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## Hidden Memory and Memorials

### The Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb and the Remembrance of Korean Victims

**Abstract:** During World War II, Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Due to this atrocity, around 140,000 human beings lost their lives. Almost 20% of them were Koreans. It resulted in the sudden capitulation of Japan and caused the so called *higaisha ishiki* (awareness of being a victim) among Japanese society. Unfortunately, the question of Korean atomic blast victims has been forgotten and the Monument raised in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb was placed in the peripheries of the Park. The aim of this paper is to analyze Hiroshima Memorial Park monuments, as locations that serve as political tools, with special emphasis on the issue of the Monument in Memory of Korean Victims of the A-bomb, which characterizes Japanese politics of remembrance towards Korea.

**Keywords:** *memory, memorials, monuments, remembrance, Hiroshima, Korean victims*

During World War II, Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Due to this atrocity, around 140,000 human beings lost their lives<sup>1</sup>. Almost 20% of them were Koreans. It resulted in the sudden capitulation of Japan and caused the so called *higaisha ishiki* (awareness of being a victim) among Japanese society. Hiroshima – a city, which at the beginning, was faced with censorship by occupational forces, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, became a specific place of remembrance consisting of different individual memorials, monuments and museums gathered in the Peace Memorial Park. These monuments and memorials were frequently used as a political tool, first of all to promote the anti-nuclear attitude of the Japanese, secondly to create a picture of Japan as a country that suffered

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<sup>1</sup> Until December, 1945. The data provided by the City of Hiroshima (*Shibōsū-ni tsuite*).

from war atrocities. Therefore, the specific Japanese term *hibakusha*, refers to the people, mainly Japanese people, who suffered because of the A-bomb. Due to the prevalence of these common opinions, the numerous Koreans (including war prisoners) that lost their lives in Hiroshima are often forgotten. Unfortunately, in the face of this unwilling policy, the question of Korean atomic blast victims, has been forgotten, and the Monument raised in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb, was placed in the peripheries of the Park. The aim of this paper is to analyze Hiroshima Memorial Park monuments, as locations that serve as political tools, with special emphasis on the issue of the Monument in Memory of Korean Victims of the A-bomb, which characterizes Japanese politics of remembrance towards Korea.

The question of the A-bombing of Hiroshima is frequently raised by numerous researchers, who analyze this *lieu de mémoire*. The various range of research includes *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms: The Renarrativation of Hiroshima Memories*, by Tomoko Ichitani, who emphasized the role of cultural meaning and political implications of remembering, re-inscribing, and re-narrating memories of Hiroshima (Ichitani, 2010). Additionally, Lisa Yoneyama in her *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and The Dialectics of Memory* (Yoneyama, 1999) explores unconventional texts and dimensions of culture involved in constituting memories of Hiroshima. Moreover, Yuki Miyamoto in *Rebirth in the Pure Land or God's Sacrificial Lambs? Religious Interpretations of the Atomic Bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki* explores the development of a religious discourse surrounding the experiences of the atomic bombings of 1945 (Miyamoto, 2005). These examples are only the so called "tip of the iceberg" of research regarding the issue of Hiroshima and its victims. The important aspect of Hiroshima itself is that it was the first city that suffered from the nuclear attack, and the only one in which residue of the attack still exists<sup>2</sup>.

In 2016, when American president, Barack Obama became the first, who visited Hiroshima and paid respect to the victims, he also mentioned Koreans who lost their lives in 1945. This action was caused by the Korean Atomic Bomb Victim Association that focused his attention towards the memorial stone dedicated to Korean victims of the atomic bombing, which is placed in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The same organization rallied protests during Obama's visit to Hiroshima Memorial. Nevertheless, the monument, hidden from public eyes by the Japanese local policy<sup>3</sup>, became a symbol of the hidden memory about Korean victims of the atomic bombing and the war itself.

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<sup>2</sup> The A-bomb Dome left as a symbol of the tragedy, as well as other buildings that symbolize the nuclear attack. Nagasaki, before the war inhabited mainly by foreigners was quickly rebuilt, never became a place to commemorate the A-bombing on the same scale as Hiroshima.

<sup>3</sup> In 1999 the monument was moved from outside the Park to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial territory. Nevertheless, it is still located in a place isolated from the official site of commemoration.

The aim of this paper is to present the absent memory of Koreans – who were also victims of the nuclear attack on Japan. Though a significant number of the inhabitants of the Korean Peninsula lost lives due to the A-bomb, the remembrance connected to the so called *hibakusha* is equated with Japanese victims. Therefore, throughout this presentation, I will discuss the following issues:

1. What was the history of Koreans in Hiroshima before and on the day of the nuclear attack?
2. What is the role of the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima in preserving the memory of the August 1945 events?
3. What is the level of knowledge about the Cenotaph for Korean Victims among Hiroshima visitors?

To answer these questions, I will employ the historical approach as well as the contextual analysis of political speeches. The discourse-historical approach (DHA) will be crucial in this aspect. Since the DHA method focuses on the negative attitudes towards social groups, it could potentially be applied to other social groups who are believed to be discriminated against, in this case: Koreans (both living in Japan and on the Korean Peninsula) (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 214). To analyze the level of awareness of the visitors to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, introductory quantitative research<sup>4</sup> aimed at studying the recognizability of the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima was also conducted.

## Politics of Memory and the Case of East Asia

The end of the Cold War, Emperor Hirohito's death and the democratization of the Republic of Korea created space for a discussion on memory of World War II events. This kind of discussion was already raised in Western Europe. In the 1970s, historians were the first, who focused on the issue of memory. The main aim of this research was to necessitate distinguishing memory from history, claiming that memory refers to the present forms of past happenings (Lavabre, 2012). According to French historian and author of "realms of memory" theory, Pierre Nora, history was always controlled by politicians, while memory remained in a private sphere (Nora, 2001, p. 41).

Nonetheless, when it comes to scientific research and a certain objectivity each author should follow, one has to admit, that even in pure academic research, political implications can be found. Moreover, some claim that in Japan or the United States, historic research is not as important to the general public as art, realms of memory and political speeches (Friedman, Kenney, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, referring to realms of memory, in the context of political speeches and decision making can be one of crucial aspects in the analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> The survey aims only at the exploration of the topic, with the whole awareness of methodological insufficiency of the study due to the author's political science background.

Japanese-Korean relations. Especially in the case of Japan, the memory of World War II differs, since the nation considers itself a victim of the war and of the atomic blast, while countries, which experienced Japanese atrocities, see Japan as an aggressor. Because of different war memory patterns, American historian John W. Dower implemented five types of memory, with a special reference to Japan. They are, citing Dower, (1) denial, (2) evocations of moral (or immoral) equivalence, (3) victim consciousness, (4) binational (U.S. – Japan) sanitizing of war crimes, and (5) popular discourses acknowledging guilt and responsibility (Dower, 2012, p. 112). Those types show not only Japanese forgetting the role they played during the war, with special emphasis on their awareness of being a victim, but also the responsibility of censoring war crimes not only by them as the aggressor, but also by the U.S., as occupying forces. This typology also acknowledges the existence of groups, which criticize Japanese war militarism. This kind of awareness, frequently connected to the political left, is described as the commonwealth of regret (*kaikan kyōdōtai*). Nevertheless, in the Korean public sphere, those in Japan who whitewash war crimes are visible, with an absence of those who fight for justice<sup>5</sup>.

### Koreans in Hiroshima

In 1910, Imperial Japan annexed the Korean Empire. However, the occupational policy of the Japanese state was conducted by Japan as early as the 1870s<sup>6</sup>. Japanese dominance on the Korean Peninsula, which lasted almost half a century, caused a vast number of Koreans to move, involuntarily or freely to the Japanese islands, to Japanese cities, including Hiroshima. This specific city was an important military center in prewar and war-time Japan, and Korean laborers were brought to Japan to work in factories connected to the military industry. Therefore, the number of victims on the Korean side is large, with the numbers reaching 50,000 injured and approximately 30,000 killed by the atomic blast (Maruya, Ishikawa, 2006; Ichitani, 2010, p. 382). This number is confirmed by Lisa Yoneyama, who adds that among those Koreans affected, were people who had been forcibly sent to Japan as mobilized workers and soldiers, or those looking for work, while their villages suffered due to the Japanese occupation policy (Yoneyama, 1995, p. 502). Moreover, the Association of Korean Atomic Bomb Victims estimates that 40,000–70,000 Koreans died in both nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (*Obama neglecting...*).

Since alternate narration of the atomic tragedy has been marginalized and the general discourse overtaken by the city and the nation's political and economic projects (Ichitani, 2010, p. 382), memory of Korean victims of the atomic blast, seems to be erased from

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<sup>5</sup> As the example can serve the Japanese Christians' financial support to rebuild the burned by Japanese in 1919 church in Jeam-ri.

<sup>6</sup> The Japan–Korea Treaty of 1876, also known as the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity was an unequal treaty which Korea was forced to sign by Japanese representatives and their gunboat diplomacy.

the official narration. It is neither present in the bilateral discussion between Korean and Japanese governments, nor does it appear in the domestic politics of Korea on such a scale as the debate on the ‘comfort women’ issue.

The question of non-Japanese victims of the Hiroshima blast was raised on a national (and global) scale, for the first time, in August 1990, in the peace declaration<sup>7</sup> delivered by the mayor of Hiroshima (Saito, 2006, p. 372). Mayor Takeshi Araki claimed that “we earnestly hope that positive efforts will be made to promote support for those *hibakusha* resident on the Korean Peninsula, in the United States, and elsewhere, and we rededicate ourselves to the cause of peace” (Peace Declaration, 1990). The certain emphasis of non-Japanese victims, namely Korean and American, was the first approach to raise this delicate issue.

The political situation in Japan, the war failure, as well as Japanese-Korean postwar relations seem to be the key to understanding the lack of a wider remembrance of Korean victims in Hiroshima. In 1949, when the Japanese parliament passed laws enabling rebuilding Hiroshima as a city of peace and commemoration (Barbasiewicz, 2016, p. 94), the situation on the Korean Peninsula was tense, and there were more important issues, than insisting on including the Korean victims into the post-war narration that the city was constructing. When the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was opened in Hiroshima in 1955, there were still no official relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed ten years later.

The other case is the ‘forgotten nationality’ of the victims. Korean, Korean-Japanese, but also American *hibakusha* struggled with discrimination, even among *hibakusha* themselves (Hein, Selden, 1997, p. 214). This situation was due to, among other things, the turning of the Hiroshima tragedy, into a major point of Japanese war narration and victimization. Moreover, especially in the case of Koreans living in Japan, the feelings of oblivion were also caused by the state’s policy towards the Korean minority in Japan, which is a touchy issue in Japanese-Korean relations.

The Hiroshima museum’s exhibitions can be a case study for emphasizing the role of Japan as a victim. The background leading up to the bomb detonation was not (and is still not) introduced to visitors. Therefore, in 1987, a Peace Link group consisting of Japanese Christians, antinuclear activists, and minorities who suffered from discrimination, requested that the city include information regarding Japan’s role during the war into the museum’s narration (Jeans, 2005, p. 169). Their demands during the petition’s presentation were overtaken by the rightist political movements, and the petition was eventually rejected (Jeans, 2005, p. 169).

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<sup>7</sup> A speech delivered each year by the Mayor of Hiroshima on August 6th.

## Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima

As mentioned in the introduction, in 2016, American President Barack Obama, while paying tribute to the victims, pointed out that not only Japanese, but also Koreans were killed during the atomic blast (Obama ‘neglecting...’). Nevertheless, though his statement drew the media’s attention to the war, the Korean Atomic Bomb Victim Association criticized Obama’s attitude towards emphasizing the suffering of Koreans, who lost their lives due to the Japanese colonial policy in 1930s and 1940s. The activists, a small group of people from South Korea, planned to gather around the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb, calling the victims of the bombing those “who endured more than their share of misery, yet whom few remember” (Choe, 2016). The oblivion of the Korean *hibakusha* is also caused by Korean national policy itself. After returning to South Korea, the survivors were shunned and denied medical care and unavoidably uncomfortable for politicians, whose official view was that the nuclear attacks were needed to liberate Korea (Choe, 2016). Simultaneously, at that time, bringing up the topic of effects of the atomic attack on Hiroshima was inconvenient for Americans. During the Korean War, Washington thought about using an atomic bomb against North Korea during operations. Subsequently, the atomic umbrella has since guaranteed security on the Peninsula (Hippin, 2015).

The obliviousness towards the Korean civilian’s tragedy is caused not only by both governments’ strategy, but also because of the placement of the commemorative monument. Situated off one of the bridges leading into the park, isolated at first glance, it tells the story of Koreans who were brought to Japan, and who were killed in the explosions as a result of their forced employment on behalf of the military complex (Takeda, 1996, p.476). The English inscription tells the visitor: “At the end of World War II there were about 100,000 Koreans living in Hiroshima as soldier, civilian employees of the army, mobilized students and ordinary citizens. When the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the sacred lives of more than 20,000 Koreans were suddenly taken from our midst. Of the 200,000 of Hiroshima citizens lost to the bomb, approximately 10% were Koreans (...).”

While the South Korean government was unwilling to provide help to the *hibakusha*, and Hiroshima city’s political strategy left the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb outside the Park, the question of nationality can still be the key to justify such actions. Korea was incorporated into Japanese territory since 1910. Consequently, during the attack, Korean labor workers were Japanese nationals. Their legal status was also not yet decided during the early occupation by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), thus the Koreans were first put under the jurisdiction of the Japanese state and only later enabled to make their own nationality decisions (Gurowitz, 1999, p. 425). Even the case of relocation of the Monument in the 1990s seems to be controversial, and the local authorities of Hiroshima, who agreed to move the memorial, were described as those, who “separate the remembered and those who are remembering the event from

the rest of Japanese society and identify them as the Korean minority” (Yoneyama, 1995, p. 501). The Japanese decided to act in order to avoid the topic of discrimination against the Korean minority (pressure groups), but the argument still remains a vivid chapter of Japanese citizenship of the Korean victims.

The Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb was completed in 1970 and established by The Construction Committee for the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the A-bomb (*Monument in Memory...*). The monument is situated on a turtle-shaped base. The epigraph on the memorial states: “Souls of the dead ride to heaven on the backs of turtles<sup>8</sup>”. In the crown on the top of the monument there are two dragons. The obelisk was first raised in the place, where Prince Yi’s<sup>9</sup> body was found after the attack. Since then, pressure from various quarters has intensified to move the monument inside the Peace Memorial Park. After an agreement was reached between Hiroshima City and all concerned parties, it was moved into the park in July 1999. The following inscription in Chinese characters appears on the monument: “In memory of prince Yi Gu and the other 20,000 or more souls” (translated by Yoneyama, 1995, p. 505). The monument was established by pro-Seoul circles, namely the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan – *Zai-Nihon Daikanminkoku Mindan*). Nonetheless, due to the existence of numerous organizations representing Korean nationals in Japan, i.e. The General Federation of Korean Residents in Japan (*Zai-Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai*), which have close ties to North Korea, there is a debate among Koreans, whether the monument represents the tragedy of all Korean victims or just a specific group. Therefore, attempts to create a second monument were taken into consideration (Yoneyama, 1995, p. 506).

Chō Te-hi, who was then representative of the committee initiating and executing the memorial’s construction, explained his reasons for choosing prince Yi U as a symbol of Korean victims as follows:

Unlike the Japanese imperial family, members of the former Korean royal family are not cared for. The Korean kings and their families are regarded as national traitors, [because it is believed that] they actively created a pro-Japanese camp. During the colonial era, the Japanese [in Korea] occupied every position of leadership. They controlled everything from financial unions, farmland registration, and the rice-mills [one of which his father owned] to forceful mobilization of the populace. In our prefecture, they built munitions factories designated by the navy under the slogan of “Korea-Japan unification” (Yoneyama, 1995, p. 506).

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<sup>8</sup> Please refer to the oldest of Korean myths on the establishment of the Korean Kingdom Gokuryeo. King Dongmyeong was able to enter the land where he established his kingdom, thanks to the turtles that rose up and formed a bridge so he could cross the river.

<sup>9</sup> Yi U, a Korean imperial family’s member, a lieutenant colonel in the Imperial Japanese Army.

Even if Prince Yi was a Japanese Imperial Army's Lieutenant Colonel, Chō puts him on an equal position with ordinary Koreans who were forced to move to Hiroshima, or who had no choice but to find employment there. The Monument can also be interpreted as a symbol of victory over Japanese rule in Korea. The national flag of the Republic of Korea, as well as the names of the chairperson of the national congress in 1970 and Korean professor who provided the description of the history of Korean victims are engraved on the left side of the obelisk.

The special weight of the Monument can also be confirmed by the demands towards the American head of state, the first sitting president to pay tribute to the victims of this atomic tragedy in this concrete location. The Korean survivors expected Obama to visit the monument of Korean *hibakusha* during his visit to Hiroshima. However, such action was not even planned as a distinct segment in the US president's agenda, who was placing the Hiroshima's visit as a stopover during the G7 summit. Moreover, Korean survivors accused him of avoiding the topic of their suffering ahead of his visit to the city (*Obama neglecting...*). These expectations and pressures towards the American president show the importance of the Monument as a *lieu de mémoire*, and as a tool to be used in the debate over history and reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **The Awareness of the Korean Loses and the Existence of the Monument among Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park Visitors**

The policy towards the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb is reflected in the opinions of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park's visitors. Based on a multi-factor analysis of the 105 questionnaire sheets concerning the visits to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which specifically emphasized the Korean victims' place of remembrance, we can study the influence of local and national Japanese policy towards memory of this sad event on the viewers' general opinion. The conducted by the author survey<sup>10</sup> is not the sociological one. As the political scientist, the author's will was to identify the problem that can be raised by the future researchers of the problem. Therefore, the further sociological research is strongly recommended.

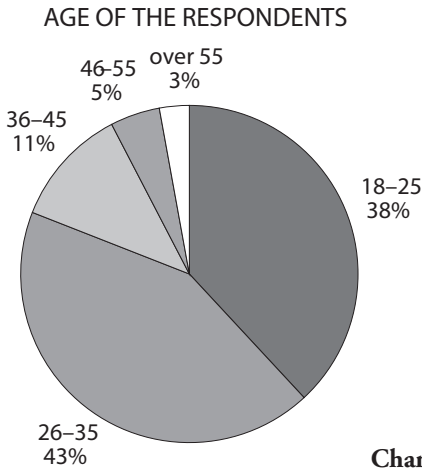
The survey took place between December 12, 2017 and February, 5 2018. It aimed to show the level of awareness of the existence of the Monument dedicated to Korean victims among the visitors of the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. Moreover, the respondents were also asked about their general feelings about the most impressionable and reaction exerting monuments and memorials. The study was carried out using a CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) online survey. This meant it was easily accessible to young people

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<sup>10</sup> As it was mentioned in the introduction, the author has the whole awareness of methodological insufficiency of the study due to her political science background, and the survey aims only at the exploration of the topic.



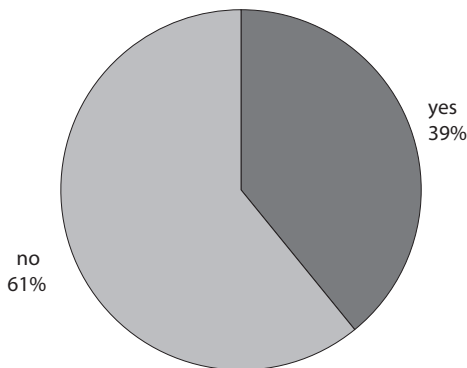
aged between 18–35 years old. Consequently, 81% of respondents were travelers up to 35 years of age. Only 11% of the respondents were aged 36–45 years old, with seldomly 8% of those who filled in the survey being older than 46 years old. Compared to other methods, thanks to a sense of anonymity and possibility of participating in the study at a time convenient for the respondent, this method provided means of gathering more reliable data.



**Chart 1.** *Age of the respondents*

The respondents were mainly visitors from abroad, but a few Japanese (4 people) also responded to the survey. A number of 33 men and 72 women, who traveled to Hiroshima and visited Hiroshima Memorial Park took part in the survey. The age structure of those responding to the questions regarding the Monument dedicated to Korean Victims and Survivors, was as follows: 40 people aged between 18–25 years old (7 men and 33 women);

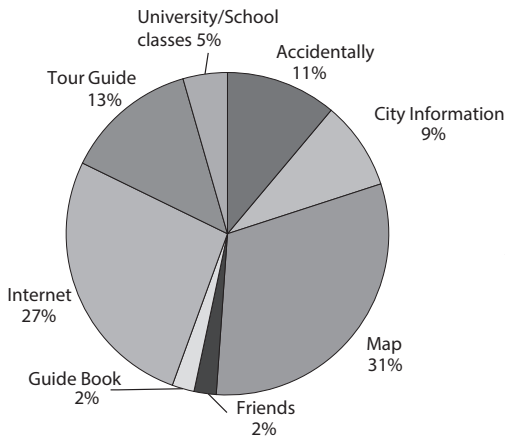
DID YOU VISIT THE MONUMENT TO KOREAN VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS



**Chart 2.** *The percentage of the visitors, who visited the Monument of Korean victims while visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park*

45 respondents between 26–35 years old (15 men and 30 women); 4 respondents ranging between 36–45 years of age (all of them were females); 3 women and 2 men 46–55 years old and 4 persons more than 55 years old (the same number of men and women). Among those respondents only 39% visited the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb.

The main aim of this study was to find out, whether or not tourists decided to visit the monument dedicated to Koreans, and if they did, how had they gained knowledge regarding this place. The biggest number of those, who have visited the monument, went there while following the map of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park (31%). 27 % of visitors knew of the monument from the Internet and 13% visited it while taking the guided tour. Almost the same number of visitors saw the monument accidentally (11%). The rest of respondents mentioned school classes or university courses, information from friend or guidebooks.



**Chart 3.** *The reason of visiting the Monument of Korean victims*

We can assume from the chart presented above, that tourism infrastructure is well prepared for those, who decide to use city information centers, tourist maps and guided tours. Therefore, we can claim, that there is no intention of hiding it from the eyes of the visitors.

From 61% of the visitors who didn't visit the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb, only 4 persons knew about the existence of this memorial. As for their reasons why they did not view this specific place in the Hiroshima Memorial Park, they gave several explanations, mainly connected to lack of time and general tiredness. The respondents answered that they: "Felt down after checking out the A Bomb Dome and the Children's Peace Monument", or "At the time we were traveling in a group with a limited time to see all the places connected with the atomic bomb and the war". One person possessed

fake information about the placement of the monument, claiming that from 1970s it has been situated outside of the park.

Concerning the correlation of age and the visit to the Monument – only 33% of the respondents aged 46 years and older visited the place. In the group of people aged 36 to 45–55% decided to visit the place. 45% of young people up to the age of 25 saw the monument. However, only 42% of those representing the next generation visited the Monument.

This kind of survey shows that the tourists are not aware of the tragedy Koreans faced in Hiroshima. Nonetheless, while using the facilities offered by the municipal council or by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, tourists could easily reach the place of remembrance of Korean victims. The surveyed Japanese tourists used two maps or city information pamphlets to get to the place. Those who were aware of the existence of the monument thanks to their university education, were Polish tourists.

### **The Question of Koreans from Hiroshima in Japanese Political Debate**

After moving the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb to its final location in 1999, a month later, Japanese prime minister, Keizo Obuchi officially visited it and paid tribute towards the victims (Kort, 2006, p. 224). He laid white lilies and bowed in front of the monument (*Obuchi becomes...*). The tribute was conducted on the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, though Obuchi promised it to the Korean victims of A-bomb as early as 1997. He was the first sitting prime minister who decided to officially visit this place. Nonetheless, the issue of Korean *hibakusha* was rarely undertaken by politicians.

During the post-war era, the topic of Korean people's tragedy was rarely raised in the Lower House of the National Diet of Japan. It was never introduced in the Upper House. For the first time, the topic of Korean victims of the atomic blast was introduced in 1975. Ōhashi Toshio from Kōmeitō<sup>11</sup>, during his meeting of the Committee on Social and Labor Affairs, used the term 'Korean victims of Hiroshima' for the first time. The Committee was dedicated debating a revision of part of the law on special measures for atomic bomb survivors (75<sup>th</sup> Sitting..., p. 2). Ōhashi emphasized the issue of the Korean A-bomb Victim Supporting [Assistance – author's translation from Japanese] Cooperation (renamed "Korean Hibakusha Association" in 1977) and claimed that interest in the issue is very strong on the Japanese government's side. He mentioned different initiatives that were undertaken in 1972 between the Japanese government and the abovementioned association also calling for the cooperation of the South Korean government (75<sup>th</sup> Sitting..., p. 17).

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<sup>11</sup> Conservative party, established in 1964.

Seven years later, the issue of Korean *hibakusha* was raised during the same Committee's debate, this time by the representative of the Japan Socialist Party, Morii Chūryō. He mentioned the research conducted by the Japanese government to analyze the issue of Korean victims, as well as depicted the situation of establishing numerous associations related to the commemoration of Korean victims of the A-bomb (98<sup>th</sup> Sitting..., p. 8).

During the plenary session of the Lower House the question of the Korean *hibakusha* was held by Ishida Kōshirō from Kōmeitō in October, 1989. Ishida reminded fellow politicians that over 20,000 people that suffered from the atomic attack were still alive (in 1989) in Korea. He reminded the Japanese government of the necessity of helping in treating such people in Japan, and that this kind of cooperation and care of the Country of the Rising Sun towards Korean *hibakusha* is Japan's international and humanitarian responsibility (116<sup>th</sup> Sitting..., p. 10). The last time the analyzed issue was undertaken by a representative of the Japanese Communist Party, it was by Ozawa Kazuaki in 2001, who mentioned the situation of laborers in Hiroshima, who had worked for Mitsubishi Co. during the war (151<sup>st</sup> Sitting..., p. 17).

The abovementioned analysis of the parliamentary hearings shows the non-existence of this topic among Japanese politicians. Half of the analyzed references towards the Korean *hibakusha* was made by politicians of leftist parties. The rest was made by Kōmeitō representatives, who are frequently vivid parties in the Japanese-Korean talks.

## Conclusions

The question of the Korean victims of the A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima is a thread that is lost in the narrative of Japanese victimhood of the World War II, which is the main rhetoric in contemporary Japan. Japan was the aggressor during the war, it also occupied the Korean Peninsula since 1910. After the war, Japan became America's closest ally. Therefore, claims from Koreans to acknowledge their reasons and victimhood, seem to be reasonable, but get lost in the global memory, that contains the generalized picture of Japan as the main victim of the A-bomb. Moreover, the division of Korea made the demands of proper commemoration problematic, since two nations wanted their story to be told as the most victimized nation.

Koreans see their atomic tragedy not only as a result Japanese of atrocities during the war, but also as a result of those done upon them during the whole occupation period (1910–1945). Therefore, they feel injured twice-fold. A lack of proper commemoration is frequently associated with the discrimination of Koreans in Japan. Consequently, the possibility of having the right to the express memory through the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb becomes their greatest opportunity to emphasize the nationhood and independence of Korea in the contemporary world.

Even though the monument is present in the Peace Memorial Park area, and the Tourist Information center, travel guides and tour guides who lead organized groups show the Memorial, only around 40% of tourists visit this place. Those who don't use the facilities provided by city authorities usually skip this place, due to lack of knowledge about its existence. This indicates, that not only the local government and groups' initiatives remain unnoticed, but also a lack of wider recognition of the problem (compared to i.e. the issue of comfort women), which leaves the topic of the Korean *hibakusha* undiscovered.

In Japan, the question of Hiroshima is, as was mentioned above, the expression of the post-war shape of the Country of the Rising Sun. Remembering Koreans, that lost their lives or were injured during the atomic blast, brings to mind Japanese pre-war nationalistic policy. This memory is not needed in a democratized, peace-loving Japan. Consequently, the presence of Koreans, who weren't forced laborers, but members of the Japanese Imperial Army (i.e. Prince Yi U) makes Koreans feel inconvenient when promoting the Korean *hibakusha's* issue.

Nonetheless, the issue of Korean victims of Hiroshima is still vivid. When these people were still alive, whether they lived in Japan or returned to the Korean Peninsula, Japanese politicians raised their issue and paid tribute to those who passed away. These actions were rather rare, but important. When hardly any of the *hibakusha* are alive, the topic of Hiroshima's Koreans becomes a tool for governmental and nongovernmental hands, and is used to draw the attention of the international community. These actions justify the need of Korean citizens to be heard and understood, especially in the context of their tragedy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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