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Historical Counter-Narratives

Japanese Christians' Advocacy for South Korean Atomic Bomb Victims

This article delineates the process that Japanese adherents of Christianity, despite Japan being one of the least Christian nations in the world, were at the forefront of civil society movements in the early 1970s to advocate for the rights of atomic bomb survivors who returned to South Korea after 1945. Many Christians, when considering Japan's accountability in World War II, were driven by contrition and a strong sense of righteousness, and they considered reconciliation with other Asian nations of the utmost importance. This article explores the support activities of three Christians who were prominent members of grassroots movements that emerged in the 1970s to assist Korean survivors in various parts of Japan. Despite belonging to diverse Protestant denominations, the advocates were motivated to act by similar Christian ethics: to stand up for the oppressed, consolidate peace, love their neighbors, and demand social justice. Their example illustrates the larger historical process of Christian reassessment of their prewar morals in a way that facilitated their emergence as the preeminent promoters of pacifism and antiwar activism in the postwar era.

KEYWORDS: Japanese Christians—atomic bomb—*hibakusha*—World War II—atone-
ment—colonialism

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VICTIMS OF the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 were not limited to Japanese. Approximately one tenth of all atomic bomb victims came from the Korean Peninsula, and most of the survivors returned to their Korean homeland following Japan's surrender in World War II.¹ However, in the postwar period their lives took a different turn from the survivors living in Japan. While Japan experienced its economic miracle beginning in the 1950s, the Korean Peninsula struggled through a domestic conflict that culminated in the Korean War. Apart from the millions of casualties, the peninsula suffered massive damage to its economy and the largest repercussion was the solidification of two separate Korean states with a communist, totalitarian regime in the north and a military dictatorship (from 1961) in the south.

Additionally, a lack of adequate knowledge on the impact of radiation on the human body led South Koreans to assume that atomic bombing-related diseases were contagious, and people exposed to radiation would have deformed children (HIRAOKA 1988, 23). Since doctors were also unaware of the acute health effects of radiation for many decades, they mistakenly diagnosed many *hibakusha* 被爆者 (survivors of the atomic bombings) with Hansen's disease (leprosy) (ICHIBA 2000, 43).² These misconceptions resulted in discrimination against South Korean *hibakusha*. Consequently, many of them lived isolated from the

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1. Fifty thousand Koreans are estimated to have become A-bomb victims in Hiroshima, among whom thirty thousand survived. In Nagasaki, twenty thousand Koreans were in the city on 9 August 1945, half of whom passed away immediately after the bombing. On the estimated number of Korean *hibakusha*, see ICHIBA (2000, 27).

2. The term *hibakusha* refers to the atomic bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who were exposed to radiation as a result of the atomic bomb attacks in August 1945. There are four categories of *hibakusha* recognized by the Japanese government: (1) people who were directly exposed to the bomb; (2) people who entered the city area of two kilometers from the hypocenter (until 20 August 1945 in Hiroshima and until 23 August 1945 in Nagasaki); (3) people who entered the city to take part in the rescue operations and remove the dead bodies; and (4) people who were exposed in utero. This article focuses on the support of those Korean *hibakusha* who had returned to the southern part of the Korean Peninsula after 1945 that later emerged as the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

rest of Korean society and concealed their *hibakusha* identity initially to avoid discrimination. Even if they had revealed their experiences as A-bomb survivors, South Korean society would not have understood their plight owing to the country's prejudice against those repatriates who had lived in Japan during the colonial era.

South Korea's historical perception of the atomic bomb attacks of Hiroshima and Nagasaki also prevented South Korean society from developing sympathy toward those compatriots who had stayed in the two A-bombed cities at the time of the attacks and in the postwar period had repatriated to the peninsula. For many Koreans, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb attacks came to symbolize Japan's punishment for its wartime aggression, and society generally viewed the bomb as a savior that brought about Japan's surrender and put an end to its thirty-six-year rule of the Korean Peninsula. Koreans in the postwar period perceived the dropping of the atomic bombs favorably and assumed it helped liberate them from an oppressive colonial power (HIRAOKA 1988, 24). Due to the absence of awareness of the long-term effects of radiation in South Korea and the approval of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, *hibakusha* living in both halves of the peninsula were unable to request provisions or to speak out against nuclear weapons. South Korean A-bomb survivors were trapped in a vicious cycle of disease, unemployment, and poverty, and were among those with the lowest socioeconomic status (HIRAOKA 1983, 26–27). Owing to the lack of a medical insurance system, most were unable to receive medical treatment for decades given the high cost of medical care, and many passed away with their plight largely unknown (ZHTCHI, 12).

The Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute conducted the first survey in 1964 to find out the number of *hibakusha* in South Korea and identified 203 survivors. Then, the Mindan 民団 (Korean Residents Union in Japan) investigation group sent a delegation to South Korea in May 1965, one month before the signing of the Normalization Treaty between Japan and South Korea. These events prompted the South Korean government to take steps to identify A-bomb victims in their country. Following the government's request, the Korean Red Cross Society launched another survey in August 1965, this time confirming the existence of 462 more atomic bomb victims (among whom eight people had passed away by then) (ZDMH, 19). These events began to raise awareness in South Korean society of the existence of atomic bomb victims. Thus, some *hibakusha* began to raise their voices against their long-term abandonment and constant suffering, and set up their own association in 1967 (hereafter, Korea Association) to demand relief measures both from the South Korean and Japanese governments.³

3. On the Korea Association, see ICHIBA (2000, 41–45).

The headway made in South Korea for the A-bomb survivors and the appearance of *hibakusha* from South Korea in Japan requesting free medical treatment made some Japanese conscious of the existence and plight of A-bomb victims living in South Korea. While atomic bomb victims in Japan were eligible for certain state-sponsored medical treatment following the enactment of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Medical Care Law in 1957 and for healthcare allowances after the passage of the Special Measures Law in 1968, the same laws were not applicable in South Korea, therefore leaving tens of thousands of Korean *hibakusha* without access to any form of support.⁴ When some Japanese citizens came to this realization in the early 1970s, they formed peace movements demanding that the A-bomb relief laws apply to *hibakusha* living in South Korea the same way they support A-bomb sufferers in Japan. In the process, these Japanese advocates were confronted with Japan's accountability in World War II, the vicissitudes of the colonial period, and Japan's complicity in many Koreans becoming victims of the atomic bomb.⁵

This article pays close attention to the foremost advocates of Korean *hibakusha* in Japan and delineates how the supporters were influenced by their Christian morals in recognizing the Korean *hibakusha*'s suffering, expressing remorse for the hardships these people had experienced. It introduces the philosophies, motives, and activities of three Christians who played a pivotal role in maintaining and extending the Korean *hibakusha* support network in Japan. They belonged to various Protestant denominations, represented three different regions of Japan where they set up their own grassroots organizations, and engaged in diverse support activities. Nevertheless, they were driven by the teachings of the Christian New Testament and their goal was congruent: to serve justice and make amends by helping Korean (and other overseas) *hibakusha* secure the same medical and financial benefits as Japanese *hibakusha* had been entitled to. It must be noted that the large number of Christians in South Korea also contributed to the Japanese Christians' compassion toward the Korean A-bomb sufferers.⁶ Dr. Kawamura Toratarō 河村虎太郎 (1914–1987), for instance, cooperated not only with Japanese but also with Korean Christians when it came to the support of Korean *hibakusha*, strengthening the bond between Japanese and Korean Christian communities.

Advocacy for the rights of Korean *hibakusha* also sheds light on the altering historical consciousness of Japanese Christians. The case of the three apologists

4. On the two atomic bomb relief laws implemented by the Japanese government, see HIROSHIMA SHI NAGASAKI SHI GENBAKU SAIGAISHI HENSHŪ IINKAI (1979, 187–195).

5. On the Japanese grassroots movements advocating for the rights of South Korean A-bomb victims, see DURÓ (2016).

6. Nowadays, approximately 25 percent of the South Korean population belongs to Christian denominations. For more information, see BUSWELL and LEE (2007).

described below exemplifies how the Japanese Christians' prewar stance of endorsing the imperial regime and militarism differed starkly from their post-war standpoint of standing up for the oppressed and minorities while expressing penitence for the colonial victimization of the Koreans (and other Southeast Asian nations). It is important to note that such a change was not peculiar to Christians. Several educators, doctors, company employees, students, and Buddhist monks were also sympathetic with the plight of the wartime victims who had suffered enormously due to Japan's oppressive colonial practices and its war of aggression in the Asia-Pacific region. Philip A. Seaton has identified five key groups when analyzing Japanese war memories: progressives, the progressive-leaning group, the "don't know and don't care," conservatives, and nationalists. He states that progressives "are critical of both Japan's aggressive war and atrocities;" they "have an internationalist outlook, advocate a human rights agenda, and criticize Japanese official apologies and compensation as inadequate." "They judge that overall Japan was more of an aggressor than a victim" (SEATON 2007, 18–20). Japanese advocating for the rights of South Korean *hibakusha* represent the progressive group, and this particularly holds true for the Christians who established various associations for their support from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. Thus, examining the lives and beliefs of three Christians initially taking the lead in the movement can provide us with critical understandings of the larger dynamic and can help us profoundly comprehend the impact of Christianity on the motives of those from the "perpetrator side" who were firmly committed to campaigning for restoring the human rights of a group of former victims.

Brief History of Christianity in Japan

To comprehend how Christian ideologies influenced the attitude of some Japanese toward Japan's wartime victims, it is important to briefly describe how this religion took hold in Japan and evolved during the course of history, with more emphasis on the postwar period. According to Mark Mullins, currently "less than one percent of the Japanese population are affiliated with a Christian church of any kind" (MULLINS 1998, 11). Until the Meiji Restoration, Christians were subjected to persecution, violence, execution, and the Tokugawa rulers were constantly seeking to suppress their voices and wipe them out.⁷ Given the long-term suffering of the Japanese Christian community, they could more easily identify with other minority groups who were oppressed, discriminated against, or simply neglected by mainstream society and the ruling government.

7. On the history of early Christianity in Japan and religious persecutions, see PALMER (2016, 483–486).

There were three introductions of Christianity in Japan. The first came with the arrival of Roman Catholic missionary Francis Xavier in 1549. The second happened after 1859, namely with Protestant and Catholic missionaries coming to Japan to spread the religion after Matthew Perry's landing in 1853. The third occurred after Japan's defeat in World War II and the consequent American occupation, which resulted in Japan following U.S. models in many areas of life, including religion (PHILLIPS 1981, 114).

The first Portuguese Jesuits setting foot in Japan in the sixteenth century had a small impact on the country. However, their adherents gradually increased and by 1600 they "converted as many as 300,000 people to the Catholic faith" (GORDON 2003, 3). With Japan's unification and the beginning of the Tokugawa period, Christian missionaries were viewed inauspiciously, and from 1612 Japan began to outlaw the Western religion and European missionaries were exiled from Japan. The ruling Edo Bakufu regarded Christianity "as a potential political threat" in the newly united country, and to solidify its power pursued the policy of isolation, leaving no room for foreign influences let alone religion (PARAMORE 2009, 53). Nevertheless, the Dutch found a way to infiltrate into Japan following the Christian persecution even in the era of complete political seclusion. Dejima, a tiny artificial island in Nagasaki, served as "Japan's only window to the outside world until the reopening of the country... in 1858" (NTS 2000, 4).⁸ This way, European culture, technology, trade, science, and religion permeated Japan, albeit under the total control of the regime. With the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate, the ban on Christianity was lifted in 1873 and the "hidden Christians" reappeared with their faith intact, but even afterwards they "had to face attacks as 'traitors' and alienation from their families and society" (BAMBA and HOWES 1978, 256). Following the Meiji Restoration, the situation of the Christians slightly improved although they still accounted for a small proportion of the population. After "the Meiji government repealed the bakufu's anti-Christian laws" in 1873, the "1889 constitution guaranteed a limited religious freedom" for them (GORDON 2003, 110).

In the first half of the twentieth century, Christians consolidated their position in Japan and gradually established a Japanese form of Christianity. Through their participation in the Three Religions Conference in 1912, the state "recognized Christianity as one of the three major religions in Japan" (ION 2003, 83). At that time, Protestants had some impact on the emerging social and labor (left-wing) movements, and some of the leaders "were Christians or influenced by Christianity," which went against the national policies (ION 2003, 73). However, the number of Christian participants decreased to a large extent by the 1920s

8. On the Dutch presence in Nagasaki in premodern Japan and their trade with the Japanese, see BODART-BAILEY (1999, 187–223) and GOODMAN (2000).

with the radicalization of these movements. “The Manchurian incident was the last time that there was any serious opposition from Christians to government policies overseas” in the pre-1945 period (ION 2003, 76).⁹ The Japanese Christians distanced themselves from their Western counterparts when the League of Nations and foreign missionaries condemned Japan’s invasion. Afterwards, most of them became fervent advocates of the imperial regime and relentlessly endorsed Japan’s wartime ambitions. The Japanese Christians’ support of the empire’s colonial policies is demonstrated by their successful missionary work and establishment of churches in the occupied areas, namely, in Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria. Their overseas activities “not only followed in the path of Japanese imperialism but also it was an intimate part of the expansion of Japanese presence” in the Japanese colonies (ION 2003, 81). Whereas most Christians did not question the morality of the oppressive practices carried out by the imperial regime, there were a few opponents to overseas missionary work: Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造 (1878–1933), a Tokyo Imperial University professor, and Yanai-hara Tadao 矢内原忠雄 (1893–1961), an academic affiliated with the Nonchurch movement. Yanaihara claimed that unless Japan put an end to its overseas territorial expansion, it “would ultimately lead to national destruction” (ION 2003, 81). Although this kind of statement was considered highly unpatriotic then, time proved Yanaihara right.

A. Hamish Ion argues that “it was by their support of Japanese imperial and military ambitions in continental East Asia that Japanese Christians could demonstrate their loyalty to Japan to counter the doubts about their Japanese-ness raised by their adherence to a foreign religion identified with the West” (ION 2002, 83). In other words, the Japanese Christians, who had been persecuted during the course of history and had been excluded from mainstream society due to cherishing a non-Japanese religion, aimed to prove their genuine Japanese identity by wholeheartedly supporting Japan’s ultranationalistic sentiments and wartime participation. Winston Davis describes the Christian support of imperial Japan as follows:

Church leaders declared that worshippers should bow in the direction of the imperial palace before services began. Pastors were encouraged to make pilgrimages to Ise and other Shinto shrines.... The church responded to the Manchurian Incident with renewed calls for national unity, prayers for peace, and plans for conducting “special, emergency evangelism” in northern China and in Japan itself. With slogans like *dendo hokoku* (serving the country through evangelism), the church expressed its naive faith that, somehow, the ritual of Protestant evangelism would make a significant contribution to

9. The Japanese Imperial Army invaded Manchuria and founded the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1931. The territory remained under Japanese occupation until August 1945.

the war effort. Money was collected by the church to purchase aircraft for the armed forces and, as in the Christian west, prayers were offered up for the victory and safety of the men serving their country. The few Holiness and Nazarene ministers who dared to oppose the emperor system were instructed by the Kyōdan¹⁰ to repent and resign from their churches. (DAVIS 1992, 91)

In the wake of Japan's defeat, the number of people joining the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) increased and some Japanese regarded Christianity as a "positive, pacifist and liberal influence in the nation" (SHERRILL 2003, 164).¹¹ Despite their pacifist stance in the postwar period, Japanese Christians neither grasped the scale of the suffering the Koreans had endured during the Japanese colonization nor did they make attempts to mend ties and do penance for their country's past wrongdoings for nearly two decades. Their attitude toward the nations Japan had invaded before 1945 stood in stark contrast to that of the American Christians. In the fall of 1945, a delegation of Christians from the United States arrived in Japan and apologized to the Japanese Christians for America's devastating aerial bombings of the major Japanese cities during World War II, which resulted in the emergence of amicable relations between the Christian communities of the two formerly hostile nations. Nevertheless, the Japanese failed to follow the example of their American counterparts when it came to showing remorse for Japanese wartime and colonial atrocities. Additionally, when the Japanese government began the repatriation of thousands of *zainichi* 在日 Koreans to North Korea who had fallen victim to the propaganda of a socialist paradise in 1959, the church cooperated with the government, believed in the righteousness of the project, and failed to comply with the request of the South Korean Christians to prevent the influx of *zainichi* Koreans into North Korea, a country that violated human rights and did not tolerate Christian congregations (KO and BYRD 2014, 18–19).¹²

The 1960s was a decade characterized by unprecedented economic growth and considerable social upheaval. With the advocacy of nuclear disarmament and the growing opposition to the Vietnam War, many Japanese began to critically think about Japan's aggression against other nations in World War II. Christianity played an essential role in heightening people's awareness of their country's responsibility for inflicting suffering on millions of people all over Asia. Additionally, the signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965 marked a turning point in the relationship between

10. Kyōdan 教団 refers to the United Church of Christ in Japan.

11. The UCCJ is the largest Protestant denomination in Japan and was established in 1941 following the union of more than thirty Protestant denominations. For more information, see "A Brief History of the Kyodan," <http://uccj-e.org/history> (accessed 16 January 2017).

12. *Zainichi* Koreans decided against returning to the Korean Peninsula and continued to reside in Japan after 1945.

the Japanese and South Korean Christian communities. South Korean church leaders demanded that their Japanese counterparts show sincere repentance and critically observed the lack of an apologetic stance of the Japanese over two decades: “They... avoid remembering what their country has done to the Asian race or thinking of how to wash away their sins. Japanese Christians only show cheap sympathy [toward Koreans]” (KO and BYRD 2014, 23).

The harsh condemnation from the Korean church provided the Japanese Christians with the opportunity to reflect on their country’s past deeds and realize that the absence of a sincere apology from the Japanese side, admission of the churches’ complicity, and the failure to profoundly comprehend the implications of the Japanese colonial policies on the Korean Peninsula were the biggest barriers to healing the Koreans’ psychological scars and improve bilateral relations. It was Ōmura Isamu 大村 勇 (1901–1991), UCCJ’s then moderator, who launched the process of reconciliation when he expressed regret over Japan’s past wrongdoings and apologized at the Fiftieth Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea in September 1965. Upon his return to Japan, he admitted: “The great problem in Korean-Japanese relationships is this: Japanese people do not know Korean people very well. They do not know how Koreans feel, and that is the problem.” He went on to say that “The crimes that our country committed were the churches’ crimes as well. I confess with full honesty. This is what everyone in Japanese churches should take as his own responsibility” (KO and BYRD 2014, 24). Ōmura acknowledged Japanese Christians’ accountability for the first time and made other church leaders realize that their unconditional support of the military and imperial regime before 1945 had contributed to the suppression of millions of Koreans and other Asian people.

Against this backdrop, Suzuki Masahisa 鈴木正久 (1912–1969), who took over Ōmura’s post as the UCCJ’s operator in 1966, “released an official statement of apology for its [UCCJ’s] support of wartime aggression” in 1967 (SHERRILL 2003, 167). In the UCCJ’s report, Suzuki apologized that the church was unable to prevent Japan from invading other nations. Two years later when the Japanese government endorsed a bill for the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine, many Christian leaders were explicitly against the proposal (SHERRILL 2003, 168). For them, the fallen Japanese soldiers were war criminals who did not deserve to be enshrined by society. This new perspective starkly contrasted with their pre-1945 stance when they had encouraged citizens to contribute to Japan’s military endeavors and considered the deceased soldiers as heroes who had given their lives for the emperor as a part of the nationalistic propaganda.

Tracing the trajectory of how the Japanese Christians confronted their country’s military and colonial past explains why many of them were prone to take a sympathetic stance toward minority groups, such as the atomic bomb survivors residing in South Korea. Admission of guilt, atonement for one’s sins, advocacy of

pacifism, the firm stance of anti-militarism and anti-nuclearism, an emphasis on Japan's need to face up to its past misdeeds, and seeking social righteousness are salient features of Christian thought in postwar Japan. These ideals determined the philosophies and deeds of some Japanese Protestants participating in Korean *hibakusha* support movements, including Dr. Kawamura Toratarō, Matsui Yoshiko 松井義子 (1928–1998), and Reverend Oka Masaharu 岡 正治 (1918–1994). Their examples not only substantiate the connection between Christian principles and one's inclination to assist an underprivileged, victimized layer of society, but they also denote the Christian reexamination of their historical consciousness in the second half of the twentieth century. Whereas Japanese Christians embraced the dominant historical narrative promoting militarism and colonial expansion in the pre-1945 period, they denounced their previous standpoint and Japan's wartime atrocities through their apologetic statements from the 1960s onward, coming up with counter-narratives that defended the victims' perspectives and put reconciliation in the foreground. The following sections examine the activities of the three Christians advocating for the rights of Korean *hibakusha* in this historical context.

Kawamura Toratarō in Hiroshima

Kawamura Toratarō was a Hiroshima-based doctor specializing in the medical treatment of atomic bomb victims and a pioneer in providing South Korean *hibakusha* with medical assistance. He recognized that immediate medical assistance was of the utmost importance for Korean A-bomb survivors, which should precede financial or any other support. In 1971 he visited South Korea as part of the first Japanese medical delegation to examine A-bomb patients there. He realized that Korean victims had been excluded from the *hibakusha* relief laws, had been unable to receive medical treatment owing to the high cost, and therefore their situation was considerably worse than that of Japanese *hibakusha*. He dedicated himself to the medical support of Korean victims, invited many patients to his hospital starting in 1973, and established a permanent medical committee in 1984 that brought hundreds of Korean *hibakusha* into Japan for medical treatment. His strong Christian faith was a key factor in his resolute support of the A-bomb sufferers in South Korea from the 1970s.

Kawamura was born in 1914 in north Gyeongsang Province of Korea, which was a Japanese colony at that time. He resided in Korea until the end of World War II, after which the whole family repatriated to Hiroshima Prefecture. Spending his youth in Korea contributed significantly to his later sympathy with the plight of Korean A-bomb survivors (KTI, 237).

Kawamura came into contact with Christianity in Korea. He recalled in his memoirs that he used to associate Christianity with the Western powers,

the enemies of Japan. He believed that condemning Christianity was a way to express his love for Japan, an influence stemming from Japan's nationalistic propaganda in the first half of the twentieth century. However, a significant event changed his mind forever. His father had worked as the president of a bank but was incarcerated when Kawamura was a sophomore at Keijo (Seoul) University due to suspicion of his involvement in a bribery case. The family suddenly became impoverished, and to make matters worse Kawamura's younger brother developed tuberculosis. The family could not afford expensive medical treatment, but a Korean Christian doctor, Iguchi Shinji 井口信二 (d.u.), agreed to examine Kawamura's brother free of charge. As Kawamura recalled, he could never forget the happiness he felt when the doctor provided his brother's medical examination and treatment. Although his brother and sister passed away, Iguchi's benevolence was forever engraved on Kawamura's mind, after which he was determined to also become a doctor who assists the poor. He was subsequently baptized and his Christian values both affected his worldview and influenced his actions later in life (KTI, 33, 76). In the midst of family tragedy, Kawamura was deeply moved by the warmth and friendliness he found in Christianity. The church and the teachings of the Bible helped him alleviate his pain and get through the loss of his siblings. His encounter with Christianity in Korea led him to a path that enabled his later involvement in treating the poor and the underprivileged, such as the atomic bomb survivors returning to South Korea after the end of World War II.

The Kawamura family returned to Japan after the war, and Kawamura Toratarō opened his medical clinic in Hiroshima City in 1947, dedicating his life to providing A-bomb victims with medical treatment (mostly Japanese and *zainichi* Korean patients). It was not until 1968 that he learned about the existence of *hibakusha* living in South Korea, which came as a shock to him. Then, Kakkin Kaigi 核禁会議, an anti-nuclear movement supporting *hibakusha* both in Japan and overseas, selected Kawamura as one of the leading members of the Japanese medical team that was first dispatched to South Korea in 1971 with the aim of examining the conditions of *hibakusha* living there. Kawamura's 1971 visit to the country where he had spent the most decisive period of his life and his witnessing *hibakusha* there who had never received medical treatment was a life-changing experience for him.¹³ His first visit was met with animosity and bitterness in Korea, since many people blamed Japan and the Japanese people for their miserable situation. As a devout Christian, Kawamura felt a deep remorse for their suffering and gradually became aware of his country's wartime atrocities and responsibility toward the victims.

13. For more information about Kawamura's first medical visit to South Korea and his provision of medical treatment for Korean *hibakusha*, see DURÓ (2018).

Kawamura and Dr. Ishida Sada took part in an informal meeting about the *hibakusha* problem at the YMCA in Seoul on 25 September. Many influential Koreans were present there, including leaders of Christian communities. The Japanese medical team was full of both anxiety and expectations. When the Korean participants criticized them for only examining but not treating *hibakusha*, Kawamura broke the ice and read out a letter written by Reverend Morita from the West Chūgoku Parish of the United Church of Christ in Japan addressed to the Korean Church. In the letter, the Japanese Christians apologized to South Korea for being unable to stop imperial Japan from inflicting enormous suffering on many people and expressed Japan's wartime guilt. Reading this letter changed the atmosphere of the meeting, and the Korean participants began to believe in the benevolence of the Japanese doctors (ZHTCHI, 8–9).

Following Kawamura's encounter with *hibakusha* in South Korea, he acquired firsthand knowledge about their plight and became aware of the repercussions of their long-term neglect. He internalized their tragedy and gained a profound understanding of their history and Japan's complicity. His Christian faith enabled his compassion toward the victims and to critically interpret his country's imperial past. However, unlike many members involved in the support of Korean *hibakusha*, Kawamura's actions were not restricted to simply demanding the Japanese government's implementation of relief measures. He realized that it was immediate action and medical treatment that Korean *hibakusha* needed, and there was no time to petition the government and wait years or decades for their efforts to bear fruit. He was aware that Korean *hibakusha* were passing away at an alarming rate and the memory of them within society was gradually sinking into oblivion. Consequently, he began to invite these atomic bomb survivors to his own hospital in 1973 at his own expense, and in 1984 founded a permanent grassroots organization called the Hiroshima Committee to Invite Korean A-bomb Survivors to Japan for Medical Treatment (Zaikan Hibakusha Tonichi Chiryō Hiroshima Iinkai 在韓被爆者渡日治療広島委員会).

Iwamura Noboru's 岩村 昇 (1927–2005) relief activities in Nepal in the 1960s had a great impact on Kawamura. Iwamura, a Japanese doctor, was dispatched to Nepal by the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Operation Service (JOCs, Nihon Kirisutokyo Kaigai Iryō Kyōryokukai 日本キリスト教海外医療協力会) to treat people suffering from tuberculosis. This Christian association held the view that Japan had inflicted a lot of suffering on the people of Asia after being embroiled in World War II, and they wanted to show contrition and aimed to establish peace between Japan and other Asian countries through their humanitarian activities. The two founding members told Kawamura, "We intend to get involved in this association to make amends [for our past wrongdoings]," and their words reverberated in Kawamura's mind (KTI, 51). Kawamura was influenced by Iwamura's work in Nepal, his philanthropy, and his profound feeling of

repentance for Japan's imperial past. Iwamura's activities had a powerful impact on Kawamura when he took on the medical support of Korean *hibakusha*.

From the 1970s onwards, Kawamura mobilized members of South Korean and Japanese society to collaborate toward the medical support of Korean *hibakusha*. He achieved some success in Seoul and Daegu and obtained the assistance of some Christian groups. Although he had never been involved in politics, he drew the attention of many politicians in South Korea who praised his relief efforts. For his medical assistance of Korean *hibakusha*, he received a letter of appreciation from the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Japan. Furthermore, in 1984, he was given a presidential award by Chun Doo-hwan 全斗煥 (b. 1931) for his long-term support of South Korean atomic bomb survivors (KTI, 71).

Matsui Yoshiko in Osaka

The Association of Citizens for the Support of Korean Atomic Bomb Victims (AOC, Zaikan Hibakusha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 在韓被爆者を救援する市民の会) has been the main grassroots organization in Japan advocating for the rights of Korean atomic bomb survivors since 1971 (ITŌ 2017). Its headquarters is in Osaka with branch offices in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forming a nationwide peace movement. This association has provided direct financial and medical aid to the Korea Association, enabling the maintenance and operation of the only organization in South Korea whose members consist of A-bomb survivors. Additionally, the AOC members have visited various parts of South Korea and conducted surveys of actual conditions of *hibakusha*. Moreover, they have collected signatures all over Japan for the support of Korean *hibakusha* and petitioned the Japanese government repeatedly on paying national compensation to Korean victims and implementing relief measures for overseas *hibakusha*. Besides, through their publications, photo exhibitions, and film showings, they have played a key role in informing Japanese society about the existence, plight, conditions, and history of South Korean A-bomb victims. Not only have they assisted hundreds of Korean *hibakusha* to receive A-bomb certificates and get medical treatment in Japan, they have also served as a pressure group within Japanese society to make the Japanese government extend the *hibakusha* relief measures to Korean victims. One of the founders and prominent members of the Osaka headquarters was Matsui Yoshiko, a devout Christian.¹⁴ This section focuses on Matsui's thought

14. Matsui was a repatriate who was born and raised in Dalian, China, which had a Japanese population of 225,000 by 1945 (HESS 2011, 377). The Japanese living in the occupied areas were "colonists" and "had been held in high esteem by Japanese society at home," a position which they lost with Japan's defeat and following their repatriation (HAMMOND 2015, 111).

influenced by the New Testament that led her on the path of supporting Korean *hibakusha* and showing compassion for the plight of wartime victims.

Matsui, being one of those three million Japanese who had resided in the occupied areas, was forcibly repatriated to Japan with her family in the aftermath of the war, following the abrupt collapse of the former empire in August 1945. Repatriates ended up losing all their overseas assets and faced a harsh reality upon their return to Japan. Due to the hardships that awaited them in the postcolonial era, James Orr notes that “most repatriate remembrances were written from a victim’s perspective, and there was hardly any sense of being the oppressor whose own country had invaded the various foreign countries as occupier” (ORR 2001, 167). Hiraoka Takashi 平岡 敬 (b. 1927), Hiroshima’s mayor from 1991 to 1999 who began reporting on the dire situation of South Korean *hibakusha* as one of the correspondents of *Chūgoku shinbun* 中国新聞 from the 1960s onward, was also among the postwar repatriates. He admitted to having accepted the fact of colonialism as a matter of course and had never doubted its legitimacy as a child. He was a junior high school student in Seoul when Japan announced its surrender, and it was not until he became a journalist in the 1950s that he realized that Japan’s colonization of the Korean Peninsula had brought about the existence of South Korean A-bomb survivors and consequently began to critically observe his country’s wartime aggression (HIRAOKA 1983, 121–126). This demonstrates that Japanese repatriates had not only taken their country’s subjugation of other nations for granted before August 1945 but also portrayed themselves exclusively as victims of World War II in the postwar era. Although Matsui did not disclose any details of her life in Dalian and her early perspectives on Japan’s colonialism in her book *Heiwa no pan dane* 平和のパン種, being filled with compassion for Japan’s wartime victims only after her encounter with Christianity is indicative of the fact that like other repatriates, she had failed to critically observe her country’s atrocities in wartime and could not comprehend what the disastrous implications Japan’s occupation of Manchuria had entailed for the colonized people while she had been living there.

In the early postwar era, Matsui contracted tuberculosis and recuperated in a sanatorium. During her stay, she met Kashiba Shimiko 樫葉史美子 (1927–1954), an active member of the anti-nuclear and anti-rearmament movement at that time. Kashiba introduced Matsui to Reverend Masaike Jin 政池 仁 (1900–1985), a Christian missionary and the director of the Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation (JFOR). They exerted the greatest influence on Matsui and prompted her to convert to Christianity. Both Masaike and Kashiba emphasized the need to love not only the people we choose, but also to care for the oppressed and abandoned who are considered “worthless” in society. Masaike taught her that God searches for those lacking support, care, and love, and looks after them. Just like God, humans also have to give a helping hand to people in need. Masaike pointed out

that regardless of nationality, all people are precious to God (MATSUI 1993, 7–9). With this, he expressed his firm stance against discrimination within Japanese society, especially against Koreans.

Matsui claimed that the victims and victimizers should hold each other's hands, establish friendly and equal relations, and through this, peace. In her book, she brought up the example of the parable of the good Samaritan in which a Samaritan helps an injured Israelite, despite being foes and despising each other. She indicated that just like the two enemy groups assisted each other as neighbors, so should other nations that are divided by long-standing conflict, such as the Japanese and the Koreans. She encouraged the Japanese to love their neighbors as the Samaritans did and stressed the importance of love conveyed by the Bible. However, Matsui critically observed her country and concluded that the Japanese could not love the way the Samaritans did. Instead, they kept blaming, judging, betraying, and abandoning others, in particular the former wartime and colonial victims such as *hibakusha* living in South Korea. With this, she went beyond the New Testament and put the story of the Samaritans into a historical context, calling Japan's attention to the ideals of brotherly love and mutual assistance (MATSUI 1993, 24, 212–214).

Another problem Matsui elaborated on was the inability of human beings to identify with those who suffer and understand those in difficult positions. Nevertheless, she refuted this argument with the illustration of motherly love. She argued that a mother can overcome different positions and unconditionally love her child. This is how true love and understanding toward another human being emerges. When children receive affection and trust from their mother, they reach the stage when the mother can assume responsibility for her actions. Love is not limited to giving material things. It is also about understanding others from the inside. She compared the idea of mother-child relations to Japanese-Korean relations. Her encounter with *hibakusha* in South Korea made it clear for her that they had suffered from a lack of understanding in society, both in Japan and South Korea (MATSUI 1993, 53–55). Matsui was profoundly aware that understanding others is of utmost importance when addressing the Korean *hibakusha* problem. When humans can comprehend the anguish, the history, and the background of others they can assume responsibility for their own actions and provide real assistance. Namely, the first step begins with learning to love others. Then, out of love, sincere understanding is born, which is the key to addressing and providing solutions for the Korean *hibakusha*'s despondent situation.

Matsui joined the Nonchurch movement, a distinctively Japanese denomination of Christianity. Nonchurch adherents followed the teachings of Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861–1930): “He and his followers attempted to witness for the Christian gospel without ecclesiastical organization and without financial support from Western missionary societies” (KITAGAWA 1966, 303). They believed

in Jesus Christ but refused to be members of any church. The followers had strongly condemned war and supported absolute pacifism, and having been labeled as dissidents, were marginal members of society in the pre-1945 period. Witnessing imperial Japan's downfall and the repercussions of its most destructive war ever, they were critical of their own government. Unlike most Japanese who perceived themselves as victims of the war, they acknowledged being the victimizers and developed a strong sense of guilt for Japan's wartime atrocities against other Asian nations.

In the late 1960s there was a movement among the Japanese Nonchurch followers supporting the reconstruction of Jeam-ri 提岩里 Church in South Korea as a token of atonement for their country's cruelty during the colonial era. The infamous Jeam-ri Church Massacre took place on 15 April 1919. It was the time of the 1 March Independence Movement (Samil Movement) when a group of Koreans revolted against Japanese rule. On the day of the massacre, the Japanese army locked twenty-nine Korean rebels inside Jeam-ri Church, and set the church ablaze (KATSIAFICAS 2012, 45). After the war, the Japanese Christians were conscience-stricken for the crimes committed by Japan, and many of them espoused the cause of the wartime victims, including Korean *hibakusha*. Several Christians joining the AOC in the early 1970s were previously involved in the movement to raise funds to rebuild the Jeam-ri Church.¹⁵

Soon afterwards, Matsui read an article published by Sin Yeong-soo 辛泳洙 (1919–1999), an A-bomb survivor residing in South Korea, in the *Asahi Graph* アサヒグラフ photo journal. As a Christian condemning imperial Japan's annexation of Korea, the Korean *hibakusha* issue immediately drew her attention. She exchanged a few letters with Sin and invited him to Japan. Seeing his face full of keloid scars due to the Korean *hibakusha*'s lack of access to reconstructive surgery, she decided to set up a movement to aid this community and played a key role in forming the AOC. The first chairperson was Motoyoshi Yoshihiro 本吉義宏 (d.u.), leader of the Korean Kobe Group (ITŌ 2017, 114–115). Following its establishment, Matsui recruited many Nonchurch adherents to join the AOC and support the cause of Korean *hibakusha*, and with this, initially there was a firm Christian base in the movement.

Aside from the circumstances mentioned above, there was one more factor that urged Matsui to engage herself in the aid of Korean *hibakusha*: her encounter with JFOR through Reverend Masaike's introduction. JFOR is a Christian nonviolent and anti-war organization present in many countries worldwide, including Japan. Through JFOR, Matsui became acquainted with Koreans and familiarized herself with colonial history from a Korean perspective. When she

15. Personal interview with Matsuda Motoji 松田素二, the secretary general of the AOC, Kyoto, 2017.

learned about the existence of atomic bomb survivors in South Korea who were still haunted by the memories of war and colonialism, she decided to take action. By then, she had been convinced that religion in the Bible is closely connected to history (MATSUI 1993, 204–205).

Matsui, a repatriate settling down in the Kansai region following Japan's surrender in World War II, became aware of the importance of peace through the teachings of the New Testament and lived in the spirit of the Christian Non-church movement. After befriending many Korean Christians, she disapprovingly observed her country's colonial past and involvement in World War II. She sympathized with the plight of Korean *hibakusha* and became dedicated to their support in the 1970s. Matsui states that she was driven by the Christian principles of self-criticism, aiding the underprivileged, racial equality, establishing peace, and loving our fellow human beings. Although many of the later members of the AOC were not affiliated with Christianity, Matsui infused the Christian ethics of war guilt into the minds of the non-Christian advocates. Her legacy continues to inspire the Japanese advocates of Korean *hibakusha* and her principles are determining factors in how the movement is being operated today.

Reverend Oka Masaharu in Nagasaki

Oka Masaharu was a protestant minister in Nagasaki in the second half of the twentieth century. He had always been a social outsider since “he never made any compromise with state power; on the contrary, he always felt a deep affection toward the weak and the oppressed” (OMTKI, 168). He had been profoundly aware of Japan's infringement upon the human rights of Koreans, and since the war's end had never hesitated to give voice to his disillusionment. Oka repeatedly emphasized Japan's wartime responsibilities, and the need to apologize to the victims and compensate them. As a fervent Christian, he had been struggling with guilt throughout his life for being a Japanese who victimized other nations. Atoning for one's sins is essential in Christianity, and Oka, as a protestant minister, placed Japan's war crimes into this context, stressing the need for penance.

Oka was born in Osaka in 1918. His father was a peace-loving citizen filled with democratic ideas, and under his influence Oka realized the untrustworthiness of the imperial system and the military state early on (OMTKI, 432). His elder brother attended the YMCA and read the English version of the Bible, and Oka also came into contact with Christianity relatively early (NISHIMURA 2005, 40). While in elementary school, he attended the Sunday School of the Methodist Church, and these early influences played a significant role in his later decision to become a protestant minister (NAGASAKI SHINBUN 2014). After his father's company burned down in 1933, he quit school to reduce the financial burden on his family and enrolled in a naval school the following year (OMTKI, 434).

With Japan escalating the Second Sino-Japanese War, Oka was dispatched to Shanghai in 1937, and with this he actively participated in Japan's war against China (OMTKI, 433). He later recalled himself as having become one of those Japanese who had committed crimes against many Asian nations, "Despite not being a fervent patriot, I consciously became one of the victimizers when I volunteered and devoted myself to the Japanese Imperial Navy, which had been responsible for the invasion of many Asian countries" (NISHIMURA 2005, 41). In the coming years he was sent to many places, from Rabaul in Papua New Guinea to the Marshall Islands, where he witnessed the brutality of the Japanese army, the suffering of the local population, and the maltreatment of Koreans, especially the Korean "comfort women" abused by the Imperial Army (OMTKI, 27).

Oka was employed at the naval academy on the island of Etajima 江田島 near Hiroshima from August 1943 to August 1945. There, he witnessed the misery of Korean laborers; they had to work eighteen hours daily and were compelled to dig air-raid shelters and underground arms factories (OMTKI, 28). On 6 August 1945, he witnessed the A-bomb exploding over Hiroshima, after which black rain fell on Etajima.¹⁶ This means that Oka was also exposed to radiation, although he never applied for a certificate (OKA 1982, 22). When he gave voice to his anti-war feelings in the form of a speech at the naval school (he argued that the emperor must capitulate and the futile war must come to an end), he was treated as a traitor and was banished to Yakeyama 焼山 (near Kure 呉), where he witnessed Japan's surrender. Despite becoming conscious of Japan's need to conclude World War II before the emperor's announcement of surrender, in his later speeches and writings he expressed regret for stressing his anti-war conviction for only six days despite serving in the navy for eleven years.

His desire to help Korean victims was strengthened through witnessing the annihilated city of Hiroshima in November 1945. He claimed that the most appalling and painful scene for him was not the view of the devastated city itself but seeing the discrimination of Koreans who remained in Hiroshima. That event was deeply etched in his mind, facilitating his devotion to assist Korean *hibakusha* and other wartime victims of Japan (OMTKI, 29, 45). Oka's participation in World War II was a life-changing experience for him in which he witnessed the immorality and discriminatory nature of the Japanese imperial system. Instead of adopting the standpoint of being victims of the war, as many Japanese did, Oka focused on Japan's atrocities and how he himself was one of those perpetrators. Feeling an urgent need for penance in accordance with Christian ethics eventually led to his support of disempowered minority groups in the coming

16. Black rain refers to the nuclear fallout that emerged over Hiroshima following the atomic bombing. The fallout was full of radioactive particles that damage health when absorbed through the skin.

decades, including Korean *hibakusha*. Despite being a forerunner in articulating Japan's role as a perpetrator during the imperial period, he was resolute in his belief that this recognition came too late.¹⁷

Oka's wartime experiences, his disillusionment with Koreans being deprived of their citizenship in 1952 following the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the abandonment of Korean *hibakusha*, and the unreasonable confinement of many Koreans in Omura Prison coupled with his profound Christian ideals of self-deprecation, doing away with discrimination, and loving all human beings equally all convinced him to form an organization whose aim would be to advocate for the rights of *zainichi* Koreans.¹⁸ In 1965 he set up the Nagasaki Association to Protect the Human Rights of Koreans in Japan (Nagasaki Zainichi Chōsenjin no Jinken o Mamoru Kai 長崎在日朝鮮人の人権を守る会, hereafter Nagasaki Association), at first attracting twenty members. They gathered every month to study about the *zainichi* Korean problem and Korean *hibakusha*. They were engaged in problems surrounding the Korean schools in Japan, immigration orders (for example, deportation orders for the Omura Prison detainees), the registration law for foreigners, the lack of assistance for Korean A-bomb victims, A-bomb certificate applications for Korean *hibakusha*, and a survey on their actual condition (OKA 1982, 17). The members became aware of the core of the Korean *hibakusha* and the *zainichi* Korean problem, conducted research on Japan's colonization of Korea and the forced labor system during World War II, and made efforts to determine the exact number of Korean victims of the bombing in Nagasaki.¹⁹ Besides the monthly study sessions, the Nagasaki Association accomplished a lot, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the lack of surveys of Korean *hibakusha* in Nagasaki, the association took it as their mission to launch a comprehensive inquiry into the condition of the *hibakusha*, which they carried out in 1981. Additionally, the members raised funds to erect a monument for the

17. Oka had a strong sense of justice based on his faith, stating, "wars completely destroy the preciousness of human life" (OKA 1975, 224). Thus, wars bring forth discrimination, a superiority complex, eliminate the mutual respect among humans, and enable the invasion and subjugation of other nations. This is how Japan's invasion in Asia and America's dropping of the atomic bombs became so simple to carry out in terms of morality.

18. Japan issued Circular no. 438 on 19 April 1952, nine days before the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect. It explicitly "stipulated the uniform loss of Japanese nationality by Koreans and Taiwanese as a result of the Peace Treaty, regardless of their place and residence" despite the fact that until then Koreans and Taiwanese possessed Japanese citizenship (RYANG 2000, 22–23). Omura Prison is situated in Nagasaki Prefecture, and since 1952 has served as a prison designated by the Ministry of Justice to confine *zainichi* Korean criminals and Korean illegal immigrants who are to be deported (OKA 1981).

19. Personal interview with Takazane Yasunori 高實康稔, former director of the Oka Masaharu Memorial Nagasaki Peace Museum, in Nagasaki, 2016.

memory of Korean A-bomb victims inside the Nagasaki Peace Park that they implemented in 1979.

Oka served on the Nagasaki City Council from 1971 until 1983, and during this period was constantly working on behalf of the interests of Korean *hibakusha*. Although he did not manage to achieve a real breakthrough in catalyzing public support, he managed to positively influence many of the city's leaders, including Motoshima Hitoshi 本島 等 (1922–2014) (Nagasaki's mayor from 1979 to 1995), who became aware of the Korean *hibakusha*'s abandonment and Japan's responsibility in their plight due to Oka's efforts.

Motoshima had a lot in common with Oka. Both converted to Christianity before World War II and refused to respect the emperor as a divine ruler. Additionally, when they met, it was unquestionably formative on Motoshima's ideals and thoughts, especially on his later comments about Japan's wartime atrocities and deeds such as apologizing to Korean *hibakusha* in person. He made the notorious statement in 1988 that "the Emperor bore a great responsibility for World War II," which led to an extreme rightist nearly assassinating him on 18 January 1990. Motoshima's "remarks broke an established Japanese taboo prohibiting even oblique criticism of the monarch" for which many Japanese, especially the right-wing extremists, were unprepared (BOGDAN and TER-RANOVA 2004, 250). This attempt on his life reaffirmed his belief that he must speak up and not let others silence him. Consequently, from 1990 to 1994 he highlighted Japan's invasion of Korea and Japan's aggression in the Sino-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War in the annual peace declarations. Also, he was the first mayor of the A-bombed cities who went to South Korea while in office in 1992 with the aim of consoling Korean *hibakusha*. He visited the homes of some A-bomb survivors and the Korea Association's headquarters, where he officially expressed his apology for Japan's annexation and forced labor system (HIRANO 2010, 260–261). His emphasis on the admission of Japan's guilt and responsibility, asking for the forgiveness of the nations victimized by Japan, and denying Japan's victimhood in the war made his thinking similar to Oka's. Their Christian faith was an important factor that helped them disapprove of Japan's imperial past and gain a profound understanding of the plight of the victims. Oka's impact on city politics from the mid-1970s is substantiated by Motoshima's steps to seek justice for the war victims and make Japan come to grips with its colonial history.

Oka passed away on 21 July 1994. Nevertheless, his ideals and the support of Korean A-bomb victims took form in a permanent institution after his death. Members of the Nagasaki Association established the Oka Masaharu Memorial Nagasaki Peace Museum a year later. It is among those few peace museums in Japan that show an alternative to the prevailing narratives. While most Japanese peace museums depict the Japanese as victims of the war and narrowly focus on the horrors of the A-bomb, this one explicitly reveals a previously undisclosed

account of the massacres committed by the Japanese Army in Southeast Asia and the suffering of Koreans under Japanese colonialism, emphasizing Korean *hibakusha*. The museum counters the dominant victim-conscious view and offers visitors a perspective that presents the Japanese as perpetrators, a position which Japan has consciously effaced. Oka had always called attention to the importance of founding such a museum to pass down this information to younger generations. Regarded as one of the most progressive peace museums in Japan, it is historically significant that it was established in the city with the largest Christian community despite being independent from any religion.

Conclusion

This article elaborates on the activities of three Japanese individuals who were driven by personal, yet fundamentally similar motives rooted in Christianity to advocate for the rights of atomic bomb victims residing in South Korea. They were prominent members of the grassroots support network that emerged in the 1970s and set up separate organizations in various regions of Japan. Kawamura Toratarō was based in Hiroshima and provided Korean *hibakusha* with proper medical assistance. Matsui Yoshiko was a distinguished member of the main Korean *hibakusha* support association in the Kansai region who succeeded in recruiting hundreds of Christian advocates and developed a profound understanding of the Korean *hibakusha* problem. Oka Masaharu was a Protestant minister in Nagasaki devoted to protecting the rights of the Korean minority groups in Japan, seeking redress for Korean *hibakusha*, pressing the Japanese government to extend the *hibakusha* medical and welfare provisions to those living in South Korea, and raising public awareness of the plight of Korean *hibakusha* in various segments of Japanese society. The advocates' strong faith was a fundamental factor in their sympathy toward Japan's wartime victims. Christian ethics, regardless of denomination, reinforced their sense of justice and helped them develop critical thinking toward Japan's wartime atrocities, demanding that Japan offer long-overdue compensation to the victims and officially apologize to them while acknowledging wartime accountability.

Apart from the Japanese Christians' transformation of their prewar perspective of endorsing militarism and colonialism into the postwar stance of advocating pacifism, denuclearization, and demilitarization, they also contributed to gradually changing their country's prevailing historical narrative. Japan's status as a victim "dominated not only the official historical narrative of the Japanese state but also the collective memory of the Japanese people" after 1945 (BERGER 2012, 123). However, the so-called "insurgent historical narratives" came to surface in the 1960s, which, Thomas Berger claims, challenged "the existing official narratives" shaped by the state hitherto. Berger further argues that "Time and

again, groups representing the victims of historical injustice, as well as groups who for their own reasons promote a historical narrative different from the existing official one, have been able to place their own concerns on the political agenda in ways that greatly complicate the efforts of political leaders to promote what they see as national interest” (BERGER 2012, 3). His argument holds true for the Japanese Christians and other grassroots movements supporting Korean *hibakusha* whose members have come up with “insurgent historical narratives” by bringing the victims’ perspective into focus as opposed to the state’s official narrative that postured the Japanese as sufferers of World War II. Nothing demonstrates Japan’s reluctance to come to terms with its troubled past better than its impaired relations with South Korea due to unresolved historical issues and the former South Korean forced laborers’ mounting demands for wartime reparations and an apology. Despite the deteriorating intergovernmental relations, it can be concluded that Japanese citizen-based movements and Christian supporters representing the rights of Korean *hibakusha*, through their decades-long advocacy and contrite attitude, have attempted to initiate reconciliation between the two nations at the grassroots level and worked toward a peaceful future based on friendly relations, mutual trust, and overcoming past grievances.

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- NTS The Nagasaki Testimonial Society. *A Journey to Nagasaki: A Peace Reader*. Nagasaki: The Nagasaki Testimonial Society, 2010.
- OMTKI Oka Masaharu Tsuitōshū Kankō Iinkai 岡正治追悼集刊行委員会. *Korui o mamoru tataikai: Tsuitō Oka Masaharu* 孤塁を守る戦い—追悼岡正治. Nagasaki: Kōbunsha, 1995.
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