

# Introduction

If the past does not bind social consciousness and the future begins here, the present is the “historical” moment, the permanent yet shifting point of crisis and the time for choice.

Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* (1983)

In tracing the development of Japan’s architectural modernism from the 1920s to the 1940s, the historian Inoue Shōichi offers an arresting story about the possible aesthetic origins of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Situated at the heart of the city, close to the site of the atomic bomb’s detonation, the park was built on a vast, open field of ashes created by the explosion. The park’s location was once the city’s busiest downtown commercial and residential district, crowded with shops, residences, inns, and theaters. Today the commemorative space accommodates a number of memorials and monuments, museums, and lecture halls and draws over a million visitors annually. It also provides a ritual space for the annual 6 August Peace Memorial Ceremony, which is sponsored by the city of Hiroshima. The design for the Peace Memorial Park was selected following a public competition that took place in 1949, while Japan was still under Allied Occupation. According to Inoue, the park’s stylistic origin can be traced back to a nearly identical ground plan that had been adopted three years before Japan’s surrender as part of a grand imperial vision, the Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia (*daitōa kensetsu kinen eizō keikaku*).<sup>1</sup>

Both designs were the creations of the world-renowned architect Tange Kenzō. For the 1942 competition that took place while Japan was in the midst of war, Tange proposed a grandiose Shintoist memorial zone to be built on an open plain at the foot of Mount Fuji.

His ground plan envisioned four blocks of buildings that would be laid out within an isosceles triangle. At the center of the triangle's bottom side was the main facility, which would serve metaphorically as an entrance gateway to the commemorative space. Two building blocks, placed symmetrically on each side of the main structure, were to serve as commemorative and exhibit halls, where people could congregate. A central axis extended from the entrance structure in a straight line toward a commemorative monument that would be located at the triangle's tip. The axis served as a "worshipping line,"<sup>2</sup> which was to function, as in similar commemorative spaces built under European fascist regimes, to pull the attention of crowds and their movements toward the central monument. With the collapse of Japan's empire that followed defeat by the Allied Forces and, more important, by anti-imperialist resistance against Japan in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>3</sup> Tange's 1942 plan was forever aborted. Yet the majestic space that he envisioned as monumentalizing the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity appears to have been revived in his 1949 postwar design; it was subsequently realized in 1954, albeit at much-reduced scale, with the completion of Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park.

Nothing epitomizes the Heideggerian irony of Japan's imperial modernity more solemnly than the incorporation of the monumentalized ruins of what is called the Atom Bomb Dome (Genbaku Dōmu) into the park. As in Tange's earlier plan, the central worshipping axis extends from the entrance, through the central cenotaph, to these ruins. This commemorative site is the artificially preserved remains of what used to be the Industry Promotion Hall, a quintessential sign of Japan's early-twentieth-century imperial modernity. Designed by an architect from Czechoslovakia, Jan Letzel, this continental Secession-style building, crowned with a distinctive dome-shaped roof, was completed in 1915. It served as a public space where crafts and commodities from Hiroshima's environs, as well as from different regions throughout the empire, were brought in and displayed. The atomic blast caused extensive damage to the building, leaving only some brick walls and the exposed iron frame of the dome-shaped canopy: hence the name of the ruins, the Atom Bomb Dome.

In the postwar plan, the earlier concept of a sixty-meter Shintoist-style commemorative structure was scaled down and transfigured into the more human-sized, arch-shaped design of the central cenotaph that is now officially named the Hiroshima Peace City Commemorative Monument (Hiroshima Heiwa Toshi Kinen Hi).<sup>4</sup> The symmetrical place-

ment of clusters of structures also, as Inoue observes, remained in large part faithful to the original 1942 vision. Two wings of buildings containing public facilities such as lecture halls and exhibit rooms were placed symmetrically in alignment with the Peace Memorial Resource Museum, the structure that serves as the main entrance to the triangular commemorative area.<sup>5</sup> In this newly recrafted public space, people are to congregate—not to celebrate the modernity, enlightenment, civilization, and dreams promised by the pan-Asian co-prosperity sphere, but rather to remember the inaugural moment of the nuclear age and to imagine the possible self-annihilation of civilization.

Inoue reminds his readers of the striking parallels between what was once hailed as the vision best “representing the sublime objective of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”<sup>6</sup> and the commemorative icon to prayers for peace and the world’s first use of a nuclear weapon. Yet, while Tange’s role in designing Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park is celebrated in tourist pamphlets and other popular accounts, it is fair to say that his earlier commemorative design—and the extraordinary resemblances in the aesthetic forms of the two projects—is hardly known. The structural continuity between the two ritual spaces and, more crucially, the widespread failure to recognize their analogies alert us to the conventional status of Hiroshima memories, both nationally and in global contexts. Whether within mainstream national historiography, which remembers Hiroshima’s atomic bombing as victimization experienced by the Japanese collectivity, or in the equally pervasive, more universalistic narrative on the bombing that records it as having been an unprecedented event in the history of humanity, Hiroshima memories have been predicated on the grave obfuscation of the prewar Japanese Empire, its colonial practices, and their consequences.<sup>7</sup>

The unproblematized transition of Hiroshima’s central commemorative space from celebrating imperial Japan to honoring the postwar peaceful nation suggests the persistence of prewar social and cultural elements, even at the iconic site that supposedly symbolizes the nation’s rebirth and departure from the past. We must begin by determining just what these persistent, albeit forgotten, elements are. Certainly, progressive critics in Japan have observed that the presence of a rising sun flag in the park indicates continuity between the prewar regime and what is often referred to as “A-bomb nationalism” (*hibaku nashonarizumu*). Yet it is not only the fanatical nationalism of imperial Japan that needs to be remembered. More important is the absence of memories of the Japanese Empire in mainstream society,<sup>8</sup> which has resulted in a

general tendency to occlude former colonial subjects from the post-1945 national *mise-en-scène*. When Japan's so-called postwar history began with the collapse of its empire, the universalism in Japanese nationalism ceased to have any sway over its colonizing and colonized subjects. The modernity, progress, and civilization that it represented in the 1920s global milieu came to be possessed exclusively by the West, especially by the United States under its cold war hegemony. Japan came to be imagined as a nation limited to a single *ethnos* or race, contained within what was internationally acknowledged as its natural sovereign territory. Political exigencies in postimperial Japan rendered the nation's multi-ethnic, multiracial, and multicultural constituencies invisible and produced a forgetting of Japan's relationship to its former colonies, along with its promises and the agonies it had inflicted upon them. By shedding light on the forces in ongoing cultural politics that seek to contest or maintain such amnesic elisions, this book aims to disentangle the processes that have produced postwar forgetfulness about the nation's recent past. It is an attempt to dislodge memories of Hiroshima's atomic obliteration from their confinement in humanist narratives and national histories, and to reconsider them within the terrain of post-cold war and postcolonial realities.

If we are indeed witnessing a "memory boom of unprecedented proportions," as Andreas Huyssen has observed of the European cultural scene,<sup>9</sup> then it becomes imperative to reflect on why issues have come to be formulated in terms of remembering and forgetting, rather than in other ways. We must also question why and how we remember—for what purpose, for whom, and from which position we remember—even when discussing sites of memory, where to many the significance of remembrance seems obvious. Moreover, the postwar and postcolonial reality within which we remember is one of late modernity, of late capitalist culture, in which a sense of history has tended to dissipate, even as yearnings for the real and the original intensify. What are the implications of recalling the past under such conditions, other than simply intensifying the search for origins and reauthenticating the truthfulness of what has already come down to us secondhand? And what will become of such memories when unearthed? As recovered memories become incorporated and settled into our commonsense knowledge about the past, present, and future, the mystifying and naturalizing effects of remembering itself seem ceaselessly at work.

My study of Hiroshima memories is a reflection on the anamnestic process that has rapidly become a far-reaching, global cultural current

of the *fin de siècle*. Precisely at this historical juncture—when memories throughout Asia, Europe, and other corners of the world appear simultaneously threatening and in danger of obliteration, when different peoples at different locations urgently call for the recovery of heretofore marginalized or silenced experiences—I address the questions that ineluctably accompany attempts to fill the gaps in given historical knowledge. In exploring the cultural meanings and political implications of the practices of remembering, reinscribing, and retelling memories of the past, this book asks how acts of remembering can fill the void of knowledge without reestablishing yet another regime of totality, stability, confidence, and universal truthfulness. How can memories, once recuperated, remain self-critically unsettling?

## PHANTASMATIC INNOCENCE

Like the absence of memory concerning the Peace Memorial Park's wartime archetype, during most of the postwar years there has been remarkable indifference about Japan's prewar and wartime legacy of colonialism, military aggression, and other imperial practices. To the world outside Japan, perhaps one of the best-known illustrations of Japan's historical amnesia occurred in 1982. What came to be known as the "textbook controversy" erupted when it was reported that the Ministry of Education, as a part of its routine administrative inspection procedures, was attempting to rewrite textbook descriptions so as to euphemize the history of Japanese expansionism. Specifically, the ministry sought to replace the key term "invasion" (*shinryaku*), which indicates an act of violation and unjust expropriation of sovereign territorial rights, with a vaguer and more neutral expression, "advancement" (*shinshutsu*).<sup>10</sup> In this case, unlike similar instances in the past, government agencies of other Asian nations officially joined in condemning the long-standing historical distortions perpetuated by the Liberal Democratic Party and the Ministry of Education.

Almost two decades earlier, the historian Ienaga Saburō's first lawsuit against the Ministry of Education had brought the inadequacies of postwar national historiography to public attention. In 1965 Ienaga charged that the ministry's censorship of his descriptions of the war in Asia and the Pacific and the Great Nanjing Massacre infringed on his constitutional right to freedom of expression and academic thought. Ienaga's legal battle lasted more than thirty years, as he pursued a number of lawsuits in courts at different levels. The modifications suggested

to Ienaga's descriptions of specific historical incidents reveal how those responsible for inspecting textbooks have attempted to obfuscate the immediate agency and involvement of the Japanese government and the Imperial Army in various atrocities.<sup>11</sup>

Still other signs of the widespread inability to confront the specter of Japan as a victimizing nation include conservative politicians' repeated "slips of tongue"—or "phantasmatic statements" (*mōgen*), as the media call them—as well as other public figures' persistent denials and cover-ups of atrocities committed in the name of imperial Japan. In 1986 the newly appointed minister of education, Fujio Masayuki, was dismissed from the Nakasone cabinet for asserting that Korea was partially responsible for its own colonization. The Rape of Nanjing, in particular, has continued to be an event that for most conservative Japanese seems to invite what Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, following Sigmund Freud, have termed "the inability to mourn"—a phrase they used to characterize the German collective unwillingness to confront Nazi crimes at a deep psychological level.<sup>12</sup> Ishihara Shintarō, a writer who was elected to office as a member of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, and Watanabe Shōichi, a professor of German literature, joined others in questioning the credibility of the Chinese government's official figure for those massacred. A decade later, in the spring of 1994, the desire for self-absolution reappeared: newly appointed Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto publicly stated that the Rape of Nanjing was a "fabrication" and was subsequently forced to resign. More recently, the Japanese military's involvement in the sexual enslavement of women from occupied territories—what is known as the "comfort women" issue—has touched off similar denials.

Even when admitting that the war (or, more precisely, defeat in war) did indeed bring disasters and inflict much suffering on people throughout the region, LDP leaders, conservative critics, and officials in the government's ministries have argued from the position that Japan fought the war in defense of the Asia Pacific region against the Western superpowers. According to this view, Japan's military expansion, colonial takeovers, and the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity project were not schemes to "invade" other territories but instead were intended to liberate the people of Asia from Western domination. The cause, in other words, justified both the ends and the means. According to historian Yoshida Yutaka, whose earlier research includes a detailed and extensively documented reconstruction of the Rape of Nanjing, the most influential works to popularize this understanding of the Asia Pacific

War were essays by the writer Hayashi Fusao, “Daitōa sensō kōtei ron” (“On Affirming the East Asia War”), published in *Chūō Kōron* from 1963 to 1965. Yoshida indicates that Hayashi’s argument, which was buoyed by the then-reemerging nationalist pride in economic recovery, reinforced the notion that the war was solely a conflict between Japan and the West and once again obscured the resistance of the people of Asia and the Pacific to Japan’s imperialist expansionism.<sup>13</sup> In the conservative historical outlook favored since the end of the war by many, both within and outside the government, the centuries of atrocities resulting from Western imperialism far outweigh Japanese offenses. Thus the Japanese need not feel remorse until the Western powers repent for their original sin.

Yet a significant shift in the formal political arena did appear after the 1993 House of Representatives election, which ushered in the end of the LDP’s nearly four-decade-long rule. Immediately after forming his cabinet, newly elected Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro defied the dominant LDP position by plainly stating in a press conference that the wars Japan had fought during the first half of the twentieth century were not waged for liberation or self-defense, but were simply self-aggrandizing “wars of invasion” (*shinryaku sensō*).<sup>14</sup> Since then, the Ministry of Education has also reversed its position on history textbooks and has been encouraging descriptions of military atrocities committed in the name of the Japanese Imperial Army, including biological warfare and the military enslavement of women. Moreover, the ministry has resisted neoconservative activists such as historian Fujioka Nobukatsu and others who, in yet another nationalist reaction to changes occurring at the political center, have demanded that descriptions of “comfort women” be eliminated from school textbooks.

As evidenced by the 1995 Diet Resolution commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war—in which penitential intent was once again eclipsed by the desire to attribute the cause for the nation’s past misdeeds to Western imperialism—these changes have not immediately resulted in any significant compensation for or even apologies to the victims. Yet they reflect the region’s shifting condition: nations that formerly were subjected to Japanese domination and that in the subsequent cold war fell under the economic and military aegis of the United States have gained a greater visibility and more independent voice on the international stage. Furthermore, these changes are closely tied to the post-cold war alteration in the U.S.-Japan relationship; Japan’s political, military, and economic reliance on the Security Treaty

with the United States has come under question and is less absolute. In order to achieve a new stability within the region, it has become imperative that Japanese politicians and bureaucrats carefully settle past wrongs against neighboring countries by laying to rest the memories about them.

At the same time, it is no less true that these transformations in the formal legislative and administrative arena would not have resulted without the counteramnes(t)ic—that is, unforgetful and unforgiving—practices that preceded them by more than a decade. Since the late 1970s, the need to establish a critical awareness about the past has been felt more widely and more urgently; various efforts to counter the hegemony of historical amnesia have increasingly appeared in academic writings, journalism, pedagogical practices, and grassroots peace and antiwar activities. Historians have highlighted the issues left unaddressed by the governmental treaties that technically settled reparations immediately after the war. For the past twenty years, public meetings have been held to disseminate testimonial accounts by the victims of Japanese colonial and military rule. Numerous lawsuits have been filed to challenge governmental as well as corporate neglect concerning individual reparations and full retroactive pay to workers mobilized from the occupied territories.<sup>15</sup> Preparations are currently under way for an international court case intended to clarify the Japanese government's legal responsibilities for compensating those forced into sexual labor. Thus, as this century nears its end, the memories concerning Japan's misdeeds during its first half have been marked by contestation, conversion, and reconsolidation.

As in Germany's *Historikerstreit* (historians' debates) that resurfaced in 1986, the battles over memory taking place in Japan are often seen as symptomatic of a deeper and broader crisis in postwar democracy. Challenges to the regime of forgetfulness also directly criticize various ongoing social injustices and political acts. For example, when the repeated official visits of Nakasone Yasuhiro and other cabinet members to Yasukuni Shrine, where the war dead have been enshrined as gods, became an issue in the early 1980s, the act was on the one hand castigated as yet another indication of a lack of repentance for crimes committed by the Japanese military. On the other hand, the practice was also criticized as a violation of the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state; in fact, the matter has been brought to district courts in several prefectures, and in some cases the politicians' official visits to Yasukuni have been found unconstitutional. Those who have launched such counteramnes(t)ic criticisms have thus tended to understand their positions as inextricably tied to the task of radicaliz-

ing Enlightenment ideals and the democratic principles of modern civil society. In this sense, their appeals are reminiscent of Jürgen Habermas's exhortation of intellectuals in Germany to take an active and responsible role in current debates.

Though there are analogies between Germany and Japan, critical differences also separate the two. The disparities do not lie only in the institutional forms that the laws and policies for postwar reparations have taken;<sup>16</sup> more important, memories of past horrors have been addressed intellectually in different ways. In order to explain the divergent understandings and management of the respective crimes committed by the people of the two nations, we must consider how these nations and their victims, as well as their own victimizations, are located in relation to global discourses on humanity, modernity, and the Enlightenment.

The fact that the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust occurred in the heart of Europe, and the realization that they were not necessarily aberrations but were arguably logical outcomes of European modernity and its foundations, compelled postwar thinkers to depart radically from conventional philosophical formulations that have located virtue, purity, and genuineness at the origin of modern Western civilization. Students of European intellectual history have written extensively on this question, especially through their rereading of critiques developed by scholars at Frankfurt University's Social Studies Institute, including Theodor Adorno, as well as by French poststructuralists such as Paul de Man.<sup>17</sup> It may suffice to note here that this departure from the underlying assumptions of Western metaphysics has produced cultural theories that critically rethink adherence to the notions of totality, the selfsame, fulfillment, future utopianism, and progress. As many have observed, the intellectual agenda in Europe after World War II has revolved around the recognition of and mourning for a loss—a loss of origins and of innocence, which was produced out of the specific historical moment of, and continuous reflection on, European modernity, fascism, and genocide.

In Japan, whose racialized and inauthentic relation to the West stood in sharp contrast to Germany's centrality to the Enlightenment, modernity, and the humanist tradition, concerns about such loss were far less profound. A sense of modern temporality different from that found in postwar Germany has decisively determined how questions regarding Japan's history and tradition have been formulated; Marxists and advocates of other progressive traditions in Japan have almost invariably regarded the nation as lagging in modernity.<sup>18</sup> In comparison to the

West, where normative modernity and the Enlightenment tradition were thought to be located, the absence of autonomous citizens who might form a modern civil society was understood to have obstructed the full-fledged development of modern democratic practices. In postwar progressive discourse, this sense of belatedness has continued to provide the interpretive framework for explaining the history of Japanese barbarism during the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, those involved in counteramnes(t)ic practices frequently emphasize that if the nation is to prevent itself from falling once again into military violence and geopolitical megalomania, the backward elements of prewar Japan—namely, such “feudal vestiges” as the emperorship, patriarchal sexual practices, hierarchical relations, and so on—must be overcome. The universal democratic ideals of modern bourgeois civil society have not yet been realized in Japan. Unlike in Germany, where intellectuals such as Adorno were compelled to place the memories of Nazism and the Holocaust in their ironic and inextricable relation to the liberal European traditions of republicanism, Enlightenment thought, and modernity, progressive intellectuals and activists in postwar Japan have emphasized the gap between such modern democratic ideals and practices and the insufficient maturity of Japan’s people and institutions.<sup>19</sup>

The conventional argument in the social sciences has long been that the lag in Japan’s modernity and the Enlightenment also resulted in the absence of autonomous and responsible individuals. This formulation is important here because it has served to obfuscate the experiences of ordinary people, who were actively and self-consciously engaged in colonial policies and military efforts. To be sure, as Yoshida Yutaka observes, the claim that political and military leaders alone were responsible for the military disaster—what he calls “*shidōsha sekinin ron*,” a widely held grassroots belief in the immediate aftermath of the war—served to challenge “the collective repentance of one hundred million” (*ichioku sōzange*) thesis. The latter, which was officially advocated as early as August 1945 by Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko’s cabinet, proclaimed that all of the nation’s people were equally responsible for the outcome of the war. Its objective, according to Yoshida, was to deflect accusations against the emperor and the imperial system.<sup>20</sup> Yet *shidōsha sekinin ron* went beyond mere oppositional discourse. As Yamaguchi Yasushi, who has written extensively on the development of postwar political cultures in both Germany and Japan, points out, Marxists and other progressive critics relegated the responsibility of the ordinary people to the ruling elites and thus spared the former from a full investigation

into their participation in national projects.<sup>21</sup> The postwar Enlightenment paradigm has to a great extent endorsed blaming the activities of wartime leaders and their supporters alone for prewar and wartime disasters. Indeed, it is precisely because the dominant paradigm has had such overwhelming mystifying power that historians' recent reexaminations of Japanese modernity, colonialism, and nationalism in the first half of the century are so urgently relevant to my study of Hiroshima memories.<sup>22</sup>

Given this intellectual milieu, it is not difficult to understand how memories of the atomic bombings of "Hiroshima and Nagasaki" came to be shaped almost exclusively by the perception that ordinary Japanese people had been the passive victims of historical conditions.<sup>23</sup> Memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with retellings of the bombings of civilians in practically every major Japanese city and the ground battle fought in Okinawa, as well as more recently revealed horror stories of Japanese colonists who were deserted by the military in north-eastern China after Soviet advances—these all contributed decisively to the notion that whereas military leaders, government elites, and perhaps some soldiers were responsible for the disasters, ordinary citizens were only victims of the war and the nation's colonial policies. This is not to say that those assaulted by the U.S.-led Allied air raids and the two atomic attacks were not victims, nor to argue that they were all ethnically or nationally Japanese. Throughout the book I question the nationalization of shared historical experiences, as well as the binarism that unidimensionally identifies such nationalized collectivities as exclusively victims or victimizers.

More important, this phantasm of Japanese civilian innocence came to be enmeshed within the universalist discourse on humanity. The historian Awaya Kentarō has argued that the differences between the handling of the postwar reparations issue in Japan and Germany also stem from judicial treatment immediately after the war; Nazi crimes were strongly condemned during the Nuremberg Trials, but charges of "crimes against humanity" were downplayed in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. That the people of non-Western nations were only marginally included in the category of "humanity" is also demonstrated by the fact that the local B and C class trials investigated the sexual assaults committed against Dutch women, while ignoring the enslavement of Asian and Pacific Islander women.<sup>24</sup> The cold war began to intensify during the Tokyo tribunal, and the interest of the United States and other nations in turning the occupation of Japan to their advantage, vis-à-vis the Soviet

Union, cut short further investigations of a number of individual cases of Japanese crimes. Yet examination of such Japanese crimes was attenuated from the beginning, primarily because those most brutally victimized by Japanese imperial aggression—Asians and Pacific Islanders—were racially and politically marginalized within the hegemonic discourse on humanity in the immediate postwar world.<sup>25</sup> As a result, many serious assaults and colonial crimes were overlooked, including the forced mobilization of people from the occupied territories by the Japanese government and corporations.<sup>26</sup> That several judges on the tribunal court represented nations that had held and were continuing to hold colonies, even as the trial began, greatly affected the course of the tribunal, for the colonialism of both Japan and the Western powers in the region remained unquestioned.

At the same time, the failure to seriously consider that using atomic bombs against civilian populations might be crimes against humanity, despite the unprecedented mass destructive force they had exhibited, generated the widespread belief in Japan and elsewhere that the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal had resulted in nothing more than “victor’s justice.”<sup>27</sup> That attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be treated, unlike the crimes of colonialism, as crimes against humanity was certainly a sentiment shared widely. A number of postwar intellectuals, writers, and critics, both Western and non-Western, perceived the atomic assaults as universal offenses against human civilization and not simply as particular attacks against a people that had been named as the enemy.<sup>28</sup> The notion of using the atomic bombs against populated cities had made even U.S. officials wonder if they might be “outdoing Hitler” in barbarity.<sup>29</sup>

Within this discursive context, the downplaying of crimes against humanity at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal created a subtle conflation of Japanese and other Asians, for neither group was granted full membership in the category of “humanity,” at least within the West-centric discourse of the tribunal. This historical perception enabled Japanese memories of atomic victimization to fuse with those of the victims of their own aggressions and racism. The idea that the Japanese were as much excluded from the Western-centric discourse of humanity as other victims of Western colonialism shrouded the critical differences, the historical specificities and the asymmetrical positions, that distinguish Japan from its neighboring countries. To put it differently, remembering the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as events in the history of humanity has significantly contributed to the forgetting of the history of colonialism and racism in the region.

Coming to terms with the past in Japan initially involved weighing the actions of ordinary Japanese against the discourse on Japan's lag in modernity. Moreover, the failure to condemn the acts of colonial and semicolonial domination over the region by Japan and the Western nations as "crimes against humanity" allowed to persist the powerfully seductive "truth" that defined the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere as a project to oppose the Western hegemony. That the Japanese were humanity's first named victims of atomic age warfare decisively contributed to this equation of Japan's and the rest of Asia's experience of Western imperialism and racism. The memories of Hiroshima's destruction, secured within the global narrative of the universal history of humanity, has thus sustained, at least in the dominant historical discourse, a national victimology and phantasm of innocence throughout most of the postwar years.

## TROPE OF THE NATION, PEACE, AND HUMANITY

Despite Hiroshima's positioning within a global narrative, more often than not the city's name evokes discrepant memories rather than the shared sentiments and understandings of a universal collectivity. For example, in the official histories of nations that achieved independence after liberation from Japan's colonial or military rule, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is celebrated as ultimately leading to the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Kurihara Sadako's well-known poem, "When Hiroshima Is Spoken Of," dramatically captures the exasperating way in which "Hiroshima" tends to set loose an endless string of names marking atrocities—Pearl Harbor, the Rape of Nanjing, the Manila inferno, and on and on.<sup>30</sup> More recently, the debates on the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum reconfirmed that reactions to Hiroshima, as the memory site of the first nuclear catastrophe, almost always produce discourses of nation-states. At various discursive junctures, Hiroshima's atom bomb appears to provoke retaliatory memories of atrocities committed by and against specific national entities.

In postwar Japan, the remembering of Hiroshima has as a rule been associated with the idea that the experience of this catastrophe was a "Japanese" one, whether through self-victimization or as a grave consequence of fanatic nationalism. Yet the nationalization of Hiroshima memories, composed of multiple and often contradictory elements, has

been more complex than one might expect. In 1971 the late Sato Eisaku became the first prime minister in office to attend the annual 6 August Peace Memorial Ceremony since it began in 1947 as a "Peace Festival." Appearing as the representative of Japan, the only "atom-bombed nation in the world,"<sup>31</sup> Sato's participation marked the beginnings of the official and statist nationalization of Hiroshima's memory. A much earlier popular mass movement, the nuclear protests of the World Conference against the A- and H-Bombs (Gensuibaku Kinshi Sekai Taikai, or Gensuikin Conference, for short) had paved the way. This nationwide movement erupted in 1954, when a Japanese fishing boat, the Lucky Dragon Five, was exposed to radioactive fallout near the U.S. nuclear test site at Bikini atoll earlier that year. One of the crewmen died of radiation exposure. The tuna that the boat brought back to Yaizu harbor was sent to the Tsukiji central market, where the media reported on its highly contaminated condition. Shortly after this incident, housewives in Tokyo initiated a campaign to ban the A- and H-bombs, a move that in the following year developed formally into the first World Conference against the A- and H-Bombs.<sup>32</sup> In less than three months, this mass campaign succeeded in collecting over a million signatures calling for a ban on nuclear testing, and with it emerged the chain of signification that connected the atomic sites of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Bikini. This link, one that was enabled and naturalized by the perception of the three incidents as nuclear attacks that victimized the Japanese nation and people as a whole, served to mobilize a large mass of citizens and all of the major existing political parties.

In the 1960s, when the Japanese central government signed the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Nichibei Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku, or Ampo, for short) over the protests of the oppositional parties and a mass movement of citizens, the antinuclear sentiments that had emerged as a national consensus became divided over approving Japan's newly formalized military alliance with the United States. The treaty brought about intense conflicts, protests, and turmoil, for not only did it grant extra-territorial rights for U.S. military exercises on Japanese soil, but it also placed Japan under the protection of the so-called American nuclear umbrella.<sup>33</sup> As he observed the Gensuikin movement's radicalization and splintering in Hiroshima, Oe Kenzaburo saw an opportunity to foster a new and self-critical nationalism by securing the historical experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as parts of Japan's collective memory.<sup>34</sup> As part of a campaign to produce a comprehensive national catalogue on the damage caused by the A- and H-bombs, many antinuclear critics and intellectuals such as Oe criticized the national government for plac-

ing economic growth under U.S. military protection above the pursuit of democratic ideals. Certain strands of the Gensuikin movement also continued to object to the treaty itself. Within this context, Sato's official attendance at the 1971 Peace Memorial Ceremony can be understood as an attempt to contain the broad oppositional base that had grown out of the peace and antinuclear activities of the preceding decades. The nationalized remembering of Hiroshima has therefore never been monolithic or without contradictions, even within the apparent homogeneity of Japanese society.<sup>35</sup>

While the memory of Hiroshima, whether in or outside Japan, is often embedded within narratives of national collectivities, Hiroshima always seems to have a universal referentiality. In the city's history, and in other places as well, the temporally fixed sign of "Hiroshima," together with that of "Nagasaki," has among other things stood for humanity's first experience of a nuclear atrocity and for the peace that followed World War II. The instantaneous and massive devastation at this site has also often been construed as an unprecedented experience in human history brought about by scientific progress. Moreover, during the last half century many have visited Hiroshima to seek answers to our "ultimate concerns": the authentic meanings of life, death, bereavement, and human suffering. And poets, priests, revolutionaries, philosophers, and scientists have visited the city to deliver messages of peace. "Hiroshima," a master code for catastrophe in the twentieth century, is apparently all-absorbing as it conflates countless particulars into a single totality in the name of world peace. Moreover, subsequent medical discoveries of the lingering and uncontainable effects of radiation, of their trespasses over geographical borders and temporal limits, have led to a growing sense of alarm that no existing borders—whether national, cultural, or ideological and political—can ensure immunity. The new scientific technology could easily annihilate all of "us." The subject of remembering the bombing of Hiroshima, the instance that simulates a panhuman eschatology, is therefore humanity, the omnipresent and universal subject that transcends all particular locations and differences.

The idea that Hiroshima's disaster ought to be remembered from the transcendent and anonymous position of humanity, and that the remembering of Hiroshima's tragedy should invoke natural and commonly shared human thoughts, sentiments, and moral attitudes not limited by cultural boundaries, might best be described as "nuclear universalism." Through most of the last half century the politics of Hiroshima memories, and the contradictions and slippages it has produced, are at once impelled forward and constrained by this dominant universalist trope

of peace and humanity. In this section, I describe three instances in which struggles over Hiroshima memories took the form of conflicts between remembrances from specifically named subjects and from the anonymous, universal position of humanity. The cases not only provide a chronological framing for the present; they also reveal how multiple and intersecting national, transnational, and local forces have worked to solidify the paradigmatic narrative about the bombing that continues to shape the way we access knowledge about the city's past. This analysis will, I hope, help us disentangle the assumptions, stakes, and concerns that have competed in the development of Hiroshima's mnemonic topography. It will also enable us to explore the interplay among several key elements in remembering Hiroshima's catastrophe—namely, the tropes of peace and humanity, the grand narrative of the U.S. cold war world order, and nationalisms of both Japan and the United States.

#### THE EPIGRAPH DEBATE

One of the earliest public debates concerning the anonymity and universality of the subject of remembering Hiroshima's bombing took place immediately after Japan regained self-government and involved the inscription on the Peace Memorial Park's central cenotaph. The contentious words are engraved on a coffinlike stone memorial that, following Tange's plan, is sheltered beneath the *haniwa*-shaped arch. This is also where a list of all those whose deaths have been linked to the bomb is placed. The epitaph reads: "Please rest in peace (*yasuraka ni nemutte kudasai*), / For we shall not repeat the mistake (*ayamachi wa kurikaeshimasenu kara*)." The equivalent of the second line's subject, "we," does not exist in the Japanese original, and this absence of the grammatical subject, common in Japanese writing, has generated numerous debates about "whose" and "which" mistake the sentence ultimately refers to.

The public controversy began in 1952 when the Indian jurist Radha-binod B. Pal visited the park during the Asian Congress for World Federation (Sekai Renpō Ajia Kaigi), which was being held in Hiroshima. Pal, a forthright critic of Western imperialism, was the only judge at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal to have insisted that a ruling on Japan's war crimes should not be made unless the colonial crimes committed by the Western nations were also subjected to interrogation.<sup>36</sup> On his visit to Hiroshima, Pal reportedly expressed his indignation at the words on the cenotaph as follows: If the "mistake" refers