another.

In examining this relationship between collective memory and national identity, we need to expand on the second dimension of Olick's model, the "history of commemoration." It is not only forms of memory but also their "carrying capacities" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988:58–61) that we should examine in order to understand how mnemonic representations disseminate across different social spaces. For example, news magazines tend to have a greater carrying capacity than academic books, for the former are economically and culturally more accessible than the latter. Nationalization of commemoration of a particular event depends on the availability of mediums capable of reaching a wide range of audiences. Without sufficient carrying capacities, memory forms cannot impose on people within a territory of a nation-state "simultaneity-in-time," a hallmark of an imagined community (Anderson 1991), around an anniversary of a given event. It is therefore critical to study how mediums of memory with different carrying capacities participate in anniversarization and dissemination of simultaneity in nationalizing a certain commemorative practice.

CULTURAL TRAUMA AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

In this process of conjoining collective memory and national identity, "cultural trauma" plays an important role. In Jeffrey Alexander's formulation, cultural trauma occurs "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (2004:1). Cultural trauma is inextricably coupled with issues of collective identity. It rattles default notions of what it means to be a member of a certain community and calls for their rearticulation (Zelizer 2002). When it meets nationalism, cultural trauma can be congealed into "founding trauma" that "typically plays a tendentious ideological role, for example, in terms of the concept of a chosen people" (LaCapra 2001:81). That is, cultural trauma can be appropriated by nationalists to give a special mission to their nation, for the "most energetic manifestations of the idea [of nation] . . . have contained the legend of a providential 'mission'" (Weber 1978:925). As we shall see, "Hiroshima" became exactly such a foundational trauma in postwar Japan.

In conceptualizing “trauma” at the level of collective memory, we should be careful not to commit what Alexander calls the “naturalist fallacy” (2004). At the individual level, trauma is generally defined as a psychic injury caused by an overwhelming experience of a catastrophic event, where the memory of the event is repressed and the response occurs in an often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive fashion (Caruth 1996:11; Olick 1999b:343; Schudson 1989:110; see Payne et al. 2004, for a review). The naturalist fallacy means analogically transferring the psychoanalytic model of individual trauma to the study of collective memory. Examples of this fallacy are often found in writings by leading historians and literary critics of psychoanalytic persuasion, such as Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth. For instance, both of them interpret the belated register of trauma in collective memory by invoking psychoanalytic theory. “The traumatic event is repressed or denied and registers only belatedly after the passage of a period of latency. This effect of belatedness has of course been a manifest aspect of the Holocaust” (LaCapra 1998:9). According to Caruth, this “temporal delay” is not limited to the Holocaust but can be found in traumatic events in general (1995).

Although their applications of psychoanalysis look suggestive at first glance, they ignore the fact that construction of collective memory is distinct from that of individual memory. When theorists state that collectivities “remember,” “forget,” or “repress” without adjustments in method and theory in crossing the distinction between the individual and the collective, their statements can be misleading. So-called delayed collective memory of a traumatic event like the Holocaust might have more to do with “political interest and opportunities than the persistence of trauma or with any ‘linkage’ in the collective unconscious” (Kansteiner 2002:187). Thus, we need to examine cultural, social, and political processes through which collective memories of traumatic events are constructed; we must maintain the distinction between “collected” and “collective” memories, that is, “socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations and mnemonic traces” (Olick 1999b:336). Typically, psychoanalysis or psychology is concerned with the former, and sociology with the latter, though a quantitative survey of collective memory in sociology (e.g., Schuman and Scott 1989) collects socially framed individual memories.

However, it is equally problematic to draw too sharp a distinction between individual and collective memories. As Olick proposes, we should instead try to pay attention to “a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, neurological, cognitive, personal, aggregated, and collective” (1999b:346)—complex interactions between collected and collective memories. In examining the so-called belated register of a traumatic event in collective memory, for instance, we should not dismiss the utility of psychoanalysis and psychology outright in favor of sociology, for denial, repression, and silence on the part of individual survivors in the aftermath of a traumatic event could delay their actions to present their traumatic experiences in public arenas.

Here, I suggest that we adopt what critical-realist philosopher of science Roy Bhaskar calls “a linking science ‘socio-psychology,’” an intermediate domain between social sciences and psychology ([1989] 1998:216). This synthetic and intermediate science between sociology and psychology may be alternatively called “psychosociology” (Oughourlian [1982] 1991). Either way, it acknowledges and aims to study the inseparable relationship between sociogenesis and psychogenesis in a nonreductionistically synthetic manner. Within this framework, we can take into account both sociological and psychological mechanisms, as well as their interactions, through which collective memories are (re)produced and transformed. Since traumatic events

cause strong psychological reactions, the study of commemoration of such events is the best place to experiment with a sociopsychology of collective memory—an analytical strategy of “multidimensional rapprochement between individualist and collectivist approaches” (Olick 1999b:333)

Thus, from a sociopsychological perspective, we need to modify a sociological theory of cultural trauma. Alexander maintains that cultural trauma “is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” by defining cultural trauma as discursively constructed and distinct from psychic trauma (2004:10). But it is implicit in Alexander’s argument that cultural trauma has an emotional and therefore psychological dimension, which cannot be reduced to discursive construction. As anthropologist Margot Lyon argues, a constructionist approach to emotion has real limitations because emotion “has a central role in bodily agency, for by its very nature it links the somatic and the communicative aspects of being and thus encompasses bodily as well as social and cultural domains” (1995:256). So, what does it mean to say discomfort or pain enters into collective identity, when it is always only individual members of a collectivity who can feel emotion?

In working out this analytical tension between psychological-individualist and sociological-collectivist approaches to cultural trauma, Raymond Williams’s suggestive but underdeveloped concept of “structures of feeling” (1977:132–33) provides one possible direction. Here, I define “structures of feeling” as consisting of rules regulating the sequence: stimulus event → emotion ≈ feeling → action tendency ≈ response. In this processual model (Damasio 1999; Elster 1999; see Lewis and Haviland-Jones 2000, for reviews), an event stimulates emotion, a neurophysiological state, which includes a distinct pattern in an autonomic nervous system and a motor behavior (Ekman and Davidson 1994). This emotional state is phenomenologically experienced as a feeling, that is, an emotional experience. An emotional (neurophysiological) state and an experience of that state then prepare the human organism to take an action in response to the stimulus event. Stimuli can come from either the environment or the organism’s memory, and a single stimulus event can arouse multiple emotions simultaneously.

In this sequence, structures of feeling mediate (i) which stimulus event elicits which emotion, (ii) linguistic articulation of an emotional state as a feeling or an emotional experience, and (iii) which emotion/feeling induces which action response. The first point of cultural mediation is more or less the same as what Arlie Hochschild calls “feeling rules” (1979, [1983] 2003). Mnemonic practices define an actor’s appropriate emotional response to a given stimulus event like a representation of the past event; cultural practices specify which symbol or image is expected to evoke which emotion/feeling. In addition, cultural practices demarcate categories of emotions, such as anger, disgust, fear, guilt, pride, sadness, shame, and so on. With the help of these categories, the actor can be experientially aware of his or her emotion that is above defined as a neurophysiological state. Finally, the actor learns to take a certain action that is deemed culturally appropriate as a response to a particular emotion evoked by a representation of the past event. This can be called rules of acting-out or “display rules” (Ekman and Friesen 1969) sanctioned by institutions. In short, (i), (ii), and (iii) together comprise, as it were, “structures of feeling about cultural trauma.”

Construction of cultural trauma can be conceived as a process in which actors appropriate structures of feeling about mnemonic representations of a certain event. In this process of “mnemonic socialization” (Zerubavel 1996), rituals play an important role, for they create a momentary “*communitas*” in which participants can

experience heightened feelings of togetherness (Turner 1969). Successful “interaction ritual chains” increase “emotional energy” of individuals and produce “high ritual density” of a group, resulting in “collective effervescence” (Collins 2001). Hence mnemonic representations become emotionally charged when they are a locus of ritual; an object makes a vivid and lasting impression upon an individual when his or her encounter with it involves strong emotion. Collective effervescence in rituals that focus on mnemonic representations of a certain event therefore reinforce structures of feeling—rules of feeling and display—about those mnemonic symbols and images: “the ingredients of group assembly, emotional contagion, and mutual focus generate respect for symbolic objects” (Collins 2004:67).

I propose that we understand the emergence of cultural trauma in terms of a shift in structures of feeling about a traumatic event from “pity” to “sympathy” among members of a given group who have not been directly exposed to it. As French sociologist Luc Boltanski (1999) argues, drawing on Hannah Arendt’s discussion of politics of pity, “pity” is the default feeling of the spectator of trauma, which preserves a distance between the spectator and the sufferer. When “pity” dominates structures of feeling about a traumatic event among group members who are not direct survivors, psychological trauma that the event inflicted upon survivors remains individual. When historical developments allow the other group members to define their emotional relationship with the survivors in terms of “sympathy” instead of “pity,” however, cultural trauma emerges at the collective level, which is more than the individual survivor’s psychic injury; the other members define their collective identity as the actor who shares the survivor’s wound, not the spectator of the distant suffering. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all the other members of the group actually feel sympathy and solidarity with the victims. This shift from “pity” to “sympathy” is essentially a *structural* one, that is, a change in structures of feeling.

The potential contribution of this sociopsychological model of structures of feeling is twofold. One is that it offers a framework in which we might synthesize psychological-individual and sociological-collective approaches to the study of commemoration of a traumatic event. Another is that the model sheds light on the role of emotion in commemoration of a traumatic event, which has been understudied in the field of collective memory (Harkin 2003; White 2000). Of course, it is impossible for us to have unmediated access to people’s emotional states in the past. What we can do is to reconstruct meanings of discursive practices that expressed certain emotional states according to the cultural logic(s) at the time. Historical relics, such as journals, newspaper articles, and poems, contain traces of emotions—confessional and circumstantial evidences by which we can make inferences about people’s emotional states.

REITERATED COMMEMORATION OF “HIROSHIMA”

With these analytical tools at hand, I examine historical transformations of Japanese collective memory of “Hiroshima” between August 1945, when the bomb was dropped, and April 1957, when medical treatment of A-bomb survivors—human reminders and remainders of the atomic bombing—was institutionalized as a project of the Japanese nation-state. In tracing transformations of commemoration of “Hiroshima,” I divide the 12 years between 1945 and 1957 into three periods that were marked by different structures of commemoration. In light of a model of reiterated problem solving, I focus on how actors articulated solutions to the recurring problem of the remembering of “Hiroshima” and how these solutions interacted with

and built on each other across different periods of time. I also incorporate a theory of cultural trauma to examine the historical development of structures of feeling about “Hiroshima” and suggest that a sociopsychological approach is helpful for the study of collective memory.

The following analysis of a history of commemoration of “Hiroshima” is centered on three kinds of data. The first set of data consists of writings, such as memoirs and petitions, produced by survivors. These materials shed light on how survivors tried (or refused) to present their experiences. The second is archival materials that document public and political practices in the locality of Hiroshima. These include peace declarations reiterated by different mayors of Hiroshima at the Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6 every year and articles published by the major local newspaper *Chugoku Shinbun*. The third category of data pertains to a history of public and political practices at the national level, including major national newspapers, magazines, and the Diet proceedings. I interpret these data—interactions among these three layers and their transformations—against a backdrop of historical circumstances of postwar Japan and international relations.¹

Transnational Hiroshima, August 1945–August 1951

The Japanese media initially reacted to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima by inciting anger. On August 8, two days after the bombing, the two major national newspapers, *Asahi Shinbun* and *Yomiuri Shinbun*, reported that the enemy’s “new bomb” had been dropped in Hiroshima. The “atrocious effect” of the new bomb was publicized, instigating anger toward the United States. On August 11, the imperial government publicly accused the United States of violating the rules of the Hague Tribunal, which banned the deployment of inhumane weapons. Both *Asahi Shinbun* and *Yomiuri Shinbun* also condemned the bombing as an act “against civilization and humanity.” Thus, the leading actors in political and public arenas tried to structure feelings about the bombing as those of the unjustly victimized.

But angry protests against the United States quickly dissipated from the public and political arenas after Japan surrendered to the United States on August 15. Censorship was imposed on September 19 by the General Headquarters (GHQ), headed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Douglas MacArthur. This censorship, called the “Press Code,” banned publication of damages of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result, most of the Japanese who had not witnessed the atomic bombing were kept uninformed of the scale of destruction that the atom bombs had inflicted upon the two cities. Besides, even after the Japanese came to know that Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been bombed by atomic weapons, they were reluctant to treat the two cities differently from other cities destroyed by fire bombs. For instance, a few members of the Diet insisted that Tokyo be not treated differently from Hiroshima and Nagasaki because, though not

¹Due to the limited space, I shall leave out two issues: Japanese collective memory of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and American collective memory of the atomic bombings. In Japan, it is generally acknowledged that people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki have different commemorative styles. A well-known phrase sums up differences between the two: “Raging Hiroshima, Praying Nagasaki.” It may be worthwhile to study differences and interactions between commemorative practices of the two cities. It may be also interesting to study mnemonic representations of the atomic bombings in the United States. The legacy of “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” can be seen as a “difficult past” (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991) or a “difficult reputation” (Fine 2001) for Americans. As Vera Zolberg (1998) shows in her study of the Enola Gay Exhibition dispute that occurred in the mid-1990s, American commemoration of the atomic bombings is a politically contentious issue (also see Lifton and Mitchell 1995).

atom-bombed, casualties the former had suffered were “three times larger” than the latter (7th Lower House Construction Committee # 16, March 24, 1950; 7th Upper House Construction and Local Administration Joint Committee # 5, April 6, 1950).

In the beginning, the “A-bomb survivor” was only locally visible in medical organizations in Hiroshima that treated A-bomb casualties, though those organizations themselves were devastated by the bomb. The existence of the “A-bomb survivor” was confined to the local medical arena, not even entering into the local political discourse. When local politicians discussed the “atom bomb” (if not the “A-bomb survivor”), they framed it as a problem for all of humanity in terms of its destructive potential. Those who died of the atom bomb were identified not so much as Japanese as citizens of Hiroshima who were considered members of humanity; at this point, association of “Hiroshima” with a particular nation was virtually nonexistent (Orr 2001; Yoneyama 1999). In other words, although the city of Hiroshima was physically located in Japan, the city and its experience of the atom bomb were presented as transnational and beyond territorialization by the Japanese nation-state. During this period, all the peace declarations read at the Peace Memorial Ceremony expressed aspirations for transnational commemoration of the atomic bombing. Mayor Hamai stated on August 6, 1948, for example: “We, the citizens of Hiroshima, hold this solemn Peace Memorial Service to convey this lesson to the whole world.”² His speech was devoid of direct reference to Japanese nationality, insisting on transnational remembering.

This practice of transnational commemoration was induced by the Occupation. Local actors in Hiroshima were discouraged by GHQ’s censorship from framing memories of the atomic bombing in political terms. For instance, the Peace Memorial Ceremony in 1950 was canceled due to pressure from GHQ because some groups of the participants were planning to use the occasion to protest against the Korean War. Since GHQ did not allow the presentist interests to appropriate “Hiroshima” for explicitly political purposes, the local actors chose to commemorate “Hiroshima” in more abstract and universalistic terms. This tendency was also evidenced by discussions surrounding the Peace Memorial City Construction Bill. In December 1948, Mayor Hamai submitted a petition to the Diet that proposed Hiroshima be designated as a city to commemorate the atomic bombing as a foundation for future world peace. He emphasized the “epoch-making” significance of the event in human history and argued that reconstruction of Hiroshima as a peace memorial city would be “the greatest contribution to humankind” (Hiroshima City 1982:237).

It is important to note that it was the Japanese people who could make “the greatest contribution to humankind” by reconstructing Hiroshima as a peace memorial city, even though this nationalist point was not stressed in the political discussions. Political actors like Hamai might have been aware that “Hiroshima” had a potential to become Japan’s great symbolic capital in the arena of international relations; the number of letters from organizations abroad (e.g., the United States, Britain, Germany, Australia, India, and France) to the mayor increased from 16 in 1947 to 357 in 1951 (see Ubuki 1992:97, for detailed statistics). Members of the Diet saw that Japan could combine its so-called Peace Constitution, which renounced war as a sovereign right, with the experience of the atomic bombings (Chugoku Shinbun Hiroshima Fiftieth Anniversary Report Group 1995:23–26) so as to promote a new

²All the English translations of the peace declarations that I quote in this article were generously provided by Hiroshima City. Japanese copies of all the peace declarations in the past (1947–2004) are now available online from the city’s website: <http://www.city.hiroshima.jp/shimin/heiwa/heiwasengen.html>.

image of Japan as a peace-loving country. Although transnational commemoration of "Hiroshima" was prevalent and the majority of Japanese were not well informed about the atomic bombings, politicians foresaw that "Hiroshima" could be a rallying point to refashion Japanese national identity from the prewar militarist to the postwar pacifist. They did not emphasize this nationalist appropriation of "Hiroshima," however, because they feared a potential intervention from GHQ (Chugoku Shinbun Hiroshima Fiftieth Anniversary Report Group 1995: 24). Besides, the politicians were preoccupied with the more urgent political agenda of rebuilding the socioeconomic system of Japan devastated by the war.

In addition, the peace declarations at the Peace Memorial Ceremony during this period focused on lives of citizens that were "claimed," "thrown away," and "lost," that is, *dead*. A dominant frame to commemorate the dead was one of teleology. The oft-quoted cliché went: "the precious sacrifice of those victimized by the atomic bombings have laid a firm foundation for Japan's postwar peace and prosperity" (Yoneyama 1999:144). This commemorative practice to give teleological meaning to the atom bomb dead was part and parcel of the "foundational narrative" of postwar Japan (Igarashi 2000), which emphasized progression from the prewar to the postwar in terms of its peace and prosperity, downplaying the interruption of the war. The teleological remembering of the dead allowed Japanese not only to leave the past behind but also to bury survivors with the dead. For example, Mayor Hamai stated at the Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6 1949: "Today is the fourth occasion on which we, the citizens of Hiroshima, have remembered our dead. We earnestly pray that such a tragedy will never occur on the earth again." Here, what was remembered were the dead and this "tragedy" was regarded as already over (so that they could pray that another one would never occur). In this context, the "A-bomb *survivor*," the unfinished tragedy, became invisible. In fact, until 1954, peace declarations at the Ceremony did not acknowledge the existence of survivors.

Another characteristic of commemoration of "Hiroshima" during this period was a peculiar logic of the perpetrator. The atom bomb was conceived as an "actor" in its own right and framed as possessing agency. When Mayor Hamai discussed the devastation of the city at the Peace Memorial Ceremony, he talked as if the atom bomb had fallen independently of Japanese and American military operations. He almost always used passive voice sentences, such as "our Hiroshima was devastated in an instance by the first-ever atom bomb" (August 6, 1947) without reference to nationalities, so as to blur the geopolitical origin of the bombing. This was true of national political actors as well. In discussing the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Bill, one member of the Diet repeated the somewhat awkward sentence "the atom bombs fell" (10th Upper House Construction Committee #4, February 20, 1951), treating them as subjects. In other words, the atomic bombing was represented as a natural disaster rather than a human wrong and thereby experienced as an act of God or a whim of nature, which consequently deflected discussion of culpability and responsibility (cf. Erikson 1995:191).

This Japanese victimhood-without-perpetrator was correlated with the postwar image of the United States as a benevolent liberator instead of a hateful former enemy. In November 1946, Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (organized by religious organizations and labor unions in the United States) started sending relief to Japan, which continued until June 1952. In 1949, the American activist Norman Cousins initiated the program of moral adoptions of "A-bomb orphans." (They were children who had lost their parents to the atom bombs while they had been taking refuge in the countryside to avoid the danger of air raids.) Above all, it is well documented that "Japanese at all levels of society embraced the new supreme commander

[Douglas MacArthur] with an ardor hitherto reserved for the emperor, and commonly treated GHQ with the deference they had until recently accorded their own military leaders” (Dower 1999:227). Thus, the United States, which Japanese could have blamed for dropping the atom bombs, was shielded from discussion of culpability and responsibility because of the widespread pro-American sentiments.

As the end of the Occupation approached, however, presentations of “Hiroshima” began to surface in national public arenas. Articles about the “A-bomb orphan,” if not the “A-bomb survivor,” appeared a few times in *Asahi Shinbun* and *Yomiuri Shinbun*. These newspaper articles produced an image of robust children who were growing up after they lost their parents to the atomic bombing. The article about the Peace Memorial Ceremony in 1951 described A-bomb orphans who attended the ceremony as “robust,” and the caption of the picture read “A-bomb orphans who grew big and splendid” (*Asahi Shinbun*, August 7, 1951). The “A-bomb orphan” was therefore a symbol of the steady recovery of Hiroshima. This emphasis on recovery was already present in 1948 when *Chugoku Shinbun* published the article “Wondrous Revival of Hiroshima the City of World Peace” (August 1, 1948). Given the nationwide undertaking of postwar reconstruction, most Japanese were eager to leave behind traumas of the war and look for signs of Japan’s fresh postwar start; they embraced what historian Carol Gluck calls “a cult of new beginnings” (quoted in Gillis 1994:12) that helped them forget what had preceded the end of the war.

While the narrative of recovery was dominant, some survivors tried to present their experiences in national public arenas in the artistic form. In January 1949, Takashi Nagai published his memoir *The Bell of Nagasaki*, which became a bestseller of the year. (By the order of GHQ, his memoir was included in an edited volume that contained another essay, “The Tragedy of Manila,” a document of the Japanese military’s atrocities in Manila during the war.) Nagai was a Christian doctor and narrated his experience of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and its aftermath in a dispassionately philosophical tone. He did not discuss any geopolitical causes of the bombing but exclusively focused on the meaning of the event and human suffering in universalist and religious terms. This preoccupation with human suffering decoupled from geopolitics was also characteristic of other works by A-bomb survivors; for example, such novels as *Flower of Summer* (1949) by Tamiki Hara, *Letters from the End of the World* (1948) by Toyofumi Ogura, and *City of Corpses* (1948) by Yoko Ota described human suffering in the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in isolation from larger historical contexts. Thus, when survivors managed to present their experiences in public arenas, they did not bring politics into their narratives.

Moreover, the majority of A-bomb survivors remained silent because they did not have financial and organizational resources to present their experiences in public arenas. They were struggling against wounds and illnesses caused by exposure to the atom bomb and barely managed to survive day by day (Hiroshima City and Nagasaki City 1979). Many survivors also avoided recalling and talking about the event because they were psychologically traumatized. As psychiatrist Robert Lifton (1967) painstakingly documented, silence and denial were not uncommon among the survivors of the atomic bombing (also see NHK Hiroshima Project Team 1986). This is consistent with the general finding in clinical and psychological studies of the relationship between memory and trauma: survivors of traumatic events are motivated not to remember their emotionally abhorrent experiences (see McNally, Clancy, and Barrett 2004, for a review).

In short, through August 1945 to August 1951, there was no national memory of “Hiroshima.” First of all, GHQ’s censorship kept most Japanese uninformed of

damages of the atomic bombings; mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” rarely appeared in national public arenas. As a result, the problem of commemoration of the atomic bombing was largely confined to the locality of Hiroshima. Second, most survivors were unable to present their experiences in public either because of their medical and psychological conditions or for lack of organizational resources. Commemoration of “Hiroshima” was therefore fragmented along the line between citizens of Hiroshima and the rest of the Japanese. The former constructed a solution of transnational remembering, which refused to render “Hiroshima” Japanese, whereas the latter bought into, as it were, a “rebirth frame,” to downplay and even forget damages of the atomic bombing by emphasizing the recovery of “Hiroshima.” These two groups engaged in two different sets of commemorative practices in isolation from each other.

Notably, the transnational commemorative solution implicitly contained seeds of nationalism of which politicians were conscious. Combining “Hiroshima” with the new Constitution renouncing war as a sovereign right, Japan could be defined as an exceptional nation in the world. The politicians did not pursue this nationalization of “Hiroshima,” however, because they were under censorship and they were also preoccupied with the more pressing political problem of rebuilding the social and economic fabric of war-torn Japan. The dominant solution to decouple “Hiroshima” from geopolitics, then, resulted in the suppression of discussion of responsibility for the atomic bombing. The a-politicization of “Hiroshima” was undergirded by the fatalist framing of the atomic bombing and the image of the United States as a benevolent liberator. These outcomes were going to prove resistant even after the major political change that was about to take place: the end of the Occupation.

The A-Bomb Maiden and Pity, August 1951–March 1954

The Occupation practically ended when Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951, which subsequently took effect in April 1952. As Japan regained sovereignty, “Hiroshima” became more visible at the national level. Censorship now absent, writings and photographs of destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were rushed into publication: *A-Bomb Children* (1951), a collection of essays by children who experienced the atomic bombing, *Poems of the Atom Bomb* (1952) by Sankichi Tōge, arguably the best-known “A-bomb poet” from Hiroshima, and *A-Bomb Number 1: Photo Documentary of Hiroshima* (1952) and *Hiroshima: War and City* (1952), both of which collected photos of Hiroshima after the bombing.

Nevertheless, mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” in these publications remained decoupled from politics. Tōge’s most famous poem “Give Back People” (1951) is a case in point:

Give back my father, give back my mother
Give grandpa back, grandma back
Give my sons and daughters back.
Give me back myself,
Give back the human race.
As long as this life lasts, this life,
Give back peace
That will never end.³

³This English translation of the poem is available from the website of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum: http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/tour_e/ireihi/tour_23_e.html.

This powerful poem can be said to be *the* poem of and by the A-bomb victims, for a monument that inscribed the poem was eventually erected in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in 1963. His poem used the kind of language that could resonate with peoples all over the world (e.g., “father” and “mother”). His cry to reclaim humanity for the A-Bomb dead was directed at the evil of war and the atom bomb, transcending time, space, and geopolitics.

Among these publications, one nationally distributed magazine called *Asahi Graph* made the biggest impact. On August 6, 1952, it published the special issue “The First Exhibition of A-Bomb Damage,” which showed photographs of the immediate aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the first time since the end of the war. Japanese were shocked by images of the devastation that the atom bombs had inflicted upon the humans and the cities. 520,000 copies were sold out in a single day. (700,000 copies were sold in total.) This publication of the photos was an important step toward nationalization of collective memory of “Hiroshima” on two grounds. First, the photo magazine had a greater carrying capacity than books, the medium upon which mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” still heavily relied. It was more accessible in economic and cultural terms. The contribution of print capitalism in forging an imagined community lay as much in the production of *images* as in that of the print or letters, for images did not require cultural literacy and therefore could penetrate into nonelite groups of Japanese. Second, the photographic images gave clearer shape to collective memory (cf. Schwartz 1998). Photos have power to render memories more tangible because they condense larger historical contexts into discrete and memorable images (Zelizer 2002). With the publication of the photos, Japanese audiences came to know more concretely what they should remember about the atomic bombings: shockingly devastated human bodies against a background of the scorched wasteland.

My hypothesis is that these documentary photos of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki positioned the viewers as “spectators of the distant suffering” (Boltanski 1999). Roland Barthes writes that documentary photography establishes “not a consciousness of the *being-there* of the thing ... but an awareness of its *having-been-there*... its reality that of the *having-been-there*, for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of *this is how it was*, giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered” (1977:44). In other words, as much as the photos contributed to dissemination of mnemonic representations of the traumatic event at the national level, they produced among the viewers the consciousness that the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki belonged to the distant past (*having-been-there-and-then*), not to the present (*being-here-and-now*). The viewers were thus positioned as spectators of the past, not actors of the present who shared the victim’s wound. As Boltanski suggests, “pity” dominates structures of feeling among spectators. I conjecture that pity and the distance it created between spectator and sufferer prevented Japanese from actively sympathizing with the A-bomb victims and redefining their identities in terms of solidarity with their suffering.

In fact, we can detect the feeling of pity in mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” during this period. When Japanese began talking about “Hiroshima” after the end of the Occupation, they focused on one particular group of A-bomb survivors: young female survivors who were called “A-bomb maidens.” Japanese publics paid attention to these women because of their keloid (overgrown scar tissue) and other externally conspicuous wounds. While many A-bomb survivors, whether men or women, old or young, suffered from keloid and other physical deformations, only young women were thematized. The situations of these A-bomb maidens

were presented as tragic because their appearances were destroyed and the possibility of their happiness in marriage was compromised. The plight of A-bomb maidens seemed to conjure up the feeling of pity and the element of drama, which caught attention from large audiences. When volunteers organized activities to provide relief for A-bomb maidens, they dramatized the activities not only by the imagery of tragic maidens but also by the involvement of female celebrities. The nationwide fundraising drive for A-bomb maidens in September 1952, for instance, even exhibited the festive atmosphere where people were asking the celebrities for autographs (*Asahi Shinbun*, September 4, 1952). Thus, Japanese who had not been directly exposed to the atomic bombing were spectators of the drama of pitiful A-bomb maidens.

Furthermore, the discourse of the “A-bomb maiden” reproduced the logic of revival and the absence of discussion of responsibility. On the one hand, plastic surgery, which corrected physical deformations (at least temporarily), made an impression that A-bomb survivors were suffering only from externally visible wounds. The thematization of the “A-bomb maiden” suspended the possibility of comprehensive inquiry into other A-bomb survivors and illnesses that were less visible than the maidens and their disfiguring keloid. Again, Japanese focused on what could be reconstructed, as they had emphasized the recovery of “Hiroshima” previously. For instance, reporting the nine A-bomb maidens who came to Tokyo for plastic surgery, the newspaper article used the caption “may the scar of the A-bomb vanish” (*Asahi Shinbun*, June 9, 1952) as if treatment of keloid could erase damages of the bomb. On the other hand, the discourse of the A-bomb maiden perpetuated the absence of discussion of culpability and responsibility for A-bomb sufferers. Since “pity” dominated structures of feeling about “Hiroshima” among Japanese, the attempts to treat the A-bomb maidens were seen as voluntary. This is why the A-bomb maidens were “deeply touched” and expressed their wish to repay their “debt of gratitude” to those who raised funds for their surgery (*Asahi Shinbun*, January 16, 1953). The “A-bomb maiden” was dramatic and pitiful precisely because she did not demand anything but endured her fateful suffering in silence.

Around the same time, however, another discourse emerged, which tried to interrogate culpability and responsibility for the suffering of the A-bomb survivors. The so-called Epitaph Dispute was ignited in August 1952 by the Indian judge Radhabinod Pal, the only judge in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East who had declared the Japanese wartime leaders not guilty. Accompanied by several city officials, Pal visited the newly founded monument in the Peace Memorial Park. The epitaph of the monument read, “Let all the souls here rest in peace; for we shall not repeat the evil.”⁴ After his visit, Pal made a remark that while “we” apparently referred to the Japanese, the evil by those who dropped the atom bomb—Americans—was yet to be atoned. (In the Japanese original, the subject “we” in the epitaph is absent as it is conventional in Japanese.) The dominant Japanese response, led by the mayor of Hiroshima and the author of the epitaph, was that “we” should be constituted by anybody praying in front of the monument and therefore the whole of humanity (Chugoku Shinbunsha 1986:81). Here again, the aspiration obviously persisted to make commemoration of “Hiroshima” transnational without confining it to national politics.

This insistence on transnational commemoration was strong even among some A-bomb survivors who decided to bring a lawsuit against the United States in

⁴This English translation of the epitaph is available from the website of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum: http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/tour_e/ireihi/tour_20_e.html.

January 1954. Their argument was that the atomic bombing violated the rules of the Hague Tribunal and individual claims for compensation could still exist even after the Japanese state had discarded its claim in the San Francisco Peace Treaty. But they took pains to situate their lawsuit transnationally. Their ultimate goal was “to inform the world of the tragedy of the atom bombs, raise public opinion for their ban, and promote peace movements” (quoted in *Asahi Shinbun*, January 9, 1954; translated by the author). The preceding and ongoing sanctification of “Hiroshima” as a foundation of peace for entire humanity prevented them from framing “Hiroshima” as a wedge between Japan and the United States in the field of international politics.

Some Japanese nonsurvivors, however, started framing “Hiroshima” as national trauma during this period. In newspaper columns and letters to editors, they expressed their discontent with the dominant American justification for the atomic bombing, “to save lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers.” (This justification was repeated by President Truman in 1953 as well as by Eleanor Roosevelt upon her visit to Hiroshima in the same year.) These Japanese contended that the American justification was tenuous (e.g., *Asahi Shinbun*, May 29, August 5, 1953). In criticizing the American justification for the atomic bombing, they argued as if “Hiroshima” were something uniquely Japanese and important for all the Japanese. They tried to use “Hiroshima” as a rallying point to create solidarity among Japanese vis-à-vis culpability of the United States. While “Hiroshima” was still framed predominantly as transnational during this period, another mnemonic solution emerged to commemorate “Hiroshima” by conjoining it with Japanese national identity.

This nationalist frame was better articulated in the national political arena. While Japan was in transition from the Occupation to independence, socialist politicians accused the ruling party of getting Japan involved in the Cold War by building the Police Reserve Force and signing the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. In expressing his concern about Japan’s remilitarization, the leading socialist politician Tetsu Katayama emphasized the importance of Japan’s voice in preventing the Third World War because “it was only our Japan that suffered from atom bombs. I believe that we should announce to the whole world the damages of the atom bombs and those atrocious conditions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in every detail, since we were baptized with the disastrous experience of atom bombs” (15th Lower House Budget Committee #6, December 3, 1952; translated by the author). Thus, to criticize the ruling party, opposition parties articulated the uniqueness of Japan: the only country in the world that experienced the atomic bombing.

In summary, during this period, mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” came to be circulated in national public arenas. First and foremost, this change was caused by the end of the Occupation. Second, presentations of one particular group of A-bomb survivors—A-bomb maidens—captured the attention of large audiences. This discourse of the A-bomb maiden focused on their recovery, as the revival of Hiroshima had been emphasized during the previous period. Moreover, despite their increased presence in national arenas, mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” remained decoupled from politics. This was because the transnational remembering of “Hiroshima” had become a self-reinforcing solution, persisting in the face of institutional changes, such as the lifting of censorship. The Japanese feeling about “Hiroshima” in the image of the A-bomb maiden was also structured around pity rather than sympathy; the feeling of pity did not motivate nonsurvivors to identify with victims of the atomic bombing. Within this mnemonic environment, a new commemorative solution, to remember “Hiroshima” as a defining feature of the Japanese nation, did not take hold of the majority of Japanese.

Again, commemoration of “Hiroshima” remained relatively fragmented along the boundaries of three groups that adopted different solutions to the problem of the remembering of “Hiroshima”: actors in Hiroshima who continued their transnational commemoration; the minority of Japanese who tried to incorporate the remembering of “Hiroshima” into nationalism; the majority of Japanese who focused on A-bomb maidens and their recovery symbolizing Hiroshima’s. Had it not been for the accidental presence of one Japanese fishing boat 70 miles away from Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954, when the United States tested a hydrogen bomb, “Hiroshima” would not have become national trauma constitutive of the postwar Japanese identity. The incident created a moment of “conjuncture,” that is, intersection of two separate sequences that produced a trajectory either sequence would not have followed without it (Mahoney 2000:527): the two hitherto independent and fragmented solutions of commemoration of “Hiroshima,” transnational and nationalist, would collide and together produce a new form of commemoration and structure of feeling.

*Discovery of “Hiroshima” as the Foundation of Japanese Nuclear Victimhood,
March 1954–April 1957*

Japanese were in shock when *Yomiuri Shinbun* scooped on March 16, 1954 that the crew on the tuna fish boat Lucky Dragon 5 had been exposed to the nuclear fallout in Bikini Atoll. After the tuna were unloaded and distributed to local markets all over Japan, it was discovered that they contained high levels of radiation. As tuna—part of the Japanese staple diet—were now exposed to nuclear pollution, people began to feel that the entire nation was threatened by nuclear weaponry. The fear of radioactive materials and their threat to Japanese everyday life was pervasive. Newspapers were relentless in reporting medical conditions of the crew of Lucky Dragon 5 and objects contaminated by the H-bomb fallout, such as raindrops and vegetables. Groups of people flooded to Tokyo University Hospital to ask physicians for medical examination because they had eaten tuna; the so-called tuna horror, the fear of tuna exposed to radioactivity (“A-bomb tuna”), was widespread. Several episodes of people who mistook white substances like pollen as H-bomb fallout were also reported. Public arenas were saturated with narratives and images expressing fear of nuclear weapons. According to the opinion poll conducted by *Asahi Shinbun* (May 20, 1954), 70 percent of the population was afraid of exposure to radioactivity.

While all the crew of Lucky Dragon 5 were being hospitalized for several months, their conditions were reported methodically as if their suffering were representative of the entire Japanese nation. When one of the crew, Aikichi Kuboyama, died in September 1954, it was declared that radioactivity “killed” him. His death made national news headlines, and delegations of the Japanese government attended his funeral. Although it is not known whether Kuboyama’s death was caused by radioactivity or by complications of medical treatment, the point is that it was *imagined* that the H-bomb fallout “killed” him. As Alexander argues, imagination is “intrinsic to the very process of representation. It seizes upon an inchoate experience from life, and forms it, through association, condensation, and aesthetic creation, into some specific shape” (2004:9). Imagination now gave a coherent shape to the national identity: the Japanese were victims of nuclear weapons.

Against a backdrop of the Lucky Dragon 5 incident, anti-nuclear movements swept the archipelago. Between March 18 and October 22, all the 46 prefectural parliaments passed anti-nuclear resolutions (Hiroshima City 1984:121). A nationwide campaign to

collect signatures against nuclear weapons also began in August 1954, which was going to collect more than 30 million signatures within a year. Within these anti-nuclear movements, Japanese defined “Hiroshima” as the origin of the nation victimized by nuclear weapons. The phrase “thrice victimized by nuclear bombs” was repeated in every signature-obtaining campaign against nuclear weapons (see Iwadare 1999: 136–52), referring to the first time Hiroshima and the second time Nagasaki. On April 1, the Lower House of the Diet passed unanimously a resolution to ban nuclear weapons. During the session filled with passionate speeches and loud applause, Yakichirō Suma, speaking as a presenter of the nonpartisan resolution, capitalized on the Lucky Dragon 5 incident to articulate the connection between the Japanese, nuclear victimhood, and anti-nuclear movements: “Since our Japan, among numerous nations, became the first victim of nuclear weaponry, and what is more, has suffered from it twice and even thrice, I believe that our Japan, as a representative of humankind, has the noblest rights and the greatest power to speak out in taking effective measures to save humankind from nuclear destruction and eliminate nuclear misery as soon as possible (applause)” (19th Lower House Plenary Session #32, April 1, 1954; translated by the author).

In this context, the A-bomb survivor was elevated to the status of a “totem” (Durkheim 1995), the most sacred (mis)representation of the unity of the Japanese nation or “the unifying symbol of the Japanese community’s atomic victimhood” (Orr 2001:38). As the political-socialization literature has shown, people develop their national identity through identification with a prominent symbolic figure within a given nation-state; for example, the President in the United States and the Queen in England (Greenstein 1965; Hess and Easton 1967). In 1954 Japan, such a figure was the A-bomb survivor. Japanese identified with A-bomb survivors and saw themselves as nuclear victims. This identification had been absent during the previous periods; however, it became possible now because the H-bomb fallout enabled Japanese to take the attitude of the A-bomb sufferer through symbolic interactions in their daily lives impaired (or so imagined) by nuclear weapons. The A-bomb victim became, as it were, “the generalized national,” representing “the attitude of the whole [imagined—H.S.] community [which] influences the behavior of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on” (Mead 1934:154–55).

Thus, the Lucky Dragon 5 incident produced a critical shift in structures of feeling about mnemonic representations of A-bomb victims. Sympathy, identification, and solidarity replaced pity associated with a subject position of spectator of the distant suffering. Of course, I do not claim that all the Japanese actually sympathized with the A-bomb victims. My point is that Japanese structures of feeling about “Hiroshima” were redefined in terms of sympathy with the A-bomb victims. I argue that this shift in structures of feeling from pity to sympathy was crucial for nationalization of trauma of the atomic bombing. “Hiroshima” as national trauma emerged when this shift occurred. Members of the national group, who had not been directly exposed to the traumatic event, came to construct their national identity as an actor, not a spectator, who sympathized with the victims and shared their suffering. The tragedy of “Hiroshima” was no longer the distant past of having-been but the present that urged the group members to take action here and now.

In addition, anti-nuclear rallies and signature-collecting campaigns facilitated dissemination of the new structures of feeling about “Hiroshima” among Japanese. They functioned as occasions for “*communitas*” (Turner 1969) in which people’s feelings of togetherness were amplified and their emotional attachment to symbols/images central to those rallies—representations of A-bomb victims—was reinforced. This

“anti-nuclear communitas” also suspended cognition of social, political, and economic cleavages among Japanese and strengthened their solidarity: “as very large numbers of persons focus their attention on the same event, are reminded constantly that other people are focusing their attention by the symbolic signals they give out, and hence are swept up into a collective mood” (Collins 2004:5).

The Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6, 1954, five months after the H-bomb fallout, reflected the new symbolic status of “Hiroshima.” For the first time, members of the Imperial Family attended the Ceremony, and the local labor unions, which had been holding their own Peace Rally previously, joined the Ceremony at the Peace Memorial Park (Hiroshima City 1984:126). For people from the right to the left in the political spectrum, “Hiroshima” was a nonpartisan, unifying symbol of the nation. Moreover, while only a few thousands had attended the Ceremony during the previous years, approximately 20,000 people attended this time (Hiroshima City 1984: 127) and the Ceremony was nationally radio broadcasted. What was notable about this radio broadcasting of the Ceremony was that it included the moment of silence at 8:15 a.m., the exact time of explosion of the atom bomb. This simultaneity-of-trauma-in-time was undergirded by Japan’s peculiar calendar system. Since the Meiji period, the year has been notated in terms of the imperial era name (instead of the Anno Domini chronology) in Japan. Accordingly, the year of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was almost always remembered as the 20th year of Shōwa (the reign of Emperor Hirohito), not as 1945; Japanese could situate the tragic event in the unique narrative sequence and temporal rhythm within the imperial chronology. Thus, the imperial calendar accentuated the commonality among members of the imagined community traumatized by the atomic bombing.

This nonpartisan and nationwide effort to commemorate “Hiroshima” as the origin of Japanese nuclear victimhood culminated in the World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs on August 6, 1955, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the atomic bombing. Representatives of 14 countries and those of 46 prefectures of Japan attended the conference in Hiroshima, which opened with testimonials by A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 8, the conference concluded with the declaration that included the following passage:

The tragic reality of atomic- and hydrogen-bomb sufferers must be widely known to the world. We must hasten to save them through worldwide movements. That is the real foundation for the anti-nuclear movement. Only if atomic and hydrogen bombs are banned, we can truly save the sufferers. We plead to the world that peoples transcend their political, religious, and social differences and promote anti-nuclear movements ever more vigorously. (reprinted in Iwadare 1999:151–52; translated by the author)

It was now clear that the A-bomb survivor was the core of nuclear victimhood and the basis of anti-nuclear movements. Although this declaration should not be interpreted simply as nationalist because it was issued from the world conference, the participants, who were mostly Japanese, still took for granted the uniqueness of Japanese nuclear victimhood and its special role in transnational anti-nuclear movements.

As they became the unifying symbol of the Japanese nuclear victimhood, representatives of A-bomb survivors went to the Diet in March 1956 and submitted their petition to ask for state-sponsored medical treatment for their A-bomb illnesses. The Japan Socialist Party responded most enthusiastically. One of its politicians,

Yoshinobu Yamashita, put forward his passionate plea by stating: “It goes without saying that the devilish atom bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of the twentieth year of Shōwa are the worst tragedy of this century” (25th Upper House Plenary Session #7, November 26, 1956; translated by the author). He proceeded to discuss situations of A-bomb survivors by using dramatic words, which culminated in his description of A-bomb maidens: “they cry over their hideous appearances, lose hope completely, wail bitterly, and hide themselves from the world.” He then argued that “helping A-bomb survivors is no longer a problem for one province [Hiroshima and Nagasaki]. Alongside the anti-nuclear movement, it is a national problem about which all Japanese citizens are earnest with all their hearts.” Naturally, the Cabinet now should do “everything they can in order to take care of the A-bomb survivors, pursue the scientific study of A-bomb illnesses, save the survivors from the atrocity of the devil [the atom bomb], and contribute to the welfare of entire humanity.” What is notable about his speech is that it elevated the atomic bombings as “the worst tragedy of this century,” marked Japan’s unique symbolic status in the world, and emphasized the national mission to contribute to “entire humanity” under which medical treatment of A-bomb survivors was subsumed.

Cabinet ministers from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party expressed their agreement with the Japan Socialist Party’s position by saying, “we could not help sympathizing sincerely with A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (25th Upper House Plenary Session #7 November 26, 1956; translated by the author). Obviously, this effort to provide medical treatment for A-bomb survivors was nonpartisan. On December 12, 1956, a resolution concerning treatment of A-bomb survivors was proposed jointly by the Japan Socialist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party and adopted unanimously at the Lower House. During discussions of this resolution, members of the Diet tried to justify the necessity of state-sponsored medical treatment for A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in terms of Japan’s undertaking to become the international leader of anti-nuclear movements and of the science of biological effects of nuclear weapons upon the human body (25th Lower House Plenary Session #17, December 12, 1956). They emphasized Japan’s exceptional, humanitarian, and pacifist approach to problems of nuclear power against the backdrop of the escalating Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Within a territory of the nation-state that embraced, as it were, nuclear-victim exceptionalism, A-Bomb survivors who were suffering from A-bomb illnesses could not be neglected without proper examination and treatment. On March 31, 1957, the A-Bomb Medical Care Bill was passed unanimously in the Diet and took effect the following day. Thus, the Japanese state finally became part of commemoration of “Hiroshima” by providing medical care for the A-bomb survivors, who were themselves a particular form of memory—living testimonials—of the atomic bombings.

In short, the Lucky Dragon 5 incident radically altered the course of commemoration of “Hiroshima.” During the previous periods, “Hiroshima” had appeared in national public arenas, but it had been seen as having little to do with Japanese national identity. The H-bomb fallout in March 1954, however, turned commemoration of “Hiroshima” into a national problem and created an opportunity for Japanese to define their identity as nuclear victims. They did seize this opportunity and, in the process of articulating anti-nuclear nationalism, they elevated “Hiroshima” to the origin and the core of their nuclear victimhood—national trauma constitutive of Japanese identity. “Sympathy” became dominant in the Japanese structures of feeling about mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima,” promoting identification and solidarity with the A-bomb victims. “Hiroshima” became founding trauma or

nationalist myth, “a story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation’s past and its place in the world, its historical eschatology” (Bell 2003:75). The transnational commemorative solution was appropriated in nationalist terms to bestow on Japan a unique mission in transnational anti-nuclear movements. This nationalist solution of transnational remembering now emerged as a “master commemorative frame” (cf. McAdams 1994).⁵

This dramatic change in commemoration of “Hiroshima” calls into question the validity of Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi’s theory of multivocal versus fragmented types of commemoration. According to Vinitzky-Seroussi, a multivocal type of commemoration is

more likely to emerge in a consensual political culture, when the commemorated past is no longer part of the present agenda, and when agents of memory have limited power and resources. In contrast, a fragmented type of commemoration will be engendered in a conflictual political culture, when a strong link exists between the past and present debates, and in the presence of powerful agents of memory. (2002: 32)

Although it is hard to say whether Japanese political culture was consensual or conflictual, commemoration of “Hiroshima” remained a fragmented one through 1945 to 1954 (where different groups engaged in commemoration in isolation from one another); however, it transformed into a multivocal one after March 1954 (where heterogeneous groups shared one master commemorative frame, even though they did not necessarily share identical interpretations of the frame). This change took place because the commemorated past became part of the present agenda and agents of memory gained symbolic power and resources.

What differentiates between fragmented and multivocal types of commemoration may not be a political culture, a link between the past and present debates, or power of agents of memory. Rather, it seems to depend on whether groups of agents of memories forge networks of interactions, create feedback loops among the groups, and consolidate their initially fragmented commemorative practices into a multivocal yet single frame of commemoration. In the case of commemoration of “Hiroshima,” it was due to the contingent event: the Lucky Dragon 5 incident enabled interactions among local actors of Hiroshima, Japanese who had not witnessed the atomic bombing, and political actors of the national level, through nationwide anti-nuclear movements. As a result, the hitherto-fragmented commemorative practices coalesced into a master commemorative solution of the nationalist remembering of the transnational Hiroshima.

However, this master commemorative solution created two new problems. The first problem was the neglect of non-Japanese victims of the atomic bombings. It is estimated that more than 50,000 non-Japanese, including, but not limited to, Koreans, Chinese, and Americans, have been exposed to the atomic bombings. It was not until August 1990 that the mayor of Hiroshima referred to the existence of non-Japanese A-bomb victims and included apologies to Asian peoples in the peace declaration. The second problem was a corollary to the first: the tendency of commemoration of “Hiroshima” to deflect discussion of Japan’s wartime aggression in Asia. By setting “Hiroshima” as the origin of postwar Japan, what had preceded before the bombing

⁵It is important to note that a master frame itself is always contested because of ongoing dialogic practices to (re)define the frame from within (Steinberg 1999).

became less visible. The nationalist appropriation of “Hiroshima” as the heart of Japan’s nuclear victimhood reinforced the Japanese victim consciousness. As a result, it became difficult for Japanese to remember that they had victimized Asian countries during World War II. Put somewhat differently, “it was in the realm of anti-nuclear pacifism that Japanese war victimhood was most easily detached from Japanese wartime aggression” (Orr 2001:36).

Here, we are left with a set of new sociological questions. Why was it the early 1990s when Japanese started reconstructing collective memory of “Hiroshima” in relation to World War II, including Japan’s imperialist-militarist past? What cultural, social, and political transformations were necessary to bring about this new way of remembering “Hiroshima?” Did this new commemoration of “Hiroshima” redefine Japanese national identity? These questions are concerned with the reiterated problem solving that Japanese continued after April 1957, but I have to leave them to future research due to limited space.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This article has traced transformations of commemoration of “Hiroshima” between 1945 and 1957 by utilizing a model of reiterated problem solving and a theory of cultural trauma. During the first period, 1945–1951 under the Occupation by the Allied Powers, commemoration of “Hiroshima” was not construed as a national problem. Registration of “Hiroshima” in Japanese national memory did not occur because of the censorship by the GHQ, the transnational remembering by the survivors, and the emphasis on recovery by the rest of the Japanese. Between 1952 and 1954, mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” began circulating in national public arenas in the image of the A-bomb maiden and structured feelings about them around pity; however, the transnational commemorative solution and the thematization of recovery remained dominant. This greater visibility of A-bomb survivors also led to the emergence of a nationalist commemorative solution to link “Hiroshima” to Japanese national identity; however, the transnational remembering of “Hiroshima” persisted as a lock-in path, dominating mnemonic representations of “Hiroshima” in public. But the contingent event of the H-bomb fallout in March 1954 created a moment of conjuncture between transnational and nationalist commemorative paths that had been hitherto independent of each other. This allowed Japanese to articulate a new solution to commemoration of “Hiroshima” by conjoining transnational and nationalist frames: to define “Hiroshima” as Japanese national trauma that bestowed upon the Japanese people a unique mission to lead transnational anti-nuclear movements. This new solution was accompanied by new structures of feeling about victims of the atomic bombing, sympathy and solidarity with their suffering.

In addition to the analysis of the history of commemoration of “Hiroshima,” the article offers more general implications for the study of collective memory. First, introduction of reiterated problem solving can enrich our understanding of the history of collective memory. It helps us examine how solutions to a recurring problem of the remembering build on one another across different periods of time without losing sight of subjectivity and agency of actors construing the problem and constructing solutions. Second, a sociopsychological approach offers a point of departure for multidimensional rapprochement between sociological and psychological approaches to the study of collective memory. The processual model of “structures of feeling” that I proposed in this article is a first step to take into account “a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, neurological, cognitive, personal,

aggregated, and collective” (Olick 1999:346) so as to understand complex processes of memory construction. Finally, I suggest that it may be rewarding for scholars of collective memory to pursue the systematic study of social responsibility and political action revolving around cultural traumas. How does collective memory of a traumatic event inform discussion of responsibility for trauma and mediate contemporary interactions among victims, bystanders, and perpetrators?⁶ This is a socially and politically important question. Perhaps, scholars of collective memory and cultural trauma might be able to offer insights into possible ways to change relations among people caught in the traumatic past toward their desirable interaction in the present, be it compensation, forgiveness, or reconciliation.

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⁶The study of perceptions of regret and responsibility for difficult pasts by Barry Schwartz and his colleagues (2002, 2004, 2005) may offer a suggestive point of departure for investigation of the relationship between collective memory and discussion of responsibility by taking into account its individual-psychological and collective-sociological dimensions.

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