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Creating the place of remembrance in Hiroshima as a Japanese *lieu de mémoire* commemorating A-bombs. The role of art and architecture

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Introduction

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are perceived as the cities of the biggest Japanese destruction – atomic bombing. Although the different aspects of bombing Hiroshima were undertaken in numerous research, the aim of this paper is to analyze the creation of Hiroshima as Japanese *lieux de mémoire* commemorating A-bombs, with particular emphasis on the role of art and architecture. While investigating those aspects, not only the form and design should be taken into consideration, but also the political situation in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as social moods and expectations that shaped the postwar Japan.

In the 1970s a French historian Pierre Nora, promoted the theory of *lieux de mémoire*: places of remembrance (realms of memory)¹. He argued that criticism of official versions of national history contributed to the coming of the time of remembering, as well as the cult of memories and roots. Therefore, society itself imposed a duty of memory and the word “history” has been replaced by the word “memory” – it is general and all-encompassing. To preserve certain memories society creates places of remembrance. In the case of two bombed cities, these are the material *lieux de mémoire*, memorials and museums that built a specific narration toward this horrible history of Japanese nation. However, beyond the official realms of memory, the songs and poems devoted to the atomic tragedy can be perceived, according to this theory, as places of remembrance, though

¹ Nora, Pierre, ed. *Realms of Memory, The Construction of the French Past*, Vol. 1, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

the intangible ones. Moreover, Hiroshima and Nagasaki also function as the symbols promoting peace activities and reassure Japanese society in its peaceful existence.

The theme of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and nuclear disaster is often undertaken by researchers from different disciplines, both social sciences and humanities. The symbol of destroyed cities is used in political statements, arts and social movements. Numerous researchers took different perspectives to analyze the case of A-bombed cities². In her paper “*Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*”: *The Renarrativation of Hiroshima Memories*, Tomoko Ichitani explores the cultural meaning and political implications of remembering, reinscribing, and renarrating the memories of Hiroshima³. Lisa Yoneyama in her *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and The Dialectics of Memory*⁴ explores unconventional texts and dimensions of culture involved in constituting Hiroshima memories. Moreover, Yuki Miyamoto in *Rebirth in the Pure Land or God’s Sacrificial Lambs? Religious Interpretations of the Atomic Bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki* explores the development of religious discourse surrounding the experiences of the atomic bombings of 1945⁵. The selection of these papers shows that Hiroshima plays a major role in analyzing the attitude of the society and the impact of A-bombing on Japan. Hiroshima was the first city that suffered from the nuclear attack and the only one in which the residue of the attack exists⁶.

To analyze the undertaken problem, several research questions should be answered. What is the history of establishing Hiroshima as a specific place of remembrance? Which artists took place in shaping Hiroshima as a Japanese *lieu de mémoire*, and why? What are the attitudes of contemporary Japanese society towards the cities that experienced atomic bombing? To develop this analysis, the evaluation of the primary and existing sources will be delivered in this article. For providing a broader analysis, the surveys, academic papers, as well as newspapers articles, will also be used.

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- 2 Among the newest Polish researchers’ publication are: Barbasiewicz, Olga. *Pomniki i miejsca Pamięci w relacjach międzynarodowych. Wpływ pamięci na stosunki japońsko-amerykańskie z perspektywy Japonii*. Warszawa: Instytut Kultur Śródziemnomorskich i Orientalnych PAN, 2016; Lubina, Michał. “Pośród Nankinu a Hiroszimy. Konfliktowe rocznice w Azji Wschodniej jako element rywalizacji chińsko-japońskiej.” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, Vol. 2 (2017), pp. 77-88.
- 3 Ichitani, Tomoko. “»Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms«: The Renarrativation of Hiroshima Memories.” *Journal of Narrative Theory*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Fall 2010), pp. 364-390.
- 4 Yoneyama, Lisa. *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and The Dialectics of Memory*. Berkeley: University of California, 1999.
- 5 Miyamoto, Yuki. “Rebirth in the Pure Land or God’s Sacrificial Lambs? Religious Interpretations of the Atomic Bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2005), pp. 131-159.
- 6 The A-bomb Dome left as a symbol of the tragedy, as well as other buildings that symbolize the nuclear attack. Nagasaki, before the war inhabited mainly by foreigners was quickly rebuilt, never became a place to commemorate the A-bombing on the same scale as Hiroshima.

Japanese society and the memory of the A-bombs

The traumatic memory of atomic bombing is one that made Japanese feel the victims of World War II and became the issue that erased other atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army from the contemporary Japanese society's minds. Kiyoteru Tsutsui's content analysis of editorials published in three major Japanese newspapers from 1945 to 2000 found that "evasion" and "displacement" have been the most dominant approaches in the postwar Japanese media discourse on the war⁷. The crime that overshadowed others became a problem in the relations with Asian neighbors of Japan. But the postwar policy and rapprochement with the United States contributed to looking at the war history as on a Japanese-American conflict, with attacking Pearl Harbor and dropping A-bombs on Japan as key events.

The question of dropping atomic bombs on Japan always divided Japanese and American public opinion. When Japanese perceived themselves to be the victims, Americans felt that the nuclear attack was justified. The latest survey regarding this issue took place in 2015 and both Japanese and Americans were questioned. The interviews were conducted between January 30 and February 12, 2015 among a national sample of 1,000 persons, 18 years old or older⁸. The view on the atomic disaster differs depending on the age of respondents on both sides – Japanese and American. Although in 1945 Americans believed that the use of the atomic bomb was justified and saved American lives⁹, in the latest survey only 56% claimed so¹⁰. Among these respondents, those who didn't turn 30 agreed with this statement only in 47%. The numbers show that as the time passes the cruelty of that event is severely judged even by Americans. The vast number of Japanese (79%) states that the use of the atomic bomb wasn't justified, when only 14% claim it was.

The surveys of justification or its lack of the bombing do not neglect the fact that America deals with the A-bombing in their own way, and it does not disregard the attitude of being guilty or not. Nevertheless, the social moods are still an important factor in remembering and commemorating the nuclear tragedy that touched Japan. In the past, when Hiroshima was shaped as a place of remembrance and a symbol of peace, the social moods played a significant role in achieving the contemporary state of the site that suffered A-bombing.

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- ⁷ Tsutsui, Kiyoteru. "The Trajectory of Perpetrators' Trauma: Mnemonic Politics around the Asia-Pacific War in Japan." *Social Forces* 87, No. 3 (2009), pp. 1389–1422, as cited in: Gi-Wook, Shin. "PERSPECTIVE: Historical Disputes and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The US Role." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4(2010), p. 668.
- ⁸ "Americans, Japanese: Mutual Respect 70 Years After the End of WWII." *Pew Research Center* 2015. N.p., 7.04.2015. Web. 1.04.2017.
- ⁹ Moore, David. W. "Majority supports use atomic bomb on Japan in WWII." *Gallup*. N.p. 5.08.2005. Web. 15.03.2017.
- ¹⁰ *Americans, Japanese: Mutual Respect 70...*, op. cit.

Making the cities being *lieux de mémoire* of a great tragedy

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, frequently used in the narration about war tragedy, are the places that can be perceived through the lenses of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* theory. These places, especially Hiroshima, became the Japanese realms of memory, with its memorials and remainings of the atomic bombings. The case of Hiroshima, the first city in history which experienced the nuclear tragedy and gained the permission to be reconstructed as a realm of memory, is a case study of this paper.

Just after the war, the history of these places was censored by occupying forces for fear of the rage among the members of society¹¹. After long-lasting negotiations with occupation forces, in 1949 finally, the Japanese parliament permitted to rebuild Hiroshima as a place of remembrance and peace, on the basis of the *Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law* that entered into force on the 4th anniversary of the Hiroshima tragedy. The establishment of this memory site was possible not only because of the consent of Americans, but also because of the will of the Japanese nation shown in the first referendum in Japan, where over 90% of voters supported the idea of rebuilding the city¹². After gaining the permission to start works on establishing Hiroshima as a special place of remembrance, two important aspects should have been arranged. First of all, the whole urban plan and architecture of the area, as well as the relicts of the past and memories, which were to be displayed in the projected museum. In May 1949, the architectural journal Kenchiku zasshi announced a competition brief for the Hiroshima park¹³. In 1955, thanks to the efforts of the city residents and Japanese citizens, such as gathering of the materials related to the atomic bombing, the opening of the museum took place. Those who collected the relicts of A-bomb memory didn't want to leave the display units for the whole construction period and hide them from the audience eyes. Therefore, the A-bomb Reference Material Display Room as a temporary exhibition was presenting the tragedy of Japanese nation to the wider audience until the end of the construction of the contemporary museum building, which at the beginning was called the Memorial Museum of Atomic Bombed Relics. The change of this institution's name perfectly shows the creation of the narration of this specific place of remembrance. Nowadays, the object's name is Hiroshima Heiwa Kinen Shiryōkan, which even though officially translated into Peace Memorial Museum, in the word shiryōkan carries the meaning of archive, the center for documentation.

¹¹ Hein, Laura and Selden, Mark. "Commemoration and Silence. Fifty Years of Remembering of Bomb in America and Japan." *Living with a Bomb. American and Japanese Cultural Conflict in the Nuclear Age*. Ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997, p. 9.

¹² "Museum History." Peace Memorial Park and the Peace Memorial Museum. N.p., n.d. Web. 1.04.2017.

¹³ Cho, Hyunjung. "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the Making of Japanese Postwar Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 66, 2012, p. 75.

Hiroshima Memorial Museum is founded on massive columns. It helps to avoid obstructing the view of the A-bomb Dome, the ruin of the former Industry Promotion Hall designed by the Czech architect, Jan Letzel – the main symbol and the lieu de mémoire of atomic tragedy. The Genbaku Dōmu¹⁴ is perfectly visible while looking through the Cenotaph (initially called “the arch for prayers”), what refers to the traditional Japanese thatched-cottage, and is shaped as inverted “u” letter. Under the Cenotaph there is a stone box with the list of all A-bomb’s victims and the epitaph: “Rest in Peace, for the error shall not be repeated.”

Among the exhibits of the atomic bomb museum, the survivors’ stories and lives were presented. As the example can serve Hiroshi Harada, whose leg sank into one of the bodies lying on Hiroshima streets, and this cruel memory still works as a testimony of the war atrocity¹⁵. This kind of naturalist narration of this place of remembrance refers to the human psyche and it confirms the conviction that the people do not want to commit a similar crime in the future.

The perception of “Hiroshima” in general audience’s mind changed from the reminder of a cruel past and tragedy of the Japanese nation to the place that carries the message of the world peace. The architect Tange Kenzō, who won the contest for the Hiroshima’s park and place of remembrance architecture, gave a great explanation of this state in the statement included in his proposal: “Peace is not naturally given from the gods, but it should be searched for. This facility is not meant to commemorate peace in an abstract way, but it is for actively producing peace. I hope that my building works as a factory for peace”¹⁶. Therefore, Hiroshima became a place which is a specific “factory for peace”, a lieu de mémoire that appeals to the Japanese consciousness.

Designing Hiroshima. Inspirations and Realizations.

The case of Tange Kenzō

The most influential figure in Hiroshima’s commemoration history became the above-mentioned winner of the Hiroshima memorial – Tange Kenzō, who also appeared to be one of Japan’s most internationally acclaimed architects¹⁷. He modeled on Le

¹⁴ The A-Bomb Dome is officially called the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Commonly in English, the Japanese name of the A-bomb is being used.

¹⁵ “Hiroshima hibakusha determined to keep memory of atomic bombing alive, 70 years on.” *The Japan Times* (2015): Apr. 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/14/national/hiroshima-hibakusha-determined-keep-memory-atomic-bombing-alive-70-years/#.WPYDloVOJYc>.

¹⁶ Tange, Kenzō. “Hiroshima heiwa kinen kōen oyobi kinenkan kyōki sekkei tōsen zuan.” *Kenchiku Zasshi* Vol. 64, No. 756 (1949), p. 42, as cited in Cho, Hyunjung., op. cit. p. 76.

¹⁷ Zwigenberg, Ran. “The most modern city in the world: Isamu Noguchi’s cenotaph controversy and Hiroshima’s city of peace.” *Critical Military Studies* (2015), p. 102.

Corbusier¹⁸, nevertheless, at the beginning modernist architecture proposed by him in the midst of destructed Hiroshima gained a lot of criticism¹⁹. The whole idea of designing Hiroshima as the Peace Memorial City that was introduced and implemented by Tange, who expressed the idea of peace by linking the peace museum, Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims, and the Genbaku Dome together in a geometric whole²⁰.

Even if the modern architecture, inspired by the Le Corbusier design, seemed to be too modern for rising from the ashes Hiroshima, the postwar period in Japan was the time, when it was “urgent to establish a legitimate style of postwar architecture, distinct from wartime precedent”²¹. This openly claimed statement was also obvious for numerous Japanese architects, who during the American occupation period avoided the traditional Japanese motives in planning, due to the occupation policy that connected the Japanese tradition with the pre-war nationalism. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial plan, which was accepted by the occupation forces and had its introduction during the occupation period, had to include this opinion. But the end of the occupation in 1952 gave some space for Japanese designers to implement traditional art into the project. The avoidance of the traditional and Shintoist elements in architecture, ordered by the occupation forces, could have also been connected to the main architect’s past achievements. Tange was the winner of the architectural contest for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Commemorative in 1942. The designed building (which was never constructed) with the main commemorative hall, reflected Tange’s fascination with Le Corbusier’s architectural idea, designed as a reinforced concrete structure, basing on traditional architectonic elements. It’s impressive gabled roof and windows brought to mind the massive roof and decorative logs called *kat-suogi* of the Ise Shrine, a place associated with the imperial power of wartime Japan²². The postwar Hiroshima Cenotaph’s Japanese traditional thatched-cottage shape was the element that could have been implemented into whole plan of the park, due to the American relaxation of the occupation policy. Nevertheless, its location was similar to that of the commemorative monument in Tange’s wartime proposal²³. The apparent continuity between Tange’s wartime and postwar designs was shown by numerous researchers, i.e. Jacqueline Kestenbaum, Terunobu Fujimori, and Hajime Yatsuka²⁴. Nevertheless, it was the cooperation with the American-Japanese artist,

¹⁸ A Swiss-French architect, designer and urban planner. One of the pioneers of modern architecture.

¹⁹ Zwigenberg, Ran., op. cit., p. 102.

²⁰ Ide, Kanako. “A Symbol of Peace and Peace Education: The Genbaku Dome in Hiroshima.” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2007), p. 13.

²¹ Cho, Hyunjung., op. cit., p. 72.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

Noguchi Isamu, whose will to reevaluate Japanese cultural roots played a significant role in designing Hiroshima, became a spark for Tange to come back with a plan of introducing Japanese traditional art to Hiroshima memorial.

The outbreak of the Korean War speeded up the project of Hiroshima. Tange was afraid that the war that lasted on the territory of Japan's neighbor would cause a stop in the realization of this place of remembrance. At the same time, the narrative that became dominant in the Hiroshima context turned to be anti-nuclear and anti-American in the context of the U.S. policy towards Korean Peninsula.

The whole project that was started in 1949 became completed in 1955. The construction process was not smooth and many elements of the urban project were contentious. However, the abovementioned linking the peace museum, cenotaph, and the Genbaku Dome together in a geometric whole gave the possibility of achieving the view through the Cenotaph, as described in previous chapters. This arrangement was the example of implementation of modernism into the entire project, what was Tange's aim.

The case of the Genbaku Dome is distinctive itself. Though being the place symbolizing the atomic tragedy and the war site itself, it became the part of Tange's peace architecture, symbolizing the 'positive peace' itself. Ide Kanako explains this paradox in the following way:

Genbaku Dome owns history because it can be any scene after the bombing. While the Genbaku Dome itself is permanent, the meaning surrounding it can change. In other words, the Genbaku Dome does not provide an image of peace in itself, although it plays an important role by informing the audience of the specific location of Hiroshima. Representations of the Genbaku Dome are used as evidence that peace has been established after the experience of the atomic bomb. Therefore, the Genbaku Dome can be an image of positive peace²⁵.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is one of Tange's first buildings in the postwar period. Its idea undoubtedly derives from Le Corbusier style. The museum is supported on pillars, like Le Corbusier's patented pilotis²⁶, as well as the building is articulated with reinforced concrete, which was the central concept of Le Corbusier's architecture²⁷. What later became the most important aspect of Tange's Hiroshima project is the "tactical synchronization"²⁸ of the Japanese and international architecture. This style was the outcome of the avoidance of using imperialist architectural motives with the simultaneous usage of traditional, Japanese themes, what resulted in the modern style of architecture and design.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 13–14.

²⁶ Ground-level supporting columns.

²⁷ "AD Classics: Hiroshima Peace Center and Memorial Park / Kenzo Tange." *ArchDaily.com*, Aug. 2017
<http://www.archdaily.com/160170/ad-classics-hiroshima-peace-center-and-memorial-park-kenzo-tange>.

²⁸ This term was originally used by Hyunjung Cho.

Noguchi Isamu and the unpreparedness for Japanese-American cooperation in designing the A-Bomb memorial

The decisions regarding the act of establishing the place to commemorate victims of A-bomb in Hiroshima was taken together with the occupation forces. Therefore, it can be observed that the achievements of Noguchi perfectly reflected the cooperation between previous enemies and nations who have to build common future. This artist has a European mother and Japanese father and his life was full of the episodes that could become the symbols of new Japanese-American relations. Being aware of his cultural identity before the outbreak of war, he changed his surname from Gilmour to Noguchi in 1923²⁹. Living in the U.S. during the war, he voluntarily joined one of the internment camps for Japanese Americans out of solidarity for those, who were held in suspicion because of their race³⁰. When he came to Japan in 1950, he became a leader at the forefront of Japanese cultural reconstruction³¹.

Being well known as a landscapist, he joined Tange Kenzō, and became famous and involved into such works as the two Peace Bridges (1951-1952) in the Park³². He was a perfect choice for both American and Japanese policymakers, being the incarnation of Japanese-American relations and history. He was also a great partner for Tange, whose need of introducing modernism to Hiroshima was perfectly understood by Japanese-American artist. During the press conference, Noguchi Isamu stated that "Hiroshima is probably the most modern city in the world"³³. The history of Noguchi's coming to Hiroshima was described in his *The Road I Have Walked*:

Finally I came to Japan and I had an exhibition at Mitsukoshi. Among the works which I showed was a piece called "Bell Tower for Hiroshima". When Mayor Hamai from Hiroshima saw it he said, "Come to Hiroshima. Maybe we can do something." That is why I was able to go to Hiroshima. I went there with Tange-san (Mr. Tange – O.B.). At the time there was nothing, absolutely nothing there. I built two bridges, one called "Tsukuru" and the other one called "Yuku"³⁴.

Nonetheless, his major work was the proposal of a cenotaph project for the victims of the American atomic bomb, which was the realization of his vision to create

²⁹ Lyford, Amy. "Noguchi, Sculptural Abstraction, and the Politics of Japanese American Internment." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (2003), p. 142.

³⁰ Winther, Bert. "The Rejection of Isamu Noguchi's Hiroshima Cenotaph: A Japanese American Artist in Occupied Japan." *Art Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 4, (1994), p. 23.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Yoshinobu, Hakutani and Isamu, Noguchi. "Father and Son: A Conversation with Isamu Noguchi." *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1990, p. 19.

³³ Zwigenberg, Ran., op. cit., p. 103.

³⁴ Noguchi, Isamu. "The Road I Have Walked." *Kyotoprize.org*, p. 16. N.d. Web. 1.04.2017, p. 6.

a monument – *lieu the mémoire* that plays a major role in the Japanese cultural revival. The Noguchi's design of the cenotaph was described by Bert Winther as follow:

The unrealized monument was to be a parabolic arch with legs inflated to great girth and sunk deep in the earth. The smooth contours of the tip of the parabola would rise above grade, but the lowering of the undercut of the arch to a cramped crawl space would intensify the sense of submission to gravity and articulate the great domelike weight above. The contours of this outcropping would suggest that it was but the excrescence of a form originating deep within the earth, and a subterranean presence was intimated by light that was to radiate in the evening from an aperture in the ground beneath the arch³⁵.

The design was symbolizing the enormity of the death and the power of nuclear weapons. In addition to this dimension, it was providing an allegory of hope and rebirth. Noguchi stated that the symbolism of his cenotaph design derived from *haniwa*, the pottery models from prehistoric Japanese tombs³⁶. Noguchi was rejected by the jury, since the design seemed to be experienced by the Japanese as being exogenous rather than indigenous to Japan³⁷. Noguchi perfectly understood that his origin and dual identity were the reason for being declined. He claimed that:

I was opposed by the people of Hiroshima because I am an American. Certainly, I am an American, but my heart is that of a Japanese and how it ached in the days of the B29 air raids... My feeling was unbearable when Tokyo was burning and the nuclear bomb was falling on Hiroshima. Therefore, I felt guilty for the people who lost their lives all at once. I wanted them to let me do the design more than anyone else. I told them I would do it without payment, but [...] ³⁸.

This aspect of Noguchi's rejection was also confirmed by Hyunjung Cho, who claimed that "Noguchi's proposal was not accepted by the Committee of the Construction of the Peace Memorial City—in part because members of the committee thought it was inappropriate to entrust a citizen from the nation that dropped the atomic bomb with the design of a memorial to its victims"³⁹. Although the criticism that met him directly, Tange supported the ideas of Noguchi and his project of cenotaph, which was rejected mainly because the abovementioned links with the U.S. But, due to the open criticism of Noguchi's project by Kishida Hideto, Tange's mentor, the only choice for Tange was to complete the cenotaph by combining his and Noguchi's project.

³⁵ Winther, Bert., op. cit., p.23.

³⁶ Ibid., p.25.

³⁷ Ibid., p.26.

³⁸ Noguchi, Isamu. "Isamu Noguchi no Naka ni Aru Higashi to Nishi." [The East and West within Isamu Noguchi], *Fujin Gabō* (Women's Pictorial News) (1960), p.224, as translated and cited by Winther, Bert., op. cit.

³⁹ Cho, Hyunjung., op. cit., p. 82.

Isamu Noguchi was a great example of half-Japanese, famous artist who wanted to contribute to the Japan's reconstruction. He referred to the great tragedy that touched the nation just a moment earlier, with references to the traditional Japanese crafts and architecture. This artist was a perfect symbol of bringing America and Japan together – previous enemies and, at the time of Noguchi's work in Hiroshima, the allies that stared cooperating. Nevertheless, the period that fell on the end of the American occupation of Japan and the beginning of new, democratized and demilitarized Japan wasn't a good moment for Japanese society, still having fresh memories of the tragedy. The rejection of Noguchi's ideas and acceptance of the Tange's project was an interesting aspect itself, because of the Tange's past, when he was the former designer of the commemorative project for Japan's wartime militarist regime and also openly supported it⁴⁰. Therefore, even if the postwar policy of occupation forces was to implement the new order, as well as new architecture, which had nothing in common with imperial past of Japan and affected the Japanese-American friendship, the case of Noguchi Isamu showed that among choices taken regarding Hiroshima, things went quite opposite. The artist being the symbol of a new political and social order and wanted to restore Japanese traditional art was rejected. The architect, who worked for the imperial powers, and was the author of projects that emphasized Japanese domination in Asia in the wartime was chosen the winner of the architectural competition and became famous as Japanese modernist, and shaped the most important place of remembrance for Japanese society – Hiroshima.

Conclusion

The cities that suffered from the A-bombs have frequently been analyzed from different perspectives, both social and political. The responsibility for the atomic bombing is constantly being discussed all over the world. The aim of this paper was to explore the role of Hiroshima as a realm of memory, focusing mainly on the selected artistic and architectural dimensions and their social context.

Over seventy years after the atomic bombing the surveys show that the Japanese, as well as American society, expresses the attitude of no necessity of the nuclear attack in 1945. In the same time, Japanese political leaders use this tragedy to promote Japanese role in fighting for the world free from the nuclear weapons. Therefore, Hiroshima as a realm of memory became a tool to promote Japan's antinuclear policy. Even though, Asian states that suffered from Japanese policy during the war see the A-bombed cities as a result of Japanese atrocities in East Asia. Simultaneously, in Japan voices appear that the sufferings associated with the atomic bombings

⁴⁰ Zwigenberg, Ran., op. cit., p. 107.

should not be reduced because of the atrocities committed by the Japanese armies. Therefore, the main role of Hiroshima is being a “factory for peace,” which paradoxically harmonizes with Le Corbusier’s idea of the role of architecture. Tange Kenzō, Japanese modernist architect, who designed Hiroshima Peace Park with its buildings and monuments, implemented Le Corbusier’s thought and style into the Hiroshima’s place of remembrance. Being supported by the local and state authorities, he created the place which became the symbol of peace characterizing Japanese new democracy. The result was, that while the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park wasn’t a scene of political demonstrations, it became a state monument that would transform individuals into national subjects⁴¹.

The important aspect of the analysis is also the Japanese approach to connect East and West, associated with the atomic tragedy, in the post war architectural expressions. The success of such actions depended on the social awareness and readiness, but it was a great approach towards dealing with the tragedy in the context of the new reality of Japanese occupation and future alliance with the U.S. The case of Noguchi Isamu work and design is a great example for this conjuncture. Being a symbol of Japanese-American friendship and cooperation, he didn’t manage to become the main architect of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Nonetheless, the bridges that he projected for the park’s purposes became the symbol of the connection between Japan and the U.S. The Tange and Noguchi’s case is also symbolic for the post war atmosphere of Japan and the constant balancing between social moods, the policy of occupation forces and the need for the commemoration of victims.

The study conducted in this paper shows the importance of the political situation and social moods in creating the place of remembrance, which will play a major role for the whole nation. Hiroshima is a place, which context was completely changed, coming from the city that was punished for its war legacy to the city that became the symbol of peace.

⁴¹ Cho, Hyunjung., op. cit., p. 81.

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Summary

Creating the place of remembrance in Hiroshima as a Japanese *lieu de mémoire* commemorating A-bombs. The role of art and architecture

This article focuses on the role of architecture and art in regards to the picture of Hiroshima as a specific place of remembrance (*lieu de mémoire*) for Japanese society. While analyzing those aspects, not only the form and design were considered, but also the political situation in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as social moods and expectations that shaped the postwar Japan. The paper bases on a case study of an architect Tange Kenzō and Noguchi Isamu, also an architect and artist, who had a great influence onto the creation of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.