

Newspaper Reports of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima in the Early Postwar Years: Local, National, and Transnational

Yuko Kawaguchi

Introduction

The year 2005 marked the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These two events have been remembered by diverse groups and individuals in different ways. Among them, Lisa Yoneyama points out that a particular discourse has frequently been seen in Japan. She reveals that “within mainstream national historiography” Hiroshima’s atomic bombing has been remembered as a “victimization experienced by the Japanese collectivity,” and, within a “more universalistic narrative,” as “an unprecedented event in the history of humanity.” When, how, and why has such a national memorization of the atomic bombing taken place? Among scholars studying peace movements in Japan, it is commonly understood that the nationwide Anti A- and H-Bomb Movement, which followed the Bikini Incident in 1954, brought the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki into national focus. Yet people in Japan certainly had some knowledge about the results of the bombing before 1954. Otherwise it is difficult to assume such nationalization of memory took place all of a sudden.¹⁾

However, only a limited number of studies focus on the extent to which the results of atomic bombings were known in Japan in the years before 1954. Among those studies, Ubuki Satoru and Ishimaru Norioki, in particular, point out that there was a distinct narrative seen in Hiroshima that related Hiroshima to the idea of peace as early as the late 1940s. Ubuki states that this narrative called Hiroshima the “mecca of peace,” and was most vividly shown in the Peace Restoration Festival held in 1946 and in the Peace Festivals that began to be held annually starting from 1947 (hereafter, I will refer to these as “peace ceremonies”). Ishimaru points out that the “ideology of a peace city” existed behind the postwar reconstruction plan of Hiroshima city. Their works are significant because the narratives they point out are some of the earliest ones about the atomic bombings. In the meantime, in thinking of journalism and publication in Japan under the U.S. Occupation, it should be kept in mind that the General

In this paper, the titles of the newspaper articles are omitted, and English translation are added to the titles of the articles in journals and of the books written in Japanese. Unless otherwise noted, the translation from Japanese to English is by the author.

¹⁾ Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3; Fujiwara Osamu, *Gensuibaku Kinshi Undō no Seiritsu: Sengo Nihon Heiwa Undō no Genzō 1954–1955* [The Establishment of Anti A- and H-Bomb Movement: The Origin of the Peace Movement in Postwar Japan 1954–1955] (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin Kokusai Heiwa Kenkyūjo, 1991), 1–2.

Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter GHQ/SCAP) enforced censorship from September 19, 1945 until October 1949. Monica Braw and Horiba Kiyoko, who have researched this system of censorship, analyze how and why the reports about the atomic bombings were suppressed. Some other scholars have investigated both the Japanese and U.S. censorship on reports about the atomic bombings.²⁾

Although such research is important, it has some limitations. One is the issue of localness versus nationalness. I have not found any research that focuses on the possible differences between the narratives about the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the bombed cities, and in Japan as a whole, since the preceding research focuses only on either local issues or national ones. For example, Ubuki and Ishimaru pay little attention to the awareness in the Japanese society as a whole. Yet the comparisons between the local and the national are significant in order to understand the process of formation of the discourse about the atomic bombings in Japan.

This paper focuses on this difference between the local and the national. It investigates the characteristics and the social background of distinctive descriptions that appeared in newspaper articles in Hiroshima in the early postwar years until 1947, and clarifies that such narratives were not shared in the nation as a whole at that time. I analyze and compare major national newspapers and *Chūgoku Shimbun* (hereafter *Chūgoku*), a local newspaper based in Hiroshima. By scrutinizing the characteristic descriptions in those newspapers and questioning their applicability within the national framework, we may gain clues to the character of the national discourse about the atomic bombings and understand better when and how the proprietary nationalization took place.³⁾

The first section follows the coverage about the atomic bombing at the nationwide level

²⁾ Ubuki Satoru has written many articles on this topic. Among them, one that relates to the argument in this paper most closely is “Nihon ni okeru Gensuibaku Kinshi Undō no Zentei: ‘Hibaku Taiken’ no Kentō” [The Background of the Anti A- and H-Bomb Movement in Japan: An Investigation on the “Experience of Atomic Bombing”], *Nihonshi Kenkyū* 236 (1982): 88–91. Ishimaru Norioki, “‘Hiroshima Heiwa Kinen Toshi Kensetsuhō’ no Seitei Katei to sono Tokushitsu” [The Procedure and the Characteristics of the Enactment of Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Law], *Hiroshimashi Kōbunshokan Kiyō* 11 (1988): 1–56; Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Japan 1945–1949* (Malmo, Sweden: Liber International, 1986; New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1991); Horiba Kiyoko, *Kinjiarata Genbaku Taiken* [The Suppression of the Experience of the Atomic Bombing] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995); Horiba Kiyoko, *Genbaku: Hyōgen to Ken’etsu Nihonjin wa dō Taiō shitaka* [The Atomic Bomb: Its Representation and Censorship, How the Japanese People Responded] (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1995); Glenn D. Hook, “Censorship and Reportage of Atomic Damage and Casualties in Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 23, no. 1 (1991): 13–25; Honda Ichiji, “Genbaku Tōka! ‘Daiippō’ Nichibei Hōdō Hikaku” [Dropping the Atomic Bomb! The Comparison of the First Reports in the U.S. and Japan], *Sōgō Jānarizumu Kenkyū* 31, no. 4 – 32, no. 2 (1994–95): 104–07, 39–47, 86–95; Sodei Rinjirō, “Genbaku Hōdō” [The Reports about the Atomic Bomb], in *Jiken to Hōdō* [Accidents and Reports], ed. Etō Fumio, et al. (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1972), 201–25.

³⁾ I focus on Hiroshima and put Nagasaki aside because the two cities had different histories, and because for me the documents about Hiroshima are more accessible.

from the day after the Hiroshima bombing until the early stage of U.S. censorship, in order to see how much and what kind of reportage about the atomic bombing was seen throughout Japan in that period. Here, particular attention is paid to the state of the press under the Japanese and U.S. censorship. This section is necessary for the arguments that follow because the coverage within Hiroshima was greatly different from that in the national newspapers. The second section of this paper focuses on the articles of *Chūgoku* between 1945 and 1947 in order to analyze the characteristics assigned to the atomic bombing in Hiroshima more closely than has been done in the previous research. Finally, the third section examines whether the local narrative seen in Hiroshima became a national one or not by examining the articles in *Chūgoku* and in national newspapers; that is, I question whether the atomic bombing was reported in Hiroshima as a national event, and whether it was reported in the national newspapers as a local or national event. Throughout, the analysis is limited to the contents of the articles and does not examine why the editors chose certain articles to print while rejecting others; neither is the question of whether readers accepted or disapproved of the articles considered. While such questions are worthwhile, it is difficult to speculate on the intentions of the editors or the reception from the published newspapers and other materials available. Further research that makes good use of different types of sources such as interviews of survivors and investigation of the internal documents of the newspaper companies would be necessary to understand these points.

Regarding the source of the research, I mainly relied on *Chūgoku* and *Asahi Shimbun* (hereinafter *Asahi*), because *Asahi* had the largest circulation in the late 1940s. I also complement the information from *Asahi* with other national newspapers, *Yomiuri Hōchi* (hereafter *Yomiuri*) and *Mainichi Shimbun* (hereafter *Mainichi*).⁴⁾

1. The Transformation of the Newspaper Coverage in the Early Days: Restraint, Outpourings, and Restraint Again

This section reviews approximately one and a half months of newspaper coverage immediately after the dropping of the atomic bombs and investigates how the descriptions of the bombing changed as time passed. Researches by Honda, Hook, and Sodei all divide the months during and immediately after the war in the following way: wartime, from the end of the war to the beginning of U.S. censorship, and the period under U.S. censorship. They all put particular emphasis on the second period, maintaining that newspaper coverage spread information about the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the nation as a whole in this period. Although I follow these scholars in stressing that there was a certain period when the atomic devastation was widely reported, I argue that these months should be divided into four

⁴⁾ *Asahi* issued 3.24 million issues in 1945, whereas the second largest newspaper, *Yomiuri* issued 1.63 issues in the same year. Asahi Shimbun Hyakunenshi Henshū Inkai ed., *Asahi Shimbun Shashi Shiryōhen* [The History of Asahi Newspaper Company: Data Section] (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1995), 320–22; Yomiuri Shimbunsha ed., *Yomiuri Shimbun Hyakunijūnenishi* [120 Years of History of Yomiuri] (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1994), 666.

periods, because there are significant differences in the tone of the reports before and after the arrival of the Occupation forces at the end of August.

The first period is during the war, from the dropping of the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945, to the end of the war on August 15, 1945. I concur with previous studies about the characteristics of the reports during this period; that is, that the Japanese Intelligence Bureau censored the newspapers and only official announcements could be printed. Consequently, there was no significant difference between *Chūgoku* and national newspapers.⁵⁾

There are three main characteristics in this period. First, reports minimized the damage and power of the bomb. It was reported that the heat and the blast of the bomb only caused slight burns and injuries. There were very limited comments on the effects of radiation. Second, the coverage claimed that, with proper countermeasures, the Japanese could definitely withstand the bomb if it were used again. It argued that Hiroshima suffered huge damage merely because people there had not taken countermeasures since it was a new kind of bomb. For instance, one article explained that, if they saw a flash, people should lie down or head to the air-raid shelters, and that they should wear something white, thick, and long-sleeved. Third, the articles highlighted the injustice and inhumanity of using such a bomb. In one of the first reports about the atomic bombing on Hiroshima, *Yomiuri* claimed that “the enemies . . . are forever branded as the ‘foe of humanity.’ . . . it may well be said that Japan has already won in terms of justice.” The newspapers also quoted the official protest that the Japanese government delivered to the U.S. government as well as various statements from foreign countries that criticized the use of the bomb. Thus the government minimized and hid the actual damage by the atomic bombs while strongly condemning the cruelty and inhumanity of its use.⁶⁾

The second period was from the end of the war on August 15, 1945, to the end of August. Although Japanese censorship was still active, there was a kind of political vacuum in this period, during which the Japanese media could enjoy relative freedom of the press without government interference. As the war ended, newspapers began to save considerable space for articles about the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They reported extensively about the real conditions of the destruction in a concrete and vivid manner and criticized the use of the bomb. One newspaper article described that “because of the unbelievable heat caused by the atomic bomb, suddenly huge fires occurred. . . only ferroconcrete buildings withstood the blast

⁵⁾ Hook, “Censorship and Reportage,” 14–17; NHK Shuppan ed., *Hiroshima wa dō Kiroku saretaka: NHK to Chūgoku Shimbun no Genbaku Hōdō* [How Hiroshima was Recorded: The Reports about the Atomic Bomb by NHK and *Chūgoku*] (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan), 284–85; *Asahi*, August 10, 1945; *Asahi*, August 12, 1945; *Yomiuri*, August 8, 1945; *Asahi*, August 11, 1945; *Asahi*, August 13, 1945; *Yomiuri*, August 10, 1945.

⁶⁾ I have chosen only the most representative articles for each note because there are many articles that have similar contents.

⁷⁾ Hook, “Censorship and Reportage,” 17–21; Sodei, “Genbaku Hōdō,” 213. Still, the Japanese government sometimes interfered in the media reports. For example, see Braw, *Suppressed*, 28–29. *Asahi*, August 17, 1945; *Asahi*, August 19, 1945; *Mainichi*, August 19, 1945.

and heat of the bomb. Even then, it was merely their exterior structures that were left barely standing. The inside was empty.” Some reports printed photographs of the destroyed cities.⁷⁾

Although there were no photographs of the wounded, the newspapers gave detailed descriptions of the damage to human bodies, both dead and alive. For instance, one article described that “the faces and the bodies of the injured people were bloody with fragments of glass sticking out of them. They groaned with contorted faces, which were squashy because of burns. There were bodies half of which had perished, with only white bones left, so that the bodies could not be identified. What could be said for sure was only whether it was male or female.” Another article reported that the reporter saw a burnt out streetcar as he walked around the city and felt curious because there were people standing and sitting in it. As he approached the streetcar, however, he noticed they were all dead. The article explained that because the heat of the bomb irradiated the passengers instantly, they had been killed in the posture they were in at the moment of the bombing.⁸⁾

The coverage also included the ominous effects of radiation. For instance, one article cited a statement by an American scientist that Hiroshima could not be populated for seventy-five years to come. Another article reported that the medical condition of an actress who had only suffered scratches at the time of the bombing became worse as the days passed. She lost her hair, her white and red blood cells decreased rapidly, and she passed away about twenty days after the day of the bombing. The descriptions of the material and human damage caused by the atomic bombs were extensively reported during this period.⁹⁾

The third period starts when the Occupation forces entered Japan at the end of August and ends when U.S. censorship started on September 18, 1945. The preceding studies do not distinguish between the previous period and this one. However, it should be pointed out that the reports of atomic devastation somewhat toned down, most likely because of the arrival of the Allied forces. On August 28, the first troops of GHQ/SCAP arrived in Japan. Two days later, the Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur arrived at Atsugi Airport. On September 2, the Instrument of Surrender was signed on the deck of the USS Missouri.

It is true that there remained some criticism of the use of the atomic bombs. According to one report, a Japanese soldier in Hiroshima clearly responded, when an American reporter asked him how the survivors felt about the U.S., that he and other residents abhorred the country. Another article reported views of the devastated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and explained that people were still dying there.¹⁰⁾

However, the effects of radiation, which had been widely reported before, were no longer emphasized. The rumor that it would be impossible to live in Hiroshima or cultivate the land there for decades was refuted. Instead, it was reported that the radiation was already

⁸⁾ *Asahi*, August 23, 1945; *Mainichi*, August 15, 1945.

⁹⁾ *Asahi*, August 25, 1945; *Asahi*, August 29, 1945.

¹⁰⁾ *Yomiuri*, September 17, 1945; *Asahi*, September 7, 1945; *Yomiuri*, September 10, 1945.

weakening and that the vegetation had begun to grow back in the bombed area. This is partly because the effects of the radiation indeed decreased as time passed, but it was also likely influenced by the statement by Brigadier General Thomas F. Farrell at a press conference on September 12, 1945, in which he denied the aftereffects of the atomic bomb. This shift of news coverage at this period suggests that although the media was aware of radiation effects, the presence of the Occupation army made journalists careful.¹¹⁾

The fourth period is the time under the censorship by the U.S. On September 19, 1945, the Press Code was issued and numerous topics, including the atomic destruction, began to be censored by GHQ/SCAP. Although there is a controversy over whether the censorship on the atomic bombing was stricter than on other issues, it cannot be denied that the coverage of the atomic destruction was effectively reduced after the Press Code. As a detailed survey by Ubuki reveals, there were 8 editorials, 30 foreign dispatches, and 77 domestic news reports concerning the atomic damage in *Asahi* from August 7, 1945 to September 18. However, the entries decrease to only 3, 66, and 30 respectively from September 21, 1945 to August 6, 1946, even though this period is much longer than the first one. Moreover, according to the headline database of *Asahi*, most of the limited number of articles concerning the atomic bombing published in this period were statistical data like the casualty toll and the result of the investigation teams, and little was reported about the suffering of the survivors. In addition, many other articles included the denial of the effects of radiation.¹²⁾

According to the studies done so far, U.S. censorship reflected the official U.S. attitude about the various aspects concerning the atomic bombing, such as the medical, militaristic, and political, yet the moralistic aspect has been regarded as the most important one. Both Braw and Horiba suggest that the U.S. was extremely sensitive about the moralistic criticism of using the atomic bombs, and therefore carried out certain propaganda. They reveal that the criticism of the bomb and of the U.S., including descriptions of cruelty, the effects of radiation, and showing emotions like anger and mourning, was suppressed, while the moralistic justification of the use of the bombs, like the opinions that it had shortened the war and saved the lives of American soldiers (and even of the Japanese people) and that denied the effects of radiation, was permitted.¹³⁾

For example, in 1947, *The Bells of Nagasaki* by Nagai Takashi was submitted to the censors. At first, the censors suggested that the book be suppressed because it might invite resentment against the U.S., particularly because it describes at length scenes of horror, the

¹¹⁾ Hiroshimaken, ed., *Hiroshima Kenshi* 6 [The History of Hiroshima Prefecture, vol. 6] (Hiroshima: Hiroshimashi, 1981), 1066; *Asahi*, September 16, 1945; *Yomiuri*, September 16, 1945; *Mainichi*, September 4, 1945; *Yomiuri*, September 17, 1945.

¹²⁾ Cited in Hook, "Censorship and Reportage," 21; *Asahi*, October 25, 1945; *Asahi*, February 4, 1946; *Asahi*, July 6, 1946; *Asahi*, September 17, 1945; *Asahi*, November 25, 1945; *Asahi*, January 18, 1947. The last one is exceptional in that, although it mostly denied the aftereffects of radiation, it reported that the hair that fell out due to the atomic bomb would never grow back.

¹³⁾ Braw, *Suppressed*, 133–34, 142, 152–153; Horiba, *Genbaku*, 172–73.

great death toll, painful injuries, the death of medical personnel, and the destruction of medical equipment. Charles A. Willoughby, the head of G-2, which was in charge of intelligence, ordered the book be held for six months. Once the suspension period was over, however, whether it should be suppressed or not aroused a heated debate within G-2. Finally, Willoughby argued that “we used the bomb to terminate a war *which we did not start*” (emphasis in original). He also stated that the bomb was used to retaliate against the barbarism of Japan. “If and when American military acts were described (as the bombing), then Japanese military acts *that were provocation or motive will have to be shown.*” When *The Bells of Nagasaki* was finally published in 1949, it was coupled with a story about the brutal acts by the Japanese army in Manila. Willoughby’s statement implies how sensitive the U.S. was about the criticism of the use of the atomic bomb.¹⁴⁾

As shown above, the reports of the atomic destruction can be divided into four stages. During the first stage before the end of the war, the cruelty of the U.S. was emphasized while accurate facts about the damage were withheld. However, during the political vacuum that appeared after the decline of the Japanese censorship but before the GHQ/SCAP took over, quite a lot of Japanese people must have had a chance to learn what really happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At this time, there were numerous vivid descriptions of the atomic annihilation of the two cities and the effects on people there as well as the effects of radiation. The arrival of U.S. troops at the end of August dammed up this flood of information even before the official U.S. censorship started. Finally, once the Press Code was issued, newspaper articles on the atomic devastation, especially critical and lurid ones, were suppressed. In short, the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki commanded tremendous attention at the nationwide level in the days immediately following the end of the war until the media held back their reports as a result of the presence of and the censorship by the Occupation forces.

2. The “Symbol of Peace” Narrative in Hiroshima

This section focuses on how the local newspaper in Hiroshima reported the atomic annihilation right after the war until the summer of 1947, while paying attention to the social environment that led to such interpretations of the experiences and the facts about the bombing.

During this period, a kind of interpretation that may be characterized as the “symbol of peace” narrative appeared. It was seen as early as November 1945, and was repeated many times in the articles of *Chūgoku* and in the official addresses given by local politicians. The overall characteristic of this narrative was based on the logic that the suffering of Hiroshima was not only a local incident but also an event that bore transnational meaning. I employ the

¹⁴⁾ Braw, *Suppressed*, 94–99; Gen Willoughby to Col Bratton, Maj Norberg, Col Duff, Lt Cols Bethune, Koster, “Censorship of Book on Bombing of Nagasaki,” March 31, 1948, Civil Intelligence Section, GHQ/SCAP Records, Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room, The National Diet Library, Tokyo, microfiche, CIS-03666; original in the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland.

term “transnational” here because this narrative located the bombing of Hiroshima in the context of world history, which transcended national boundaries, and emphasized that the bombing of Hiroshima put an end to the world war. In addition, it claimed that Hiroshima attracted the attention of people all over the world. In this way, the articles of *Chūgoku* and the addresses by local politicians evaluated the results of the bombing rather favorably, while erasing the painful experiences and emotions such as agony, loss, and mourning, much less opinions against the war and nuclear weapons, although such emotions and opinions existed among Hiroshima citizens.

This narrative first appeared in an editorial of *Chūgoku* on November 11, 1945, in which the city was connected to an image of peaceful reconstruction: “Hiroshima city, which expanded as a result of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, had been proud of its existence as a militaristic city until the end of the war.” However, “the attack by the atomic bomb . . . obliterated the militaristic city. It also eradicated the militarism among the citizens . . . and at the same time, it gave a golden opportunity to Hiroshima to . . . revive itself as a peaceful . . . city which is in direct opposition to the militaristic city.” Thus, this editorial stressed that the atomic bombing made Hiroshima city into a “peace city.”¹⁵⁾

From that point on, *Chūgoku* and officials of Hiroshima city kept up a close relationship with each other and eagerly enunciated connections between Hiroshima and the image of peace. They also employed the logic that the suffering Hiroshima experienced was meaningful even beyond Japan’s national boundaries because it contributed to world peace. Almost the entire passage of the editorial cited above was later mentioned in a message by Kusunose Tsunei, the Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture, printed in *Chūgoku* in December of that year. Moreover, a front-page article on the atomic bomb in August 1946 was entitled “a prelude to peace.” In another front-page article in the same month, the writer argued that “Hiroshima, which used to be a base of militarism,” “totally cleansed its past in terms both materially and spiritually” by “the flash of peace,” the atomic bomb, and now was “moving toward Hiroshima the peace city, an entirely new concept.” Another article claimed that “it goes without saying that it [the atomic bombing] was an opportunity to end the war and to restore a peaceful country.” In addition, *Chūgoku* Newspaper Company held a music contest on the first anniversary of the atomic bombing. The lyrics which received the first prize went as follows:

Since that day, who said “the atomic desert”?
Such a name for the city
Is now a tearful story of the past
.....
The trees along the streets grow together with the singing voice
That encourages the restoration of the city
Under the eaves of the increasing number of houses

¹⁵⁾ *Chūgoku*, November 11, 1945.

Is the clear water of the seven rivers
So clearly reflecting peace

.....

The following year, an article recalled that “the sorrow of that day [of bombing] was a significant sacrifice for world peace, and Hiroshima became the birthplace of world peace.”¹⁶⁾

Chūgoku repeatedly reported that the whole world kept its eyes on Hiroshima: in 1946, as the first anniversary of the bombing approached, it described that “now the eyes of the whole world focus on Hiroshima.” The next year, an article about the reconstruction of the city said, “Since August 6 [of 1945], Hiroshima has become world-famous as the atomic city, and the eyes of the world focus on how this ‘city of corpses’ will come back to life.”¹⁷⁾

Aside from newspaper articles, we can also find expressions of the “symbol of peace” narrative in the messages and speeches by public figures when peace ceremonies were held under the joint sponsorship of the city. On August 6, 1946, Kihara Shichirō, the first mayor of Hiroshima city after the war, sent a message to *Chūgoku*. Although Kihara recalled that “the cruel damage we suffered pains my heart,” he declared that “it was the devastation we suffered that created a significant trend for peace in the whole world.” He continued, saying that “we should transcend all the sorrows of the past and construct an international peace city.” The next year, Hamai Shinzō, who had replaced Kihara, maintained in the Peace Declaration that “all human beings must remember August 6 as the day that brought about world peace.”¹⁸⁾

However, the coverage of the atomic bombing in *Chūgoku* and the remarks by public figures also had features substantially different from these kinds of positive and even grandiose views about the significance of the bombing. These features provide a clue as to how and why such positive views came into being in the first place and how the citizens received it. One point is that sometimes they did speak out about the painful experiences and misery of the survivors, thereby offering critical opinions of the war and nuclear weapons. Kihara’s message in 1946 referred to “the cruel damage” caused by the bomb. The front-page article which called the bomb “a prelude to peace” also strongly stated that “we should absolutely not have such a terrifying weapon in wars, which kills hundreds of thousands of people by only one bomb. Moreover, we would like . . . war itself to never happen again.” Another article that described a memorial service held as a part of the peace ceremony in 1946 wrote, “citizens’ fresh memories of their lost fathers or children on that day rise to mind as the smoke of incense that reminds people of the incident.” These kinds of direct expressions were not frequently seen because simply writing them would have violated U.S. censorship regulations, even though

¹⁶⁾ *Chūgoku*, December 19, 1945; *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 2, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1947.

¹⁷⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 2, 1947.

¹⁸⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1946; Saeki Takenori, “Hibaku Yokunen no Heiwa Fukkōsai no Ikisatsu” [The Circumstances of the Peace Restoration Festival One Year after the Atomic Bombing], *Hiroshima Shinshi Henshū Techō* 4 [The Editorial Notes on Compiling *New History of Hiroshima*] (n.p., 1979): 24; *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1947; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1947.

documents that directly outline the regulations of U.S. censorship about such expressions have yet to be found. Yet such expressions are particularly important as they distinguished the positions of *Chūgoku* and the city officials from the U.S. official one.¹⁹⁾

There was much criticism of the peace ceremonies that employed the “symbol of peace” narrative, particularly the Peace Festival in 1947. Although *Chūgoku* reported that many people joined the Festival, it also reported that critical letters from the citizens “were rushed in” “everyday.” These letters complained that “such boisterousness is out of the question” and that “there was no solemn ceremony held in the festival” to commemorate the suffering and deaths. Hamai, too, wrote in his autobiography that “bereaved citizens turned their faces away from the merrymaking.” There are testimonies by survivors that they were not even told that the peace ceremonies were to be held. One might say that the peace ceremonies had not taken root among the citizens of Hiroshima by, at least, 1947. Celebrating the use of the atomic bomb probably contradicted the emotions of many survivors, since the bomb had caused such great pain to them. Additional events that were not even directly related to the memory of the bomb such as the *Bon* Festival dance, exhibitions of arts and flower arrangement, movies, and even a fancy-dress parade also aroused similar criticism. Assuming that these expressions, and criticism of the war and nuclear weapons, which are in opposition to the “symbol of peace” narrative, reflected the real sense among the citizens, it is probable to argue that the “symbol of peace” narrative was rather an artificially constructed narrative, being conscious of U.S. censorship.²⁰⁾

Another point is that both *Chūgoku* and Hiroshima city officials often employed the “symbol of peace” narrative in relation to the postwar reconstruction problem, which was one of the most urgent issues at the time. The articles, messages, and a speech I referred to earlier in this paper argued that Hiroshima should be reconstructed as, or was moving toward being, a “peace city.” However, the idea of a “peace city” was rarely discussed in conjunction with more substantial reconstruction plans. The Restoration Council of the city spent most of its time discussing practical and urgent issues like social infrastructure and rarely discussed how to reconstruct Hiroshima as a “peace city.” This distance between the narrative and the actual plan of restoration suggests that the main newspaper of the city and city officials utilized the logic of the “symbol of peace” narrative as an expedient means of appeal to GHQ/SCAP to obtain financial aid for the reconstruction of the city.²¹⁾

In sum, the “symbol of peace” narrative constituted one of the main themes of the articles of *Chūgoku* and in statements by the city officials in the early postwar years. The structure of

¹⁹⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1946.

²⁰⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 15, 1947; Hamai Shinzō, *Genbaku Shichō: Hiroshima to Tomo ni Nijūnen* [The Atomic Bomb Mayor: 20 Years with Hiroshima City] (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1967), 108; Kiriya Taeko, “Sengo Hiroshimashi no ‘Fukkō’ to Hibakusha no Shiten: Chūgoku Shimbun no Kiji o Shiryō to shite” [The ‘Reconstruction’ of Postwar Hiroshima City and the Viewpoint of Hibakusha: Based on the Articles of *Chūgoku*], *Ibunka* [Journal of Intercultural Communication] 7 (forthcoming); *Chūgoku*, July 20, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 2, 1947; *Chūgoku*, July 7, 1947; *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1947.

this narrative can be summed up as a combination of the following two aspects: one aspect is at the local level, connecting views that the bomb destroyed prewar Hiroshima, the militaristic city, and that it provided the city with a chance to revive as a “peace city.” The other is a worldwide or transnational interpretation of the bombing that the suffering of Hiroshima put an end to world war and brought world peace, and therefore Hiroshima was the center of worldwide attention. Thus, according to this narrative, Hiroshima is the “symbol of peace.” Such articles that referred to the atomic bombing could be printed under U.S. censorship probably because they attributed such positive meanings to the bombing.²¹⁾

However, it is likely that *Chūgoku* and the city officials were motivated by local and practical reasons when they employed the “symbol of peace” narrative, rather than by sincere belief in the positive and transnational meaning of the Hiroshima bombing, because they sometimes expressed the sufferings of the survivors and criticism of the atomic bombing. Due to the censorship by the U.S., which was sensitive to any criticism of the inhumanity of the bomb, the local media and politicians probably had to minimize expressions of any negative emotions. At the same time, city officials and the media might have made the most of limited chances to appeal to the Occupation authorities for financial support for the city’s restoration, utilizing the “symbol of peace” narrative in order to set the Hiroshima bombing apart from the air raids on other cities. Yet, these last two possibilities have not been proved by available primary documents so far and remain speculations. Neither has the question of who first fabricated the “symbol of peace” narrative been clarified yet.

3. The National Aspect of the “Symbol of Peace” Narrative: The Reportage in *Chūgoku* and in National Newspapers

This section investigates whether the “symbol of peace” narrative seen in the previous section was incorporated into the national framework. Here, this question is considered in the following ways—whether or not the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was regarded as a national incident when the narrative was delivered in Hiroshima, and whether or not it was accepted as such at the nationwide level. For that purpose, I focus on the articles of *Chūgoku* and national newspapers issued around the dates of the anniversaries of the atomic bombing and of the end of the war as well as the dates when the gist of the new Constitution was released (March 7, 1946), when it was promulgated (November 3, 1946), and when it was enacted (May 3, 1947).

²¹⁾ As for the state of the reconstruction at that time, see, for example, Ishimaru, “Seitei Katei to sono Tokushitsu,” 5–7; Hiroshimashi, ed., *Hiroshima Shinshi: Shiryōhen II* [New History of Hiroshima: Data II] (Hiroshima: Hiroshimashi, 1982), 307. For the minutes of the Council, see Hiroshimashi, ed., *Shiryōhen II*, 3–80. *Chūgoku*, November 11, 1945; “Kihara Shichō no Fukkō Kōsō” [The Restoration Plan by Mayor Kihara], *Shiryōhen II*, 83. I made a detailed argument about the relationship between the postwar restoration of Hiroshima city and the “symbol of peace” narrative in my MA thesis titled “Genbaku to ‘Heiwa no Shimboru’ Ron: Sengo Shoki no Hiroshimashi ni okeru Sensai Fukkō Mondai o Chūshin ni” [The Atomic Bomb and the ‘Symbol of Peace’ Discourse: With a Focus on the Reconstruction Problem of Hiroshima City in the Early Postwar Years], (master’s thesis, The University of Tokyo, 2003).

²²⁾ Ubuki, “Zentei,” 88–89.

I chose these dates because they represent the idea of peace with which the atomic bombing became tightly associated in the articles of *Chūgoku*. The end of the war was considered tantamount to the coming of peace, and the new Constitution was often called the “Peace Constitution,” as was symbolized by article 9 which declared the renunciation of war.

First, I analyze the articles of *Chūgoku* and national newspapers issued around the time of the peace ceremonies in order to investigate whether the bombing of Hiroshima, which was closely related to world peace in the “symbol of peace” narrative, was also contextualized within the conception of the Japanese nation. The articles of both *Chūgoku* and national newspapers around August 6 of 1946 and 1947 suggest that the answer is, for the most part, no. It is true that there were some expressions in *Chūgoku* that treated the atomic bombing as a national incident; for example, in an article on August 7, 1946, a *Chūgoku* reporter wrote that “praying for peace on August 6 will continue forever in our country, which will be rebuilt as a peaceful nation, and the prayer will become a commemorative event of the Japanese people.”²³⁾

Nevertheless, this is an exception rather than the rule among the huge number of articles and messages in *Chūgoku* that regarded the atomic bombing as an explicitly world event but not a national incident. *Chūgoku* often allocated the best section on its front page to such articles. To give only a few examples, a front-page article of the issue on August 1, 1946, predicted that the lives and properties lost in Hiroshima and Nagasaki would contribute to world culture if the great scientific knowledge that produced the atomic bomb was utilized as the root of eternal world peace. Another front-page article of August 6, 1946, ended with the sentence, “the state of human society under progress should be symbolized in Hiroshima, the center of world attention.” The editorial issued in the following year argued that “there seems to be a movement that makes the Peace Festival into a worldwide event. Now Hiroshima occupies the interest of the world society as the first atomic city.”²⁴⁾

As for the national newspapers, they paid little attention to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Of course some articles about Hiroshima did appear. For example, there were two articles in *Asahi*, one that explained the effects of radiation, even as it tried to minimize the damage with a scientific tone, and the second, which was a bit exceptional, as it employed the “symbol of peace” narrative. Otherwise, there were only short articles mostly focused on reconstruction efforts. In *Asahi*, there was not even a report about Hiroshima on August 6 and 7 of 1947. The situation changed somewhat the next year when the Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur himself sent a message to the Peace Festival, since such an act was extremely unusual for a local event. In *Asahi*, there was almost no mention of the Peace Festival in Hiroshima until August 6, 1947. But in that year the best section on its front-page of August 7 was reserved

²³⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1946.

²⁴⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 6, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1947.

²⁵⁾ *Asahi*, August 6, 1946; *Asahi*, August 4, 1946; *Asahi*, August 7, 1947; *Mainichi*, July 30, 1947; *Mainichi*, August 7, 1947; *Yomiuri*, August 7, 1947. However, there is not enough material to clarify why MacArthur paid such attention to the Peace Festival.

for the message from MacArthur. Both *Mainichi* and *Yomiuri* reported about this message, too.²⁵⁾

Second, I would like to consider the articles in national newspapers issued on the anniversaries of the end of the war to see if the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was considered at the national level to be one of the factors that brought peace. As for *Chūgoku*, I have already shown that its articles reiterated many times the close connection between the atomic bombing and world peace. However, the national newspapers issued on either August 6 or 15 in 1946 and 1947 did not explain that the atomic bombings terminated the war. This is peculiar considering that the official statements both in Japan and in the U.S. referred to the atomic bombings as a factor that led to the end of the war. In Japan, the Emperor had referred to the atomic bomb in his announcement of surrender only few years earlier. In the U.S., officials such as Henry L. Stimson, the ex-Secretary of Army, and Karl T. Compton, who had been involved in the Manhattan Project, emphasized that the use of atomic bombs was necessary to end the war, and the censorship in Japan was exercised based on such official attitudes.²⁶⁾

Third, I would like to examine the correlation between the atomic bombing and the new Constitution in newspaper articles. The national newspapers were silent again, and this time, *Chūgoku* was silent, too. Although there was a large number of articles about the Constitution in national newspapers and *Chūgoku*, only a few articles discussed the so-called “Peace Constitution” in relation to the atomic bombing. This was the case even though the difficulties people suffered during the war were mentioned as the background for renouncing the war.²⁷⁾

The possible exceptions are the editorials printed in *Chūgoku* in August of 1946 and 1947. It is true that these editorials discussed the Constitution without making obvious references to the atomic bombing. Yet the very fact that such discussion was printed around the date of the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing implies that the editors associated the bombing with the new Constitution. For instance, the editorial written in 1946 said that “we, the Japanese, who deeply understand the disaster and the folly of war, would like to make efforts to obliterate wars forever; this resolution brought about the renunciation of war which appears in the revision of the Constitution this time.”²⁸⁾

In conclusion, in the two years after the end of the war, the “symbol of peace” narrative was told in Hiroshima as a site-specific story that was not related to national issues such as the new Constitution, and it did not even appear in the national newspapers. Even the peace ceremonies, so widely reported in Hiroshima, were rarely reported at the nationwide level. There was significant difference in the newspaper coverage of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima

²⁶⁾ Karl T. Compton, “If the Bomb Had Not Been Used,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1946), <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/46dec/compton.htm> (accessed January 12, 2006); Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Bomb,” in *The Atomic Bomb: The Critical Issues*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 3–17.

²⁷⁾ For example, see Monbushō, ed., *Atarashii Kempō no Hanashi* [On the New Constitution] (Tokyo: Jitsugyō Kyōkasho, 1947).

²⁸⁾ *Chūgoku*, August 1, 1946; *Chūgoku*, August 7, 1947.

and that in the rest of Japan.

Conclusion

This paper showed that first the whole nation was stunned by the degree of annihilation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the media obtained relative freedom to report it. It should be stressed that the people in Japan did have a chance to learn what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, even though what they could know may have been limited. This point has not always been fully acknowledged because previous research has tended to regard the Bikini Incident as the starting point of activism about nuclear arms, ignoring the years prior to the Incident almost entirely.

Moreover, close readings of newspaper articles show that the presence of the Occupation army had some impact on the Japanese media, even before its official censorship began. As a result, most of the Japanese people who lived outside Hiroshima and Nagasaki no longer had a chance to learn about the situations in those two cities for some years, at least until the summer of 1947. It was not until the end of the Occupation in 1952 that all of Japan began to really visualize the damage caused by the atomic bomb in concrete, vivid ways. While there were some chances to learn earlier than 1952, they were limited; for example, an international peace movement which arose in 1949 called attention to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Yet this movement had only limited impact because it was supported mostly by the socialists.²⁹⁾

However, the local media and public figures in Hiroshima spread a specific narrative about the atomic bombing, which I call the “symbol of peace” narrative, even while under the constraint of censorship. It evaluated the atomic bombing of Hiroshima positively in both local and transnational contexts at the same time. At the local context, the bombing of Hiroshima was reported as the destruction of a militaristic city and its subsequent reconstruction as a “peace city,” and at the transnational context, the critical role Hiroshima played in ending the world war and bringing about world peace was highlighted. Here, it should be remembered that this narrative appears to have been motivated in part by practical reasons. For one thing, it was difficult for *Chūgoku* reporters and the city officials, who actively promulgated the positive narrative, to criticize the use of the atomic bomb under U.S. censorship. For another thing, the “symbol of peace” narrative had to do with the financial situation regarding the postwar restoration of Hiroshima city. These considerations suggest that the advocates of the narrative did not entirely internalize it.

Finally, there was a chasm between the local, Hiroshima level and the nationwide level. On the one hand, the “symbol of peace” narrative did not appear in the national newspapers in those years, even though the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was widely reported right after the war. On the other hand, it did appear in the local newspaper in Hiroshima but

²⁹⁾ John W. Dower, “The Bombed: Hiroshimas and Nagasakis in Japanese Memory,” in *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 128; Ubuki Satoru, “Gunshuku to Shimin Undō: Nihon no Gensuibaku Kinshi Undō o megutte” [Demilitarization and the Civic Movement: On Anti A- and H-Bomb Movement in Japan], *Kokusai Seiji* 80 (1985): 113, 124.

did not associate the damage by the atomic bomb with national affairs.

Thus, in the early postwar years, a universalistic “symbol of peace” narrative, which directly related Hiroshima, a local city, to transnational world peace, was first formulated in Hiroshima. However, this narrative did not locate the bombing within national historiography, and neither was it shared at the nationwide level, at least until the summer of 1947. The narratives about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima were not yet nationalized as they would come to be in later years.

In concluding this paper, there are several questions left to be answered. One very obvious question is why the attention that the Japanese press and people had initially paid to Hiroshima declined so sharply that there was soon hardly any coverage about Hiroshima in national newspapers. Clearly U.S. censorship was one of the main reasons, but that was not the whole reason because even the “symbol of peace” narrative, which was acceptable to GHQ/SCAP and thus was widely narrated in Hiroshima, did not show up in national papers. It is also curious how the atomic bombing could be specifically understood as a unique incident in the history of all humanity, when other Japanese cities were also ruined by incendiary bombings. These topics are definitely worthy of further research.

By pointing out the gap between Hiroshima and the nationwide levels of reportage concerning the interpretation of the atomic bombing, this paper reiterates that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not considered a national event at first. This is an important starting point in analyzing how the memories of Hiroshima became nationalized and how that memory was transformed as it went through a process of nationalization.

戦後初期の原爆報道： ローカル、ナショナル、トランスナショナル

< 要旨 >

川口悠子

本論文では、広島原爆被害について、戦後日本ではどのような記憶が構築され浸透していったのかという問いを検討するため、1945年から1947年夏までの間の広島状況と全国的な状況について、広島の地方紙と全国紙の記事の比較分析をおこなった。

第一節では、敗戦から占領軍の駐留開始までのあいだに、多くの日本人が原爆による被害の状況を知る機会があったことを示した。これは、敗戦によって日本政府の情報統制が緩み、原爆被害についての生々しい報道が数多くなされたためである。その後、占領軍（GHQ/SCAP）が到着し検閲を開始したため、原爆報道は急減していった。

第二節では、広島の地方紙の記事と市当局者の発言の中で繰り返されたナラティブの特徴を分析した。このナラティブは、原爆投下によって軍事都市としての広島が消滅し、また世界平和が訪れたとして、広島はローカル・トランスナショナル双方の意味において「平和のシンボル」となると主張するものだった。しかし、このような主張は必ずしも本心からなされたものではなく、むしろGHQ/SCAPの検閲の影響や復興資金獲得への動きなど、実際的な理由に基づくものだったと考えられる。

第三節では、前節で見た「平和のシンボル」論は、広島では報道はされたもののナショナルな文脈には位置づけられず、また全国紙は敗戦直後には原爆被害に多くの紙面を割いたにも関わらず、このような主張を報道することもほとんどなかったこと、すなわち原爆被害に対する関心にはローカルとナショナルなレベルでギャップがあったことを明らかにした。

すなわち、1947年夏までの時期には、原爆被害はまだナショナルな出来事として記憶されていなかったのである。