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Manipulated Museum History and Silenced Memories of Aggression: Historical Revisionism and Japanese Government Censorship of Peace Museums

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Manipulated Museum History and Silenced Memories of Aggression: Historical Revisionism
and Japanese Government Censorship of Peace Museums

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by
Benjamin Birdwhistell
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Abstract:

The Japanese government has a vested interest in either avoiding discussion of its war-torn past or arguing for a revisionist take. The need to play up Japanese victimization over Japanese aggression during World War II has led to many museums having their exhibits censored or revised to fit this narrative goal. During the 1990's, Japan's national discourse was more open to discussions of war crimes and the damage caused by their aggression. This in turn led to the creation of many "peace museums" that are intended to discuss and confront this history as frankly as possible. At the beginning of the 21st century, public discourse turned against these museums and only private museums have avoided censorship. Some museums, like the Osaka International Peace Center, have been devastated by the censorship. This museum and other museums with similar narrative issues raise questions about appropriate narrative on display. What is appropriate to censor for the sake of respect for the dead? What must be included for the sake of historical accuracy and honesty about the past? These questions are investigated at four different peace museums throughout Japan.

Keywords: World War II (1931-1945); Japan; China; Korea; Yushukan Museum; Osaka International Peace Center; Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum; Kyoto Museum for World Peace; Nanking Massacre; Iris Chang; Shudo Higashinakano; History of Memory; Military History; International Relations; Religion

Introduction

From May 31 to July 9, 2016, I visited several World War II museums in Japan. While at these museums, I made an effort to interview staff members as best as I could in Japanese. I asked about changes to exhibits, the goals of the various museums, and whether artifacts from previous exhibits were still maintained. The first, out of convenience, was the Kyoto Museum for World Peace located on the grounds of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto. The museum's exhibits on World War II were critical, but not overly so. The exhibits' narrative integrated discussions of Japanese World War II atrocities into a broader discussion of 20th century warfare and its consequences. The exhibit was lenient on Japan's World War II atrocities, but it did not deny reality. I soon learned this was a rare exception.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Yushukan museum felt like a discussion of history in a reality that I did not recognize. It paints Japan as unwilling aggressors, its actions as either justified combat or unforeseen consequences, and it honors all Japanese soldiers while blatantly ignoring anything they may have done during World War II. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was more tolerable only because its focus on the tragedy of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima left less room for nationalist revisionism of the war that preceded it. It did however paint US actions as unconscionable while ignoring any Japanese aggression that may have provoked them. Still, neither of these museums were as infuriating as the first visit to the Osaka International Peace Center. I had studied this museum beforehand and its previous exhibits had just finished being altered at the time this project began. The dissonance between the honest portrayals of history discussed in the original museum compared with the heavily censored partial history that was seen on June 16, 2016 was eye-opening.

Until very recently, the Osaka International Peace Center was praised as a museum that was respectably honest about Japanese war crimes during World War II while still being largely focused on the bombings of Osaka by United States war planes. In what was once Exhibit Room B, the museum showed exhibits from Japan's imperial conquest of Korea, its violent atrocities in China, and other actions of extreme cruelty throughout Asia during World War II. In the entryway to this room, a small shrine was erected to honor those killed at Auschwitz and to tie the horrible actions being discussed in Exhibit Room B to the more famous Nazi atrocities. The Exhibit Room B described above no longer exists. It was removed in 2014 in an attempt to pretend that the events it depicted never happened. The removal of exhibits that criticize Japanese World War II aggression and war crimes is not limited to the Osaka International Peace Center. It is a nationwide trend.

Whether by refusing to take a deliberate position on these issues or seeking moderation in the debate, the national government and other complicit local governments have chosen to aid the revisionists by silencing exhibits that directly criticize Japan in museums. The politics of history of the Japanese government is not conducive to honesty about Japan's World War II atrocities. As such, it would rather just bury the issue and only acknowledge the problem when it is addressed. The desire to avoid chances for audiences to bring up the issues surrounding Japan's World War II atrocities has likely contributed to the restriction and censure of publically funded and managed World War II museums in Japan.

The appearance of peace museums in the early 1990's led to a far right conservative backlash amongst some Japanese historians and many in the national government. Individuals like Professor Higashinakano, a professor of Japanese intellectual history at Asia University in Tokyo, launched a crusade of protests and critiques of these museums on the grounds that they

represent a false history harmful to Japan. This mindset of pro-Japan historical revisionism was always present in Japanese politics, particularly within the Liberal Democratic Party, but it was often more moderate. In recent years, the resurgence of the Liberal Democratic Party under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the spread of similarly minded regional government groups has led to these views becoming far more conservative. In particular, historical revisionism has targeted peace museums that are seen as being critical of Japan's World War II history.

While Japan would prefer to simply ignore its distasteful World War II history, the rest of the world will not permit it. Many Asian neighbors, particularly China and Korea, nurse old wounds related to Japanese war crimes during World War II that will not be simply forgotten. Also, Western historians have consistently been just as critical of Imperial Japan's World War II conduct as they have been of Nazi Germany's. Historical amnesia is only possible if the whole world agrees to the process. The result is that Japan must maintain a discussion of its World War II history while attempting not to acknowledge the elements of it that other world governments criticize. As John W. Dower refers to it, Japan approaches its history like items at a supermarket from which they can, "pick and choose whatever conforms to existing tastes."¹

The Japanese government is too politically invested in burying the issue. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was formed in the years after World War II and many of its original members served as officials during the war. It is now one of the largest political parties in Japan, and includes the current Prime Minister. Shinzo Abe wants to expand Japan's ability to deploy

¹ John W. Dower, *Culture of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010), 436.

its military overseas independently.² To draw attention to the atrocities of World War II and the culpability of many of the party's founding members is politically untenable for the LDP.

Another more recent political party, also politically devoted to burying Japan's World War II history, is the Ishin no Kai (Japanese Restoration Party). Led by Toru Hashimoto, former governor of the Osaka Prefecture, the Ishin no Kai has made criticism of museums like the Osaka International Peace Center, which until recently had been brutally honest about Japan's war guilt, a major feature of its politics.

The desire to erase uncomfortable history from current World War II discussions in Japan comes into stark focus when viewing Japanese museums regarding World War II. Public museums are pressured not to confront the dark elements of Japan's World War II history and focus on narratives of victimization by the United States. The only museums that are exempt from these pressures are private collections belonging to specific organizations or universities. Depictions of what occurred during World War II differ as wildly in museums as the opinions on the issues at play. This occurs as a result of the handpicked history that the Japanese government inconsistently chooses to display in museums.

These arbitrary display policies for museums raises a question when looking at public displays of Japanese WWII history: who is Japan displaying the history in question for? On the one hand, history museums are meant to enlighten the general populace about their own past and give them perspectives to aid in viewing the present and possible futures. In this case, one might argue that excising Japanese war crimes from the museum's other narrative of Japanese

² Richard Lloyd Parry, "Abe pushes Japan to give up 'peace clause'," *The London Times*, April 29, 2015, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/asia/article4425154.ece>.

victimization in World War II makes explaining the main argument of the museum less complicated and more focused thematically. One of the workers at the Osaka International Peace Center who answered questions about the museum's recent changes, basically said as much when she stated that the current museum's historical narrative is easier to explain to any students who visit the museum.³ Making the messages of the museum's exhibits clear for the audience is not necessarily a bad thing. Clarity of message in historical themes is necessary for conveying your viewpoint to an audience for generations to come.

This call for a more nuanced message not muddied by debates of aggression and guilt plays into the goals of revisionists because the only subjects being silenced or muted are the ones they find objectionable. The history of Japanese aggression during World War II is a history of violent interactions between Japan and many other nations in Asia, particularly China. As Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue in *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, German historians discussing World War II in Germany history increasingly shifted from a narrative of German victimization to a narrative regarding the victims of German atrocities during the war.⁴ The censoring of the Japanese war crimes display in Exhibit Room B of the Osaka International Peace Center suggests Japan is attempting to erase these people's suffering from their own history because it is inconvenient politically for them to display these memories publically. Government censorship of an exhibit that was once open about the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in Korea, China, and other Asian countries during WWII is seen as insensitive to

³ Anonymous source to author, Osaka International Peace Center, June 15, 2016. I feel the statement is important even if paraphrased and not quoted directly as it summarizes the public viewpoint of those who supported censure.

⁴ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, translated by Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 98.

victims of the atrocities in other countries. The original exhibit, it could be argued, was designed to help the people of Japan associate their own victimization during WWII with the victimization of other countries by the Japanese army. Associating Japanese memories of suffering with the memories of other peoples' suffering could promote sympathy and a more balanced perspective on victimization and the scars of warfare throughout Asia. The current exhibit merely reinforces the themes of Japanese victimization and the promotion of world peace as a vague, general goal. Sznajder and Levy point out that the Japanese saw themselves as the ultimate victims of WWII since they experienced nuclear war.⁵ However, should this promotion of a national image of wartime victimization come at the cost of denying the victimization of other groups by the Japanese? These kinds of issues contribute to an ongoing distrust and animosity on the part of the Chinese government towards Japan.

Japanese willful ignorance of how their actions are perceived by other countries is not a new trend either. Former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi (2001-2006) faced harsh criticism for attending ceremonies honoring the deceased soldiers interred at the Yasukuni Shrine in 2001. Several soldiers interred at Yasukuni were convicted Class A war criminals who committed atrocities in Asia. China and Korea found honoring such people offensive. Current Prime Minister Abe has also been questioned about the issue of Japanese leaders honoring war criminals, and this was his response: "Visiting the cemetery [Arlington Cemetery] does not mean endorsing slavery, even though Confederate soldiers are buried there."⁶

⁵ Levy and Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, 40.

⁶ Shinzo Abe and Jonathan Tepperman, "Japan is Back: A Conversation with Shinzo Abe," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (July/August 2013): 5, accessed February 7, 2016 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23526902>.

Comparing American controversies with the Civil War to Japanese controversies with World War II gets to the core of the problem of Japanese sites of World War II memory. Japanese World War II memorial sites are complicated. They have both religious implications for the Japanese but also implications of a history of violence for other countries. What is the importance of WWII museums for Japan? Are they venues for religious memory casting a fog over history for the sake of reverence to the dead, or are they sites of historical memory that Japan often manipulates to only tell the narrative the government wants to discuss?

With these questions in mind, how do Japan and the rest of the world view the phenomenon of peace museums in a country attempting to deny its past? How have different Japanese World War II museums with different administrative structures balance government requirements with the goal of presenting history? The issue of Japanese censorship of World War II museums has been covered both in Japan and worldwide, and the censorship of the Osaka International Peace Center has been discussed, but never in the broader context of the Japanese government and its treatment of peace museums. This paper seeks to argue that the Japanese government has remained ambivalent about its wartime past and that its ambivalence has helped to mute and silence discussions of Japanese World War II history in publically funded museums. This means that only privately funded museums are allowed to be remotely honest about Japanese wartime aggression, and even they must often moderate their narratives to avoid rebuke.

Japanese Wartime Aggression: History and Memory

Charles S. Maier's *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* contextualized the nature of the problem with the Japanese government silencing World War II history in its museums. When discussing the history of the German people dealing with

the Nazi atrocities, Maier brings up the concept of “reflective memory,” and how it can be used as a tool to silence the past. To quote Maier, “it can be used, not to confront the past, but to complicate it. The demand for more subtle historiography can itself serve as a tool of evasion, ‘revision,’ or normalization.”⁷ The situations are slightly different, but the end result is the same. The Japanese government’s decision to remain neutral and push for more nuance and a balanced discussion of the history ultimately ends up assisting the historical revisionists. Policies of revisionism have resulted in the loss of honest portrayals of history across multiple museums. As such, understanding the logic of passive silencing through calls for nuance or moderation is part of this paper’s argument.

The need to push past debate by calling for more nuance results in objectionable material being removed. Japan needs strong voices for honesty about Japan’s dark World War II past to avoid the history being silenced in the cries for moderation. One key individual pushing for honesty is Katsuichi Honda. A Japanese journalist, he is the man who is mostly responsible for igniting the discussion of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan in the 1970’s. His first book, *Chugoku no tabi* [China Trip] set forth key starting points in the debate because it was the first time a Japanese intellectual used Chinese eyewitness sources as part of his analysis.⁸ Throughout his career, Katsuichi has pursued policies of overt hostility to “peace events” and other commemorations by the Japanese government of its World War II suffering because he believes that Japan disrespects other cultures when it chooses to ignore others’ suffering in order to

⁷ Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 161.

⁸ See Edward J. Drea, Review of *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan’s National Shame*. H-Net Japan. (November 1999), accessed November 6, 2016. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=3599>

glorify itself.⁹ Honda's key professional trait is "anthropological journalism," applying anthropological methodology to his investigative reporting. While *Chugoku no tabi* did attempt to study Chinese survivors of World War II, it did not directly confront Japan over its failures in the postwar period.

The book that directly confronts the issue of Japanese war guilt is *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame*. Published in 1997, the book builds upon Honda's previous works to provide a sweeping study of the Nanjing Massacre. Its primary sources consist of eyewitness accounts from both Japanese Imperial Army soldiers and Chinese civilians. Furthermore, he openly criticizes the Japanese historians who deny or downplay the existence of the events he discusses. At one point, he states that historian Tanaka Masaaki's attempts to portray the Nanjing Massacre as a hoax were laughable since he selectively uses testimony and extensively alters it to reinforce his arguments.¹⁰

Western scholars did not enter into the debate until after the release of Iris Chang's *Rape of Nanking*. Chang's book covers a fairly extensive period of time and attempts to analyze every aspect of this event, its causes, and its postwar memory. The narrative includes studies of the military mindset of Japan in the years leading up to the war and continues into the late 1980s, when government officials who attempted to broach the subject faced public and private harassment. It utilizes a variety of English, Chinese, and Japanese sources. When Chang was

⁹ See Millie R. Creighton, Review of *The Impoverished Spirit of Contemporary Japan: Selected Essays of Honda Katsuichi* by John Lie, *Pacific Affairs* 67, No. 3 (Autumn 1994): 449, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2760430>.

¹⁰ Katsuichi Honda, *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame* (Osaka, JP: Asahi Shimbun Publishing Co. 1999), 187.

writing another book about the Bataan Death March, she sadly took her own life on November 9, 2004.

The biggest criticism of Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* has been the somewhat unreliable nature of parts of the narrative and certain factual elements. Critics both for and against discussion of Nanking as a massacre have pointed out holes in the narrative and in the logic of what is occurring. This ties into the other major criticism of Chang's book, the lack of proper research effort. Joshua Fogel stated that while the book was well-intentioned, it often had wild, unsupportable assertions, did not criticize the evidence provided to her by sources, and basic factual errors.¹¹ Iris Chang's work may not be considered scholarly, it still served as a tool to open discussions about the Nanjing Massacre and to introduce major arguments to Western audiences. In particular, Honda agreed to have his *Nanjing Massacre* book translated into English and other languages in order to inform a more global audience of the discussion. He did this because he felt foreign politicians, particularly American ones, had been putting pressure on Japanese bureaucrats to confront the issue and condemn the "disgraceful and anti-internationalist behavior of the Japanese government and conservative forces."¹² Regardless of intellectual merit, Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* can be credited with starting a frank argument on the topic among Western scholars.

Iris Chang's *Rape of Nanking* serves another purpose in this discussion. Professor Shudo Higashinakano, a professor of intellectual history at Asia University of Japan in Tokyo, is one of

¹¹ See Joshua A. Fogel, Review of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* By Iris Chang; *Japan's War Memories: Amnesia or Concealment?* By George Hicks. *The Journal of Asia Studies* 57, No. 3 (August 1998): 818-819, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2658758>.

¹² Drea. Review of *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame*.

the more notable voices of conservative revisionism and has devoted much of his professional life to discrediting Chang's history and her sources regarding the Nanjing Massacre.

Higashinakano started his career as a professor of German intellectual thought and socialism and only shifted his research studies to the Nanking Massacre after the fall of the Berlin Wall. After the book was released, Higashinakano charged that no evidence present in the book provided genuine proof of Japanese atrocities. In a book he published with Shinjiro Fukunaga and Kobayashi Susumu called, "Analyzing the 'Photographic Evidence' of the Nanking Massacre," Higashinakano goes through a series of developments in the narrative of the Nanking Massacre.¹³ These early works were later integrated into a much larger narrative dismissing the Nanjing Massacre called *The Nanking Massacre: Fact Versus Fiction*. At the core of Higashinakano's dismissal of Iris Chang's work is the argument that all Western discussions regarding the Nanjing Massacre are linked to unreliable primary sources. This primary source that Higashinakano seeks to discredit on several occasions is H.J. Timperley's *What War Means*.¹⁴

H.J. Timperley, an English speaking news correspondent, also taught as a university professor in Nanking at the time of the invasion. Higashinakano's major criticism of Timperley is that he discovered a document in the Chinese government archives in Taipei from the Guomindang. This document stated that Timperley was an advisor to a special branch of the Guomindang's public relations bureau whose goal was to spread anti-Japanese propaganda.¹⁵

¹³ Shudo Higashinakano, Shinjiro Fukunaga, and Kobayashi Susumu, *Analyzing the 'Photographic Evidence' of the Nanking Massacre* (Tokyo: Soshisha Press. 2005): 9-10, accessed November 5, 2016, http://sdh-fact.com/CL02_1/26_S4.pdf.

¹⁴ Higashinakano, Fukunaga, and Susumu, *Analyzing the 'Photographic Evidence'*, 4-6.

¹⁵ Higashinakano, Fukunaga, and Susumu, *Analyzing the "Photographic Evidence"*, 6-7.

Their book quotes the document, but research did not reveal the document in question so it is unclear if there is any truth to this assertion. Also, a key primary source that Timperley uses in *What War Means* is Miner Searle Bates, a professor at Nanking University in the late 1930's. Bates worked on the International Committee in the Nanking Safe Zone during the Japanese invasion and occupation. The International Military Tribunal of the Far East later called Timperley as a witness to Japanese war crimes at the Tokyo Trials.¹⁶ Higashinakano believes that Bates knowingly collaborated with the Guomindang's public relations committee who manipulated reports coming out of Nanking at the time.

Another key primary source Higashinakano seeks to undermine in his research is *The Good German of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*. John Rabe was a German national, and a member of the Nazi party. He was the man in charge of the Nanjing Safety Zone during the Japanese invasion. During the period now known as the Nanjing Massacre, Rabe chronicled in his diary what he saw and heard. A number of those diary entries are integrated into *The Good German of Nanking*. Higashinakano criticizes Rabe's text as being largely hearsay with no actual eyewitness accounts. Some of his accounts of the population numbers do not match up with several independent sources that verified the number of Chinese civilians in the Nanjing Safety Zone at the time of the massacre.¹⁷

Higashinakano himself is not immune from criticism for shoddy research. Sources Higashinakano tried to discredit in his books have spoken out against his narrative. Xia Shuqin, a witness and survivor of the Nanjing Massacre, sued him and fellow scholar Toshio Matsumura

¹⁶ "Miner Searle Bates," *Divinity Library*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University, January 29, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/nanking/bates>.

¹⁷ Higashinakano, Fukunaga, and Susumu, *Analyzing the 'Photographic Evidence'*, 5-7.

for their claims in the books, “Thorough Review of Nanjing Massacre,” (This text was later edited and compiled into *Fact Versus Fiction*) and “The Big Question of the Nanjing Massacre,” that all evidence of the event was faked including her eyewitness accounts.¹⁸ Shuqi’s suit went to court in Japan, and the Tokyo High Court ruled against Matsumura and Higashinakano.¹⁹ They appealed to the Japanese Supreme Court, but the ruling stood. Higashinakano and Matsumura were charged with libelous defamation and forced to pay ¥4.5 million in damages. Higashinakano and Matsumura argued that her family was killed in the footage shot by US missionary John Magee, which both men claim is fabricated. Xia’s lawyer prepared evidence to prove her account, but Matsumura and Higashinakano could not discredit the footage or prove that Xia was not the little girl whose family died on film.

Western scholars have also contributed extensively to this debate. Ian Buruma, a Dutch historian working in the United States, has covered Japan’s problems with war memory repeatedly and also explicitly linked and compared it to Germany’s postwar experiences with war memories. Two books in particular, *Zero Year: A History of 1945*, and *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, helped to craft the philosophical underpinnings of this paper’s argument. In *The Wages of Guilt*, Buruma brings up the contradiction of a history museum also serving as a memorial site, claiming that you cannot combine a secular, independent institution with a site for non-confrontational collective ritual without distorting the purpose of either.²⁰ For Buruma, combining the two only works in an authoritative society.

¹⁸ “Nanjing Massacre Survivor Wins Lawsuit,” *Xinhua News Agency* (August 24, 2006), accessed November 16, 2016. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2006/Aug/178925.htm>

¹⁹ “Chinese hail Nanjing Massacre witness’ libel suit victory,” *Xinhua News Agency* (February 9, 2009), accessed November 16, 2016. <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/6587967.html>

²⁰ Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt* (New York: Penguin Press, 1995), 218-219.

Buruma's extensive focus on the necessity of discussing ideas and how they are presented and either maintained or lost is key to understanding the implications of censoring war memory in museums.

Laura Hein is another Western scholar with extensive contributions to the field. Hein is a professor at Northwestern University who focuses her research on 20th century Japan and how it interacts with foreign powers. In particular, her research focuses on how Cold War and World War II politics affected Japanese interactions with the rest of the world. She discusses the key sources of argument between different groups over museum memory presentation repeatedly. She distinguishes between US and Japanese perspectives on key issues and also shows similarities in how each nation approaches the problem.²¹

For Japanese perspectives on the nature of war memory, Professor Kazuyo Yamane presents the core arguments while promoting the more liberal perspective. The Professor lectures on Peace Studies at Kochi University and is the editor of *Muse*, a biannual bilingual newsletter chronicling news on the evolution of different peace museums in Japan and their exhibits. He discusses both the obvious narratives about distinctions between Japanese and American atomic war memory as well as smaller issues such as separation of church and state in Japan or Asian criticism of Japan's victim narrative.²²

Outside of the research more specifically targeting Japanese aggression, research into how this type of history is studied and recorded by historians serves as part of the discussion as

²¹ Laura Hein, "Curating Controversy: Exhibiting the Second World War in Japan and the United States Since 1995," *International Institute For Asian Studies Newsletter* no. 45 (Autumn 2007): 14, accessed November 14, 2016 http://ias.asia/sites/default/files/IIAS_NL45_14.pdf

²² Kazuyo Yamane. "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum." *Peace Forum*, 24, no. 34 (2009): 76.

well. Michel Rolph-Trouillot is a Haitian Professor of Anthropology and Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. His research focuses on Haitian history, particularly slave revolts. His book *Silencing The Past* uses the Haitian slave revolts as a vehicle to discuss broader issues about the ways history is remembered and recorded by academics. His theories on “impossible history” and how cultural preconceptions can alter the way history is discussed in different contexts apply to the ongoing debate over how Japan deals with its war guilt.

Johan Galtung contributes important theoretical background required to understand the entire peace museum movement. Galtung is a Norwegian sociologist who pioneered the discipline of peace and conflict studies in sociology. Central to Galtung’s relevance in this paper is that his definition of what constitutes a “peace museum” is used to classify Japanese peace museums in the broader global context. He distinguishes war and peace museums and the factors he uses to differentiate the two are key to the discussion of Japan’s presentation of its war memories. Also, his views on “positive peace” through “equity...cooperation for mutual and equal benefit,” are central to understanding the origins of Japan’s conflict with China about WWII and the continued enmity between the two countries.²³

The Struggle for Control of the Narrative

The struggle over Japan’s presentation of its World War II memories in Asia started as a result of evolving relations between Japan and the People’s Republic of China in the years after Mao Tse-Tung’s regime. After Japan and the PRC normalized diplomatic relations in 1972, discussions about Japan’s wartime aggression against China, Korea, and much of Asia became a

²³ Johan Galtung, “How do you define ‘positive peace’?” *Envision Peace Museum*, July 9, 2012, accessed November 14, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyFn_hSF3wQ

political issue as well as intellectual discourse. Katsuichi Honda's *Chugoku no tabi* [Trip to China] started many of the key debate points for the left-wing critical view of Japan's wartime past by utilizing Chinese eyewitness sources to support the narrative and challenging denials made using Japanese soldiers' accounts. These kinds of published works combined with the recovery and distribution of video footage and photographs led to intensified debate over Japan's wartime history.

The opposing perspective, which is more important to the argument of this paper, is a conservative, nationalist approach embodied by the works of men like Professor Shudo Higashinakano. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will focus on Higashinakano as a standard bearer of the conservative nationalist revisionism that characterizes right-wing criticism of those who push for Japan to remember and atone for its atrocities during World War II. His work attacks the veracity of the claims of World War II Japanese atrocities and seeks to criticize, denounce, or undermine any scholarly works that seek to push criticism of Japan's World War II history. The most he is willing to acknowledge in regards to Japanese war crimes during the period is that there are some "malicious individuals," but that their actions should not be reflective of the Japanese Imperial Army as a whole.²⁴

Outside of these two major arguments that have defined the debate since the end of World War II, a third argument has longer lasting implications for Japanese museums of World War II: the "liberal" approach championed by Nobukatsu Fujioka. Fujioka believed that the continuing debate between apology and national pride has been an unending disaster for

²⁴ "Osaka: Japan: Nanking Massacre Protests" *Associated Press*. January 21-23, 2000, accessed March 30, 2016 <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/9569b9d79bcaa13ab8db6f89ad714eff>

Japanese national policy without hope for a satisfying conclusion.²⁵ So, Fujioka sought to pursue a “liberal” view of history whose stated goal was essentially to excoriate and remove any aspect of Japan’s war history that might be detrimental to ongoing policy. While in practice this is merely a repetition of the nationalist, rightist wartime pride policy, Fujioka’s approach was seen as distinct because he was not seen as promoting national pride and merely removing sources of conflict that dogged the previous two arguments.

The Origins of the “Peace” Museums: Early Years of the Osaka Peace Center

In 1992, the first conference of the International Network of Peace Museums met in Bradford, UK.²⁶ Representatives from 10 countries including the United States, Japan, and Australia met to organize, exchange ideas, and plan for future efforts. The International Network of Peace Museums has held eight conferences in total with a ninth planned for April 2017 in Belfast. The International Network of Museums for Peace (as it is now called) has been granted NGO status and has expanded the scope of its duties to account for more countries and different political scenarios.

The 1980’s and early 1990’s represented a period of transition amongst some groups in Japan with regards to public discussions of Japan’s World War II war memories. Criticism of war efforts spread as a result of anti-nuclear sentiment and worldwide derision of US military action in Vietnam. One of the earliest peace museums, the Osaka War Memorial Exhibition

²⁵ Gavan McCormack, “The Japanese Movement to ‘Correct’ History,” In *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden, (Armonk, NY: East Gate Books, 2000), 64-65.

²⁶ Anonymous author, “History,” *International Network of Museums for Peace*, accessed November 14, 2016 <http://www.museumsforpeace.org/history.html>

Room for Peace, opened in Osaka in 1970's.²⁷ This exhibition was one of many temporary exhibitions set up to showcase public support for the cause of peace in Japan. It would also later become a permanent peace museum called the Osaka International Peace Center.

An event that helped push many of these changes forward was the opening of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in 1985. The opening of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall drew unresolved issues regarding Japanese wartime aggression into the international spotlight. Increasing contact with the People's Republic of China made it more difficult for Japan to ignore discussing wartime atrocities and the erection of public monuments in Chinese museums to remember those who were raped, robbed, and murdered by Japanese soldiers in China. Other stories of Japan's embarrassing lack of discussion about its own World War II past emerged in the late 1980s, and with Japanese desires for peace and improved relations with neighboring Asian nations increasing, it was becoming difficult for the Japanese government to avoid discussing these issues much longer.

The increasing international attention on issues of wartime guilt and discussions of unresolved conflict increased public desire for permanent museums discussing Japan's wartime history to serve as memorials and symbols for peace. As a result of this transition, several "Peace Museums" opened in Japan during this period. According to UNESCO surveys, eight permanent peace museums opened in eight different cities between 1992 and 1993 alone.²⁸ These museums ranged from privately funded collections created by museums to publically funded

²⁷ Kazuyo Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," *Peace Forum*, 24, no. 34 (December 2009): 75, accessed November 19, 2016
http://www.museumsforpeace.org/attachments/category/52/Moving_Beyond_the_War_Memorial_Museum.pdf

²⁸ Kazuyo Yamane, "Peace Education through Peace Museums," in *Peace Studies: Public Policy and Global Security Vol. II*, ed. Ursula Oswald Spring (United Nations: EOLSS Publishing, 2010), 70-71.

displays intended for tourism. Their exhibits served to paint Japan as both victim and aggressor. The narratives were usually designed to display a sense of unity with the rest of Asia through honest portrayals of Japan's violent past.

Laura Hein argues that intense scrutiny of war narratives in museums both in Japan and the United States began in earnest in 1995. For the United States, this is in reference to the debates over the portrayal of the *Enola Gay* and discussions over what role the dropping of the atomic bomb played in World War II history. For Japan, after 1995, a severe rightwing backlash against the peace museum movement began. The exhibits in these museums were seen as being too horrifying to show to school children and that they promoted a pointlessly harmful picture of Japan's past in the name of historical accuracy. As heated and contentious as the right wing politicians who promoted these political arguments were, these were still restrained arguments. Far more extreme criticism of the peace museums came from those who believed that the history these museums displayed never existed. One of the most memorable instances of the extreme rejection of peace museums and their perceived anti-Japanese depiction of history was Professor Shudo Higashinakano's protest lecture within the Osaka International Peace Center.

Crisis over History: The Osaka Peace Center Protests (January 21-23, 2000)

From January 21 to 23, 2000, Professor Shudo Higashinakano organized lectures and informal protests of exhibits in the Osaka International Peace Center decrying all evidence of Japanese aggression displayed there as false and misleading. Higashinakano sought to repudiate the argument put forth by these artifacts and the museum's narrative that systematic war crimes were carried out by the Japanese Imperial Army. The protest ironically led to a counter protest outside the museum as Chinese and Japanese citizens assembled to denounce Higashinakano's claims.

Higashinakano's lecture puts forth many of the points that he later reiterated in his books and his lawsuits against survivors of the Rape of Nanjing. He argued that no evidence existed of systemic abuse and violence by the Japanese military. He added that the evidence provided by film, photos, and eyewitnesses is either faked, or represents the actions of one or two deranged individuals, not the entire Japanese Imperial Army. He criticized the exhibits in Osaka and elsewhere and attempted to discredit any evidence of Japanese aggression.

Higashinakano's actions did not go unnoticed. Long lines of people formed outside of the museum to protest the views the professor expressed in his protest lecture. The protests were peaceful, but arguments did break out between those who came to hear Professor Higashinakano's protests and those who came to protest his views.

Further issues arise when reviewing the footage that was collected by the reporters during the protests. This footage includes the statements of Japan's Foreign Minister at the time, Yohei Kono. He clearly asserted that the views expressed in Professor Higashinakano's protest conference were not the views of the Japanese government. The protest reflected private views of the organizers and the protest organizers presented a view of history independent of the Japanese government's wishes.²⁹ Kono's statement suggested that pressure from private groups, whose opinions do not reflect the majority opinion in Japan, did influence the presentation of Japan's WWII memories, in the Osaka International Peace Center.

Kono's statement is contradicted by what happened to the museum starting in 2015. As a publically funded institution, the Osaka International Peace Center was vulnerable to scrutiny from its government backers. In 2013, Osaka prefectural government placed heavy pressure on

²⁹ "Osaka: Japan: Nanking Massacre Protests"

the museum to alter the contents of its exhibits or face closure. Toru Hashimoto, the governor at the time, threatened to close the museum, “If the exhibits are determined to be inappropriate.”³⁰ When it was reopened in 2015, Hashimoto’s replacement, Ichiro Matsui, stated that the museum, “Looks better now,” and that, “I believe exhibitions should not represent the view of one side when there are diverse perceptions.”³¹ This argument is flawed since the only portions of the museum that were altered or removed are the portions that were designed to showcase that Japan’s war crimes define its memories of WWII. The current Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, is much more in line with this kind of thinking. He stated previously that exhibits such as the pre-2014 Fifteen Year War exhibit at the Osaka International Peace Center had been a, “masochistic” portrayal of Japanese history.³²

The New Message: The Censorship of the Osaka International Peace Center (2013-2015)

The Osaka International Peace center opened in 1991 with the goal of prioritizing the history of the United States bombings of Osaka during World War II while also discussing Japanese aggression in Asia. The museum discussed topics like the occupation of Korea, the Nanjing Massacre, and other atrocities. The directors hoped to combine discussions of WWII aggression on all sides to unite people in the pursuit of peace. The 1991 pamphlet for the museum stated its operating philosophy on the cover with the following quote: “The Osaka International Peace Center is conceived in memory of Osaka’s wartime victims and as an

³⁰ Richard Lloyd Parry, “Japan peace museum removes war crimes exhibit after closure threat,” *The London Times*, May 15, 2016, accessed July 18, 2016, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/asia/article4432196.ece>.

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

instrument to set forth new regional support for the cause of peace.”³³ As the 21st century dawned, Japan’s national government and particularly the regional government in Osaka became increasingly critical of the museum’s brutally honest depiction of Japan’s wartime guilt.

In November 2013 Toru Hashimoto, Osaka Prefectural governor, and his governing party, Ishin no Kai (Japanese Restoration Party) released a plan to revitalize museums related to World War II in Osaka.³⁴ The project was part of a broader attempt to promote Japan and more particularly Osaka by removing public projects that were critical of Japan’s history. It is unclear how much of this was Ishin no Kai and Toru Hashimoto’s own desire to silence these examples of criticism, or if the Osaka Prefectural government was attempting to curry favor with Prime Minister Abe and his national government at the time. Hashimoto was no longer governor by the time the plan had come to fruition, but Ishin no Kai largely carried out his vision.

Regardless of the source of the criticism, Osaka International Peace Center had been fighting a losing battle for many years. As a publically funded museum, the Osaka Prefectural government held the museum’s life in its hands. In previous years, in response to public attacks on the horrific nature of its exhibits, the museum had been slowly modifying the exhibits that the prefectural government found objectionable. By 2013, public support for the peace museum movement waned compared to where it was in the 1990’s. With one final plan, Ishin no Kai basically left the Osaka International Peace Center with an impossible choice: completely

³³ Anonymous Author, “Prospectus,” Osaka International Peace Center English language Pamphlet (Osaka, JP: Osaka International Peace Center, 1991).

³⁴ “Osaka International Peace Center (Peace Osaka): Osaka City,” *Muse: Japanese Citizen’s Network for Museums for Peace Newsletter*, No. 29 (February 2014), 17, accessed October 14, 2016. http://www.tokyo-sensai.net/muse/muse_PDF_en/muse29en.pdf

remove all objectionable exhibits from the museum or face closure. Peace Osaka ultimately chose self-censure rather than cease to exist.³⁵

On September 1, 2014, the Osaka International Peace Center closed for what would end up being eight months of completely overhauling its exhibits to fall in line with what was expected of it by Toru Hashimoto and the Ishin no Kai. Years of political pressure by Hashimoto and his political party to financially strangle museums that did not fit with the prevailing political vision of Japan's WWII memory narrative finally resulted in the temporary closure of the Osaka International Peace Center. The Osaka International Peace Center's censure took years of planning, but the degree of its planned censure did not become apparent until fairly late in the process. In June 2013, the Japanese Citizen's Network for Peace Museums' regular newsletter, *Muse*, mentioned the event briefly. However, the description of the renewal here only seems to be designed to commemorate the anniversary of the Osaka Air Raid back on March 3 of that year. The plans for the museum's "renewal," as Hashimoto's government was calling it were not made public until November 2013. A year before the museum's closure, contributors to *Muse* expressed concerns that the exhibits regarding Japanese aggression abroad would be deleted completely according to this plan.³⁶

³⁵ Parry, "Japanese peace museum removes war crimes exhibits after closure threats," <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/asia/article4432196.ece>.

³⁶ "Osaka International Peace Center (Peace Osaka): Osaka City," *Muse: Japanese Citizen's Network for Museums for Peace Newsletter*, no. 29, (February 2014), 17, accessed October 14, 2016. http://www.tokyo-sensai.net/muse/muse_PDF_en/muse29en.pdf It is somewhat disheartening how little the newsletter discusses the proposed changes to Peace Osaka, considering the newsletter's stated goal of informing and educating the public about these museums and likely government attempts to tamper with the narratives they displayed. This is the only mention of the process as the changes were happening until the museum finally closed for "renewal."

After the Osaka International Peace Center reopened in April 2015, the biggest victim of the reductions and alterations to the museum's exhibits and message was Exhibition Room B on the first floor. Exhibition Room B discussed "The Fifteen Year War," referring to Japan's many invasions and wartime atrocities throughout Asia. Its exhibits included pictures of dead civilians and soldierly abuse in addition to explanations of Japan's colonization of Korea, the military and industrial development of Manchuria, and other invasions perpetrated by the Japanese.³⁷ The current museum now uses the space to reemphasize the suffering of the Japanese people in Osaka due to the bombings of the city by American B-29's. While this depiction of Osaka was always part of the Osaka International Peace Center, removing criticism of Japan's wartime aggression severs any possible thematic links between what the Japanese suffered during WWII and what the people of other Asian countries invaded by Japan suffered.

The pamphlets for the Osaka International Peace Center from before and after the renovations show both the changes to the exhibits themselves and the changed rhetoric of the museum's operating mission. The original pamphlet used from 1991 until 2014 has used statements such as, "We shall not forget that Japan was responsible for the great hardships suffered by the people of China and the other Asia-Pacific region[s]."³⁸ The overall message does not criticize Japanese feelings of victimization during World War II, but it also does not paper over the very real facts of Japanese victimization of many other nations. Furthermore, the inclusion of an Auschwitz exhibit wing along with extensive discussions of Japan's colonial and

³⁷ Anonymous Author, "Exhibit Room B," Osaka International Peace Center Pamphlet (Osaka, JP: Osaka International Peace Center Press, 2013).

³⁸ Anonymous Author, "Prospectus," Osaka International Peace Center Pamphlet.

military activities in the Asia-Pacific Theater has helped to create a sense of the larger war that Peace Osaka seeks to reflect on honestly.

Compared with the 1991 pamphlet, the Osaka Peace Museum's 2015 pamphlet attempts to make a bland statement about pursuing pacifism and world peace while not addressing Japan's culpability in World War II. The following phrase sums up the change: "As we carry out the exhibition renewal...we have decided to focus on the 'Osaka Air Raids.'"³⁹ When reading that statement and being aware of the political pressure and protests, this real message is: "This is all we are allowed to discuss." Not only are all references to Japan's wartime aggression expunged, but the new message of the Osaka Peace museum retreats from making any argument beyond Japanese victimization at the end of World War II.

Making the Past Fit the Present: Narratives of Victimization

When discussing Professor Shudo Higashinakano's book, *The Nanking Massacre: Fact versus Fiction, A Historian's Quest for the Truth*, requires parsing through several disparate points about the professor himself and his views. When he led the conference at the Osaka Peace Center Museum, he expressed proudly that, "Even if the Chinese government or Taiwan claim that there was a massacre of 300,000 people or some scholars claim it to be 200,000, there is no evidence to back up these theories."⁴⁰ He follows this trend of thought in his book. In the preface, he argues that physical evidence does not exist to corroborate the charges of a massacre

³⁹ Anonymous Author, "Message from Osaka International Peace Center: April 30, 2015," Osaka International Peace Center Pamphlet, (Osaka, JP: Osaka International Peace Center, 2015).

⁴⁰ "Osaka: Japan: Nanking Massacre Protests," <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/9569b9d79bcaa13ab8db6f89ad714eff>.

against the Japanese army.⁴¹ He further argues that it serves as political propaganda for revenge and aggression against Japan. He cites a book discussing potential misconduct and abuse carried out by US soldiers against the German POW's after WWII and how Western historians who criticized that book spoke approvingly of Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*.

When looking at his sources, it is difficult to ignore the need to closely scrutinize Higashinakano's perspective. He reviews evidence of Japanese military war journals and seeks to portray any evidence of murder or misconduct as inconsequential problems of war or breakdowns in military communication. Higashinakano elaborates in extensive detail why many of the problems with discussing the "Nanking Massacre" occur. Higashinakano claims too many scholars were unaware of the extensive wartime propaganda by Nationalist Chinese agents to manipulating the Western press.⁴² His evidence of this again falls back on critiques of the historians. He questions the reliability of *What War Means* by citing the work of Theodore White, who was one of Bates's successors working in Chongqing, who stated in a memoir that, "In reality, I was employed to manipulate American public opinion...It was considered necessary to lie to it, to deceive it."⁴³ He assumes that because White and Bates both worked in the Nationalist Party's Information Office at roughly the same time, Bates's sources are unreliable for fear of deliberate manipulation. His arguments even acknowledge but ultimately dismiss the trials carried by the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal held in Tokyo in

⁴¹ Shudo Higashinakano, *The Nanking Massacre: Fact vs Fiction: A Historian's Quest for the Truth* (Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan Inc., 2005), i-ii.

⁴² Higashinakano, *The Nanking Massacre*, 251-286.

⁴³ Theodore H. White, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 76.

December of 2000. He argues that the “Nanking Massacre, which was originally used as a propaganda tool, was resurrected to help justify the Tokyo Trials.”⁴⁴

If his major argument against the “Nanking Massacre” is a lack of evidence to support the claims of organized atrocity, then his protest of the exhibits at the Osaka Peace Center Museum and his dismissal of the eyewitness accounts of survivors at the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal becomes even more questionable. Another statement of his recorded at the Osaka Peace Center protests calls his views into question: “You have to differentiate between the acts of some malicious individuals and the systematic conduct of the Japanese military.”⁴⁵ Based on transcripts of the judges’ statements at the Tribunal, the judges made it quite clear that they intended to render judgment based on what laws existed at the time of the event. Even with that caveat, they still found immense evidence from multiple eyewitness sources from several different countries of the organized rape and enslavement of Chinese women by the Japanese military.⁴⁶ With so much information obtained from diverse first-hand accounts with sufficient consistency about the system of abuse and the various crimes committed, what evidence is Professor Higashinakano looking for to verify the events in Nanking? At what point does questioning the evidence become simply denying the existence of the evidence? Also, choosing to look for the most benign explanation of what is written in the war journals of Japanese soldiers and then referring to Western sources about Nanking from the time as victims of a

⁴⁴ Higashinakano, *The Nanking Massacre*, 299.

⁴⁵ “Osaka: Japan: Nanking Massacre Protests,” <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/9569b9d79bcaa13ab8db6f89ad714eff>.

⁴⁶ “Transcript of Oral Judgment Delivered on 4 December 2001 by the Judges of Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery,” accessed September 10, 2016 <https://www.gwu.edu/~memory/data/international/oraljudgement.pdf>.

Chinese Nationalist public relations conspiracy suggests rationalization instead of explanation. It falls into the trap of what Rolph-Trouillot would refer to as “impossible history,” which he explains as follows: “When reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs.”⁴⁷

Reductive and evasive interpretations of history appear, according to Trouillot, when the facts of the events in question contradict or call into question deeply held beliefs on the part of the authors. Toru Hashimoto, the prefectural governor of Osaka, who largely pushed for the censorship of Peace Osaka, made several comments during his tenure that tend to fit into such a mindset. In 2013, he was quoted by the press as saying, “comfort women (system) was necessary in order to provide relaxation for those brave soldiers who had been in the line of fire.”⁴⁸ In context, Hashimoto stated that he feels that the Japanese government should apologize for the treatment of women as part of the comfort system and compares it to systems of brothels run by Nazi Germany in World War II and in Japan under post-World War II American Occupation. Comparing Japan’s forced enslavement of conquered women to Allied systems of brothels in Germany or comfort women in Japan bare investigation, but this statement still fits into a category that Trouillot calls, “tools of trivialization.”⁴⁹ The term references rhetorical, narrative and interpretative tools used to downplay, ignore or trivialize the nature of historical events because they do not fit into widely held beliefs and narratives.

⁴⁷ Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 72.

⁴⁸ Reiji Yoshida, “Hashimoto Looks to Deflect Sex Slave Blame,” *Japan Times*, May 28, 2013, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/28/national/politics-diplomacy/hashimoto-looks-to-deflect-sex-slave-blame/#.WAKZ4yRyzuw>

⁴⁹ Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 95-97.

Religion vs. History: Hiroshima Peace Museum

Several of the museums that were visited during onsite research in Japan set forth an issue that is an unavoidable question when discussing wartime history museums in Japan: are Japan's war time museums places of religious worship or visual archives of Japanese wartime history? Furthermore, does being a place of worship exempt these museums from criticism for depictions of history that are at best erroneous if not outright revisionist? In the case of the site of the atomic bombings at Hiroshima, a strong case can be made that these sites hold a religious significance that requires a certain level of reverence. For an American comparison, even if Confederate soldiers fought to maintain the right for states to control the legality of slavery, it would be inappropriate to go to a cemetery of Confederate soldiers and set up history exhibits explaining the horrific acts these men may have committed. However, the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Museum has to contend with the fact that it serves the roles of both museum and site for reverent remembrance. As a site for both religious worship and historic memory, can the museum be expected to be both reverent to those who died for their country and accurate to the wider historical context that these men took place in? Should that be the goal?

In an interview with the director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Kawamoto Yoshitaka, Ian Buruma discussed a controversy occurring in Japan in the late 1980's. The controversy in question refers to a petition for the addition of an "Aggressor's Corner" to the Hiroshima Peace Museum as a result of questions posed by middle school students from Osaka visiting the museum in 1987. These questions included asking why the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, what the nature of the war that led to the bomb being dropped was, why the fact that several of the people who died at Hiroshima were Korean slave workers imported by the Imperial Japanese army was downplayed, and other questions related to

Japanese war guilt.⁵⁰ During the discussion, Kawamoto told Buruma that he felt that the younger generation of Japanese students (presumably referencing the ones who brought the criticism) no longer knew what endurance was and did not understand what the people of Japan went through during the war. He then went on to state that the criticisms being brought forth by these students are likely just being fed to them by their (left wing?) teachers and that they are inappropriate for discussion in this museum.⁵¹ He argued that Hiroshima existed as a place of memory and a symbol in the fight for world peace and that it should serve as a means of promoting human solidarity. It should not be used as a point of contention for debates about the historic context that led to the events at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.

Director Kawamoto then discusses appropriate historical comparisons with Hiroshima, and the only appropriate one (according to Kawamoto and several public figures in Hiroshima at the time) was Auschwitz.⁵² Kawamoto argues that both Hiroshima and Auschwitz are memory sites promoting peace and global cooperation. While both locations are sites of memory tied to warfare, the context of these two sites differs greatly. Hiroshima is a memorial to victimization by atomic destruction and the cruelty of war. Auschwitz is a memorial to the human cruelty and abuses that should never be repeated, regardless of war or peacetime. Connecting Hiroshima to Auschwitz while not discussing Japanese aggression feels misguided and manipulative.

Also, when looking through the most recent pamphlet for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the pamphlet does not present a vision of reverent memory for the events on August 6,

⁵⁰ Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 106-108.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 109.

1945.⁵³ The first sections are devoted to showcasing artifacts of the fallout caused by intense heat and radioactivity from the bomb. The next several segments mention the diseases, environmental disasters, and other human tragedies that continued to plague the area for decades after the bomb was dropped. The only mention of the broader history of World War II in the museum's structure is as part of a collage of the context of Hiroshima which covers centuries, making focus impossible. In the brochure, the only addendum to this regarding the history of the dropping of the atomic bomb is a series of statements about the development of the bomb. The brochure's description argues why the United States developed the atomic bomb, chose to use it, and chose Hiroshima as one of the targets. The exhibit eschews any mention of World War II in the museum's pamphlet beyond this reference to American anti-Soviet policies in Japan at the end of the war. Other potential reasons that the pamphlet mentions include ending the war quickly and limiting potential casualties, but the pamphlet openly criticizes this argument.⁵⁴ The museum at Hiroshima focuses its criticism on the country that dropped the bomb while mostly ignoring Japan's role in World War II leading up to the bombing. A vision of these memories that may critique Japanese aggression and war guilt would apparently distort the message of peace and solidarity the museum sought to achieve.

Requiring your exhibit to ignore or downplay history for the sake of its message is somewhat disconcerting since in 1995 Hiroshima's mayor freely admitted that, "We cannot and will not deny Japanese aggression, that Japan did evil."⁵⁵ Granted, this statement was made in the

⁵³ Anonymous Author, "East Building (1F)," Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Pamphlet (Hiroshima, JP: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, 2016).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Roger B. Jeans, "Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Japan," *The Journal of Military History* 69, No. 1 (January 2005): 167-168.

context of sustaining the argument that the use of the atomic bomb was unjustifiably cruel, but an admission is still an admission. Why none of this is integrated into the main museum tour is unclear. The portion of the museum dedicated to discussing the broader war and Japan's role in it is separate from the main tour and this portion of the building was closed for maintenance at the time of research.⁵⁶ Hopefully "maintenance" does not mean a full overhaul of the exhibits similar to what occurred at the Osaka International Peace Center.

The Hiroshima Memorial Museum, more than any of the other museums present in this paper, is not designed to allow questioning of its exhibits or its narrative. The constant crowds and the structure of the Hiroshima museum do not lend themselves to in-depth exploration of the exhibits. Tour groups composed mostly of school children come through constantly and the museum's limited interior is filled with people. Giant crowds in each tour and the pace of the tours makes it difficult to examine most of the exhibits. The exhibits that are given the most room to allow for some lingering inspections are the exhibits likely meant to horrify the audience. The first major room features a diorama of Hiroshima with a red sphere meant to represent the atomic bomb one second after its detonation. Explicit mannequins of people with flesh melting off of their face and limbs, pictures of the immediate aftermath of the bombings (with lots of fire, debris, levelled buildings, etc.), a replica of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and maps giving a sense of how much of the city was destroyed in the bombing overwhelm audiences. The second room features ghastly photos of "black rain," sores and cancers caused by radiation, terrible burns, and scientific explanations of just how much ongoing destruction and

⁵⁶ Anonymous Author, "East Building (2-3F)," Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Pamphlet (Hiroshima, JP: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, 2016). The fact that the WWII section of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is closed for maintenance is printed in the pamphlet. This suggests that the modifications or renovations occurring are far more extensive than just simple maintenance.

devastation the bomb wreaked on the people of Hiroshima. The fact that Japan's history of aggression in the war is only vaguely represented as part of a broader history of the city of Hiroshima is likely an intentional choice by the designers to avoid muddying the narrative of the museum with any discussions of Japan's conduct towards other countries during the war. Former director of the museum Yoshitaka Kawamoto would likely argue that the museum is not about any of that.⁵⁷

The Yushukan Museum: Public Criticism versus Private Reverence

The Yushukan Museum faces a similar issue of presenting wartime memories while also attempting to discuss history. Yushukan is located on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine and because of this, the conflict between reverence for the dead and remembrance of the war is apparent. Yushukan is probably the most well-known museum of World War II history in Japan in the West and likely also the most criticized. The narrative of World War II in Japan presented in the museum has been critiqued as being highly revisionist. Roger B. Jeans points out that the museum's viewpoint of Japan as unwilling aggressors pushed into war by United States political and economic pressure rings false when it refuses to mention Japanese aggression against Korea, China, and other Pacific nations.⁵⁸

Yushukan is also a much more difficult museum to clearly define as a site of memory. The museum resides on the grounds of a shrine, and a central theme of Yushukan's exhibits is Japan's long history of warfare and the traditional nobility of the military spirit in Japan. However, the museum is also clearly a presentation of WWII history for Japan as they would

⁵⁷ Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 106-108.

⁵⁸ Jeans, "Victims or Victimiziers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Japan," 156-157.

like to remember it. The vast majority of the artifacts on display both in the museum and in the museum's English language brochure are from the period of World War II. It also features artifacts and historical discussions of the Tokugawa, Meiji, Taisho, and several other periods of Japanese history.⁵⁹ The tour ends in a room referred to as the "Noble Spirits' Zone," and is a collection of pictures, letters, and other artifacts of soldiers and their families who died fighting in World War II.

All of this returns to the central question: should Yushukan be allowed to reimagine history in order to act as a site of religious memory? The museum's pamphlet states that the museum's mission is, "to inherit sincerity and records of enshrined deities [spirits of dead soldiers] of Yasukuni Jinja."⁶⁰ This combines with the prominence of the "Noble Spirits Zone," which showcases photos and artifacts of those who died in wars. This is designed to promote a sense of reverence exempting the museum from overt focus on historical memory. If the museum were merely a repository of memories and artifacts of those Japanese soldiers who died during World War II, then its status as a site of religious memory would be easier to accept.

Yushukan also claims to be a place of learning. The name 'Yushukan' is derived from Chinese characters roughly translating as, "a building for learning from scholars on their travels."⁶¹ If the Yushukan wishes to claim to be a place of learning, then it should be put to task

⁵⁹ Anonymous Author, Yasukuni Jinja: Yushukan Pamphlet, (Tokyo, JP: Yasukuni Shrine Yushukan, 2016). Some of what this article mentions is taken from memory of the museum itself (unfortunately photography is not allowed inside), there are still enough artifacts mentioned in the brochure to get a sense of the broad swath of history covered in Yushukan.

⁶⁰ Anonymous Author, "Learning the 'Sentiments' and 'Achievements' of the Noble Spirits of Fallen Heroes..." Yasukuni Jinja: Yushukan Pamphlet (Tokyo, JP: Yasukuni Shrine Yushukan, 2016).

⁶¹ Anonymous Author, "The Origin of the Name, 'Yushukan'" Yasukuni Jinja: Yushukan (Tokyo, JP: Yasukuni Shrine Yushukan, 2016). It is difficult to translate literally what is written in the pamphlet even though it is written in English.

on its revisionist take on history. Professor Kazuyo Yamane points out that leaflets distributed after the museum was renovated in 2002 suggest that the Yushukan's exhibits represent, "a new light on modern Japanese history."⁶² He then proceeds to refute this claim by discussing several examples of Japanese World War II atrocities that the Yushukan either fails to address, or frames as noble, necessary actions taken by the Japanese Imperial Army. As of 2016, the exhibits discussing Japan's invasion of mainland China still use the politically controversial term "the China Incident" to refer to Japan's military activities from the "Mukden incident" unleashing the Japanese invasion of Manchuria to the Marco Polo Bridge battle outside Beijing in 1937. The Nanjing Massacre is referred to only as an "operation," not an atrocity and a war crime. Japanese newspaper articles from the period only suggest that the Chinese troops were undisciplined and poorly led. Discussions of Japanese military behavior both during the invasion and after are virtually non-existent.⁶³

Yushukan's narrative is structured so that visitors will only learn what the government sponsors want them to learn. Professor Yamane shows that Japanese individuals who are still alive and old enough to remember the horrors of the war are more critical of the Yushukan museum.⁶⁴ Amongst the younger generations, people are split between those who find a form of nostalgia for the national spirit represented at the museum and those who feel Japan either needs to openly apologize for its atrocities or at least reflect on its wartime aggression. Also, Johan Galtung would say that this representation of history is self-serving and does not promote equal

⁶² Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," 77.

⁶³ This is still true as of my visit to the museum in 2016. I was not allowed to take notes or photographs within the museum according to their policy, but the articles Yamane describes are still there.

⁶⁴ Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," 78-9.

cooperation or equal mutual benefit. It only aids those who wish to glorify their past. In this museum, Japan ignores what Galtung refers to as the two key blockages to true, positive peace: “trauma [violence from the past] and unresolved conflict [in this case with China and itself].”⁶⁵

Mild Criticism? Ritsumeikan University Kyoto Museum for World Peace

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace is a rarity amongst current peace museums in Japan. Residing on Ritsumeikan University’s campus in Kyoto and serving as a peace museum in a major Japanese city that openly states that the Japanese Imperial Army committed atrocities against different Asian and Pacific nations during World War II. A large portion of its main, permanent exhibit is devoted to the “Fifteen Year War” (one of the other names Japan uses for WWII, 1931-1945). In these exhibits, there are pictures of comfort women, piles of bodies from air raids, and stories referencing deliberate mistreatment of POW’s by the Japanese army. In one panel, the exhibit explicitly states, “By the beginning of the 15-Year War, Japan had already colonized Korea, Taiwan...people in the colonies were forced to work.”⁶⁶ According to Professor Yamane, the museum also at some point showed photos of Chinese civilians being buried alive in Nanjing.⁶⁷

The Kyoto museum also promotes the type of dialogue that Galtung would argue is essential for positive peace. In 2002, a Dutchman visited Ritsumeikan University and spoke of

⁶⁵ Johan Galtung. “How do you define ‘positive peace’?” *Envision Peace Museum*, July 9, 2012, accessed November 14, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyFn_hSF3wQ.

⁶⁶ Photos taken by Ben Birdwhistell, “Colonies and Occupied Areas,” Kyoto Museum for World Peace (Kyoto, JP: Ritsumeikan University).

⁶⁷ Yamane, “Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum,” 79.

the poor treatment of Dutch POW's by the Japanese.⁶⁸ He went on to state that dropping the atomic bomb saved many POW's lives by ending the war quickly. A Japanese student questioned him about the necessity of the atomic bombs and what Dutch colonial policies were like and how that history is taught in the Netherlands. The argument ended there because the Dutchman refused to discuss it further, but this open dialogue about Japanese aggression and the complicated historical context of the time shows the effect of honest portrayals of history in museums. People need to be able to discuss their memories and feelings about war honestly and confront each other with differing opinions. Silencing the past to avoid an argument only results in the argument never being resolved.

Why is the Kyoto Museum for World Peace allowed to discuss issues that have caused the censorship of museums like the Osaka International Peace Center? Part of the reason is likely that Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto is a private institution. According to Professor Kazuyo Yamane, The Kyoto Museum for World Peace is the only peace memorial museum that exists on a university campus.⁶⁹ He argues that, "Public peace museums in Japan tend to exhibit only about Japan's victim side of the war while private peace museums exhibit Japan's aggression honestly."⁷⁰ Public museums have the disadvantage of being subject to a changing national politics of history. In the late 1990s, the support for more honest depictions of Japanese aggression waned and museums that were not privately controlled faced scrutiny, criticism, and loss of funding. The Kyoto Museum for World Peace was opened in 1992, at the height of the

⁶⁸ Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," 80.

⁶⁹ Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," 79.

⁷⁰ Yamane, "Moving Beyond the War Memorial Museum," 75.

peace museum boom in Japan. Its private status allowed it to survive the political purge of these museums that occurred later.

However, another idea to consider is that the Kyoto Museum for World Peace criticized Japanese wartime aggression in the broader context of warfare in the 20th century. While a majority of the exhibits in the permanent museum focus on Japan and World War II, several of them discuss other aspects of conflict in the 20th century. Beyond Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Kyoto Museum for World Peace discusses the potentially dire implications of nuclear destruction and the Cold War tensions that could ignite conflicts worldwide.⁷¹ There is even a small Godzilla toy used to reference *Gojira* (1954), a Japanese monster film serving as a dark, horrifying allegory for nuclear war. The combination of the museum's private ownership and its attempts to discuss Japanese aggression in the broader context of 20th century conflicts and atrocities are the likely reasons this museum's critical narrative has survived unscathed.

Potential Political Issues Resulting from the Mindset of Censorship

The proof that issues of the past effect the present rest in the public portrayal of Japan's wartime aggression as being largely minimized in favor of the victimization narrative is a part of the political plans of the current leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party. The viewpoint of Prime Minister Abe and the LDP regarding negative portrayals of Japan's military past is partially due to the political decisions currently being pursued in the National Diet. Specifically, Prime Minister Abe is hoping to push through a referendum to remove, or at least alter, Article 9

⁷¹ Ben Birdwhistell, Photos of "Colonial Independence and the Cold War," Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Kyoto, JP: Ritsumeikan University, 2016.

of the Japanese Constitution.⁷² Article 9 refers to the promise Japan's reformed government made to renounce its right as a government to declare and wage war. This is still true even though the Japanese Self Defense Forces are a very well-trained, highly technologically advanced military force, and Abe wants to use these forces abroad in what he refers to as "pro-active pacifism."⁷³ In an interview with Jonathan Tepperman, Tepperman asked Abe if this desire for freedom to use Japan's military offensively was in any way a form of preparation for war with China. Abe did not indicate any desire for war, but he stated that Japan would not simply demur before aggressive Chinese politics and that Japan simply wanted the freedom to assist its treaty and security allies without prior approval.⁷⁴

Disassociating from controversial or politically damaging aspects of a nation's history is not a problem unique to Japan. Post-World War II Germany also provides many appropriate parallels when viewing the evolution of discussions of the Holocaust in German history. Throughout the 1950's, most discourse in Germany about World War II focused on victimization of the German people by the Allies during their invasion of Europe. According to Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, the public trials of those who worked at Auschwitz in Frankfurt brought the worst abuses of the Nazi regime before the eyes of the public. However, these criticisms were not meant to instill a sense of grief or remorse for the Jewish victims. Instead, it brought forth a series of arguments criticizing either the current West German politics of history or how the Imperial German regime and how its capitalist construction led to Nazi fascism.⁷⁵

⁷² Parry, "Abe pushes Japan to give up 'peace clause'."

⁷³ Parry, "Abe pushes Japan to give up 'peace clause'."

⁷⁴ Abe and Tepperman, "Japan is Back," 7-8.

⁷⁵ Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, 97-100.

Acknowledgment of the crimes of the Nazi state became the political agenda of the New Left in West Germany while simultaneously disassociating the current German people from the abuses and atrocities of the Nazi regime.⁷⁶

Something similar has been occurring in Japan in the past few years. The widespread praise and support for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Japan, in contrast to the governor of Osaka referring to the exhibits in Osaka Peace Center as “inappropriate,” suggests an attempt to criticize the violent and bloody wars in the history of Japan without specific criticism of the Japanese Imperial Army’s atrocities. The victimization narrative requires distancing Japan from its war crimes and any valid complaints from the surviving victims. Even their museums that are more open about the Japanese committing war crimes in WWII still have a tendency to obfuscate Japanese war guilt. In a discussion of war crimes from the website of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, the following text sums up the approach of these museums that are more open to criticizing Japan: “the use of toxic gases during the war with China and the experimentation on live subjects by Unit 731 are certainly war crimes, yet those responsible were never brought to justice because the American authorities decided it was not in their best interests to prosecute them.”⁷⁷

American complicity in the desire to deny and remove Japan’s wartime atrocities from history should not be ignored. In concrete terms, one of the arguments made by the defense attorneys for the prosecuted Japanese war criminals is that the actions taken by the Japanese

⁷⁶ Levy and Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, 99.

⁷⁷ Anonymous Author, “The Fifteen Year War: Determining Responsibility for War Crimes,” Kyoto Museum for World Peace (Kyoto, JP: Ritsumeikan University). http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/mng/er/wp-museum/english/fifteen_war_determining.html.

soldiers in China cannot be considered illegal because there was no law at the time to judge them for the acts they committed.⁷⁸ Although, the Emperor of Japan was the leader of the Japanese government during World War II, at least on paper, assessing Hirohito's personal guilt in the Japanese war effort is difficult. The United States needed a functional Japanese government to repel communism in the early years of the Cold War. MacArthur and the Military Tribunal largely exempted high level government and military officials such as the Emperor to allow for smoother transition into the Cold War.

Given the United States's decision to exonerate many of Japan's war criminals, do the Japanese feel that many war criminals amongst the Japanese people are left that need to be convicted of war crimes? Why would they not hold themselves accountable? Discussing blame while denying guilt runs into the same issue that was discussed with the West German New Left criticizing the Nazi regime in the 1960's. Subsequent generations after WWII are willing to admit that war crimes were committed but they do not want to see war criminals prosecuted and convicted. The Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University does admit that individuals have filed lawsuits against the Japanese government for war crimes. There are even photos in the museum of a case where Chinese citizens initiated lawsuits against Japanese individuals and won.⁷⁹ However, individual cases do not solve the core problem. Just as Professor Higashinakano argued that you have to distinguish between a few bad soldiers and the systematic behavior of the Japanese army. The prosecution of individual cases only does so

⁷⁸ Chapter II: The Law. Transcript of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East. <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/IMTFE-2.html>. This version is a translation of the original text.

⁷⁹ Photo of "Ruling in favor of Wang Cheng Wei and Zhang Wen Bin in lawsuit." Photo of image taken by Ben Birdwhistell. Original property of Kyoto Museum for World Peace. Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan.

much to help alleviate the tension caused by Japan's rather inconsistent handling of presentations of its war time atrocities.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The censorship of the Osaka International Peace Center makes it clear that these Japanese museums controlled by the government are not allowed to discuss World War II. The censored Osaka museum only mentions atrocities committed against Japan and not anything that occurred in the previous fifteen years during the Japanese war of oppression. Any criticisms of the new museum's gutted narrative are buried under the excuse that this museum's new narrative is more even-handed to people with differing opinions on the factualness of history. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party decided what people deserve to know and removed everything else.

The story of the Osaka Peace museum's treatment fits into broader trends of the dilemmas facing all Japanese peace museums. Japan is still committed to peace, but it refuses to accept its wartime past honestly and prefers to bury its uncomfortable history. This results in museums with widely divergent histories. Yushukan paints the Fifteen Year War as a noble cause that the Imperial Army was forced into by foreign aggressors. The Kyoto Museum for World Peace admits that Japan committed atrocities and attempts to discuss them in the context of all of the violence in the 20th century. Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum acts as though World War II was nothing but the dropping of the atomic bomb without any further context.

While the Japanese government cannot control private museums, it can force public museums like Peace Osaka to silence the history of Japanese war crimes on display and how the

⁸⁰ Anonymous, "Osaka: Japan: Nanking Massacre Protests,"
<http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/9569b9d79bcaa13ab8db6f89ad714eff>

government wants its World War II past discussed. Government pressure will bury this history where it can so Japan can avoid critical links between Japan's wartime atrocities and the current Prime Minister's efforts to restore Japan's ability to deploy its military overseas. Despite past attempts to link the horrors of Auschwitz to the horrors of Hiroshima, Japan's government does not want people comparing them to the Nazis. At home, they are trapped in the position of promoting unity at home by burying the issue of Japanese war crimes committed during World War II. However they also must discuss the issue for the sake of diplomatic relations with Asian neighbors. Japan's sponsored Peace Museums are victims of this uneven, dishonest, and vacillating policy.

The curator of the new Osaka International Peace Center exhibit said that it is necessary for museums to make history easy to understand for the public. That is a worthy goal, but it does not mean that museums should simply remove the dark chapters of their nation's history because the government wants it forgotten. Japan needs to honestly admit to its World War II atrocities and discuss them openly. The peace museums discussed here were, until recently, an effective way to do that. The museums cannot simply change their exhibits due to the whims of the current government. Ideological consistency requires commitment. Japan has to either retreat from the outside world if it does not want to discuss its history honestly or simply come clean about its history. If Japan wants to retain good relations with its neighbors, particularly with China and Korea, a fair account of the past is essential. If Japan does choose to come clean, it must be made clear. Government policies cannot be allowed to placate those who are still embarrassed by atrocious history. A candid politics of history is painful, and the censorship of these museums has simply buried that pain temporarily. It is not a long term solution because Japan's difficult World War II chapters of history are not going away in the eyes of the world.

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