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978-1-107-07127-8 - Hiroshima: The Origins of Global Memory Culture

Ran Zwigenberg

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Hiroshima

In 1962, a Hiroshima peace delegation and an Auschwitz survivors' organization exchanged relics and testimonies, including the bones and ashes of Auschwitz victims. This symbolic encounter, in which the dead were literally conscripted in the service of the politics of the living, serves as a cornerstone of this volume, capturing how memory was utilized to rebuild and redefine a shattered world. This is a powerful study of the contentious history of remembrance and the commemoration of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima in the context of the global development of Holocaust and World War II memory. Emphasizing the importance of nuclear issues in the 1950s and 1960s, Zwigenberg traces the rise of global commemoration culture through the reconstruction of Hiroshima as a "City of Bright Peace," memorials and museums, global tourism, developments in psychiatry, and the emergence of the figure of the survivor-witness and its consequences for global memory practices.

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For Barbara and Chikako

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Acknowledgments

This book was written mostly as we were expecting our first child. In fact, the manuscript was completed only a few days before Noa was born. I often tell my wife, Chikako, that I feel I had two children born that week, a suggestion she often challenged (pregnancy being far more demanding). Writing one's first book, regardless of the metaphor used, is quite trying. Much of the research for this book was done, originally, for my dissertation. Moving from that stage to the writing of a manuscript was not easy. Adding to the usual difficulties was my academic adviser Barbara Brooks' long struggle with cancer. Barbara, in fact, passed away a day after Noa was born. It was, indeed, one of the most emotionally laden weeks of my life. This book would not have come to light without the efforts of both Chikako and Barbara, who dedicated many hours to listening to my ruminations and doubts (and Noa, who very thoughtfully waited until the manuscript was finished). Dagmar Herzog, my European history adviser, deserves an equally great credit for stepping in and helping when it became obvious Barbara was not well. Dagmar stayed and advised me well beyond her official capacity as adviser and beyond the dissertation, which served as the first draft of this manuscript. Indeed, it was to a large degree thanks to Dagmar that I was able to venture out well beyond Hiroshima and explore European, North American and Israeli connections. She guided me in some quite treacherous academic waters and was very generous with her time and knowledge, which made working with her a pleasure. All of this, she did despite not being an Asianist and at times unfamiliar with the peculiar difficulties of writing on Japan. Here, Kerry Smith from Brown University, who also stepped in and read a number of my chapters (and also stayed around well beyond the dissertation phase), deserves my thanks.

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But, in terms of archives and libraries, no one was more helpful than Kikuraku Shinobu, the head librarian at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Kikuraku sensei is a treasure trove of knowledge about Hiroshima. No one knows more than her the ins and outs of Hiroshima's history and this book was certainly a much poorer work without the many hours we talked and the countless pieces of archival material she managed to locate and direct me to. Her staff at the Memorial Library, especially Miss Hisayuki (who being so formal and proper I never learned her first name – a common occurrence in Japan), was also extremely helpful. Steve Leeper, the head of the Memorial Museum Foundation, was also extremely helpful both inside and outside of Hiroshima. Tashiro Akira with the Hiroshima Peace Media Center at the *Chūgoku Shinbun*, and all the wonderful and dedicated staff at the *Chūgoku Shinbun* archives (and especially Ai Inemoto, of course), the staff of the Hiroshima Prefectural Archives and the Hiroshima City Archives and the many others who shared with me sources, citations and much of their time, all deserve thanks.

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Finally, a word on the title of this book (and gratitude): *Hiroshima* is a homage of sorts. It refers to John Hersey's iconic work, which transformed Hiroshima from an enemy city to a place of human suffering and gave names and faces to its victims. The title acknowledges the debt all of us who work on Hiroshima owe to Hersey's work and the enormous impact it made. This impact, however, is now largely gone. Hiroshima is a name that will be remembered forever in history, but for far too many it is a place whose significance lies in history rather than the present or future. It is the purpose of this book to make its modest contribution so that the city of Hiroshima will be relevant once again.

Note on the text

With the exception of names widely known in the West, such as Akira Kurosawa, in rendering East Asian names in the body of the text I follow the conventional ordering of the region, with surnames followed by given names. Thus, Hamai Shinzō appears in the Japanese order; the surname Hamai precedes the given name Shinzō. Furthermore, in Japanese, the term *hibakusha* can be rendered in two different ways in writing. When the character for Baku is written as “bomb,” it refers to victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When Baku is written with the character for “exposure,” the meaning of *hibakusha* is widened to include all victims of radiation from nuclear material (e.g. Marshall Islands residents who were exposed to radiation during the 1954 Bikini nuclear tests, or workers at the Fukushima nuclear plant who were exposed to radiation in March 2011). In this book, unless otherwise noted, I use *hibakusha*, in its narrower, historical definition to refer to victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When possible I have used available English translations of Japanese, Hebrew and other texts; unless otherwise noted, all other translations are mine.