There is a battle for and around history going on at this very moment which is extremely interesting. The intention is to reprogram, to stifle what I've called the "popular memory," and also to propose and impose on people a framework in which to interpret the present. . . . Popular struggles have become for our society, not part of the actual, but part of the possible. So they have to be set at a distance. How? Not by providing a direct interpretation of them. . . . But by offering an historical interpretation of those popular struggles. . . . to show that they never really happened!

MICHEL FOUCAULT

Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive: it masters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. . . . A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.

WALTER BENJAMIN
In the spring of 1994, following Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto’s public statement that the Rape of Nanjing—the Japanese military operation in which between 155,000 and 300,000 people were massacred—was a fabrication, the national and international media yet again problematized the Japanese people’s amnesia about their war atrocities and the colonial aggression toward other peoples in Asia and the Pacific. From the 1980s textbook controversy concerning the Ministry of Education’s euphemization of Japanese expansionism by its replacement of “invasion” (shinshutsu) with a more diluted expression, “advance-ment” (shinryaku), and incidents in which the conservative politician Ishihara Shintaro has repeatedly denied the Rape of Nanjing, to the more recent administration’s concealment of documents that corroborated the military’s official involvement in the recruitment of women who were forced to provide sexual “comfort” to the Japanese military: examples of “Japanese amnesia” about the past war and colonialism seem inexhaustible. That the Japanese do not remember themselves as aggressors and only remember their victimization in the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has become almost a cliche, even in the U.S. news media.

Although this amnesia over Japan’s past deeds is unmistakably persistent in certain sectors of society, it is no longer as pervasive or as dominant as many claim. Setting aside the matter of the U.S. media’s portrayal of “the Japanese” as a monolithic entity and its inattention to the diversity of historical awareness within Japan, what has been missing in most media coverage is recognition that opinions such as Nagano’s are increasingly parochialized within the present cabinet and even among conservative political leaders. As exemplified by the government’s attempts to join the United Nation’s Security Council, the primary nationalist agenda in the present government is to secure Japan’s status in the post-Cold War global political economy, when the political, military, and economic reliance on the Security Treaty with the United States has come under question and is less certain. The Socialist Party’s recent approval of the Treaty’s official standing despite the Party’s past opposition to the militarized and quasi-colonial nature of the Treaty, paradoxically attests to the increasing uncertainty and waning appeal of the bilateral alliance with the United States. In order to achieve the nationalist ambitions of the conservative elites, it is imperative that they carefully resolve past wrongdoings against neighboring countries through apologies or by settling such memories within the “collective consciousness.”

The fifth anniversary of Hiroshima’s atom bombing and the 1995 commemoration of the end of the war in Asia and the Pacific provide opportunity for those who desire a closure to the contentious discourses on the nation’s past. In this essay on the memorial to Hiroshima’s Korean atom bomb victims I problematize one such recent attempt to contain and domesticate unreconciled discourses on the nation’s past.

As we shall see, the Korean memorial has constituted a discursive space for Japan’s former colonial subjects. It has contested and denationalized the dominant ways in which Hiroshima memories are articulated, namely, the remembering of Hiroshima’s holocaust primarily as “Japanese” victimization. Yet this memorial, which challenges the silence about Japan’s colonial aggression and war atrocities, is physically located at a site that is starkly isolated from the official commemorative site, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. This essay explores the controversy that erupted in 1990 over the city’s plan to relocate the Korean memorial within the Peace Park. The memory practices revolving around the Korean memorial and its location constitute a double discourse. They separate the remembered and those who are remembering the event from the rest of Japanese society and identify them as the Korean minority. Yet at the same time these narratives and practices of memorialization constitute contradictory elements in the production of subjectivities, thereby marking differentiations within the group as well as within each individual.

On the one hand, the ability to perform one’s own acts of remembrance—the ability, for instance, to erect memorials, to hold public commemorations, or to write autobiographical histories—serves to reterritorialize the cartography of memory, authorizing one’s past as differentiated from that of others. The act of
inscribing one's own way of remembering onto a society's historical knowledge makes one's presence visible within its public sphere and assures one's voice a place in the production of discourses on the past. To possess and demonstrate one's own memories is therefore inextricably tied to power and autonomy.

The erection of the Korean atom bomb victims' memorial in 1970 thus ensured the presence of ethnic Koreans in Hiroshima's history and society. The memorial restored the sovereignty of the dead, of those who had been deprived of independent national status under Japan's colonial rule, and who consequently were doubly victimized as a result of the U.S. nuclear attack. Among the 350,000 to 400,000 who were attacked by the atom bomb and/or exposed to the lethal post-explosion radiation, at least 50,000 were people from the Korean peninsula who had been forcibly sent to Japan as mobilized workers and soldiers, or who had left their villages following the devastation of Japan's colonial takeover of Korea in 1910.

In past official representations of Hiroshima's holocaust, Korean atom bomb victims have been virtually absent. In the official narratives of the Atomic Bomb Memorial Museum, those who suffered the U.S. assault have tended to be cast as a homogeneous victim of the nuclear holocaust, an event unprecedented in human history. Until 1990, the speeches of political elites at the annual municipal Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6th never referred to the at least 20,000 to 30,000 Korean atom bomb victims, who comprised between ten and twenty percent of the total population estimated to have been immediately killed by the bomb. Among numerous commemorative sites of the Hiroshima nuclear holocaust, the memorial for the Korean atom bomb victims therefore is the only visible reminder of the tribulations and suffering of those identified as Koreans.

In this way, the discourse on the Korean minority's memories of the atomic bomb disturb the dominant national as well as nationalist narratives about the war and the nuclear holocaust, constantly challenging the amnesia and whitewashing involved in official representations of the nation's past. Issues concerning the memorial's location are inextricably intertwined with the question of how the Japanese government faces its responsibilities for colonialism and the war of invasion. The Immigration Control and Refugee Act and the Alien Registration Act, the two laws that currently define the legal status of approximately 700,000 Korean resident aliens in Japan (zainichi kankoku chōsenjin; referred to as zainichi hereafter) have undoubtedly inherited many of the forms of Japan's colonial policy that treated Korean people and other colonial subjects as second class citizens. The legal practices that continue to subordinate the Korean minority in Japan include: the requirement to carry an alien registration card at all times, even for permanent residents; the discretionary power of the Ministry of Justice which confines resident aliens to a vulnerable status that makes them subject to possible deportation; the arbitrary yet strictly selective naturalization process, and informal administrative pressures to assimilate them and other aliens by imposing Japanese-like family names upon them.

Segregation of the ethnic memorial site from the city's central commemoratory space therefore is often regarded as symptomatic of the subaltern status of zainichi, who are invariably subjected to legal and administrative practices that are often summarized as those of "discrimination, assimilation, and expatriation." The memorial has not only provided a ritual space for the annual memorial ceremonies for Korean victims. By allowing an occasion for the continued rearticulation of past and present knowledges about ethnic Koreans, the memorial and the discourse on its location have also constituted, as we shall see in detail, a critical locus for the identity politics of Korean resident aliens in Hiroshima and elsewhere.

On the other hand, the narratives and practices of memorialization inevitably shape the Korean minority's diverse consciousness about history, ethnicity, and nationality—in other words, about those elements that cannot be entirely subsumed under the totality of collective identity or by what are imagined to be shared communal experiences. Far from merely constituting "sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves, places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their 'shared' stories of the past" (Young 1993:6-7), the Korean memorial, and many other mnemonic sites in Hiroshima, often generate contentious interpretations about the past and present, while inciting a kaleidoscope of visions toward the future. The meanings of the memorial, the event it commemorates, and the subject of memorialization are rarely transparent. The acts of remembrance necessarily
entail questions regarding the legitimacy and ownership of memory as well as belongingness to the shared past. Who participates in the remembrances at the memorial, what is desired in the remembering, how the commemorated event is construed, and for what objectives—these questions are inherently tied to the issue of communal boundaries and their authenticity. The collisions and elisions of meanings over the memorial, its location and the event it commemorates occur both without and within the ethnic boundaries, thereby differentiating the members of the Korean minority not only from the rest of Japanese society and history, but also from one another.

By exploring the diverse narratives produced by Korean resident aliens in Hiroshima, who are differently positioned within the matrices of generation, region, gender, sexuality, and class (although I cannot discuss them all), I shall distinguish elements within the web of memories which are often collapsed into the single totality of Korean-ness, while at the same time recognizing the critical importance of organizing and mobilizing individuals by their ethnic difference. In doing so, I ask how the Korean memorial continues to be constituted as a site where contestatory representations of the nation’s colonial history can be enunciated.

In examining narrative contestations over the Korean memorial, I shall also focus on the tension between attempts to control the contestatory memory of colonialism and resistance to these attempts at domestication. Contrary to the common perception, the hegemonic process within the production of Japan’s national history is moving beyond what we currently see as reprehensible—that is, beyond amnesia—to a point where those in power are contriving to “come to terms with the past” (Adorno 1986), through at least partially acknowledging the nation’s past misconduct and inscribing it onto the official memoryscape. Yet, as Theodor Adorno wrote, the coming to terms with the past (Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit) “does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory” (115). This process, therefore, necessarily entails the forgetting of that very amnesia, masking the fact that the memories of aggression and discrimination have been deliberately and at times forcibly repressed for almost half a century since the end of the war. As this study of the plight of the Korean memorial hopefully demonstrates, what really is at stake in this time of proliferating memorial objects and commemorative practices is to remember this very amnesia, so that we might consider how forgetting has shaped the subjectivities and the politicized engagements of those who are now being remembered.

Contentious Memorial

The memorial for the Korean atom bomb victims stands northwest of Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park, across the river which demarcates the Park’s western boundary. It is located at the foot of a bridge on a 150-square-foot corner lot, at a narrow four-way intersection. A statue of a mythic turtle supporting a fifty-foot-high granite column stands there. On the front of the memorial is an engraving of Chinese characters which reads, “kankokujin genbaku giseisha irei hi” or “memorial for kankokujin (South Korean and/or Korean) atom bomb victims.” Next to it is another line, also of Chinese characters but in a different style of calligraphy, which reads, “In memory of prince Yi Gu and the other 20,000 or more souls.” Below these two lines written vertically, is another horizontal engraving in English, “The monument in memory of the Korean victims of A-bomb” (sic).

The memorial has incited a number of interpretive contestations in the past two decades. Whether this monument memorializes all souls of the Korean atom bomb dead, or only of those whose survivors are affiliated with the Republic of Korea has been a central issue. The term kankokujin, at least in contemporary Japanese usage, refers in most cases to nationals of the Republic of Korea; while the other term for Korean people, chitenjin, is used either to specifically describe nationals of the People’s Republic of Korea, or to indicate the ethnological group.

The schism of the homeland, brought about by the history of Japanese colonialism, U.S. Cold War hegemony, and the Korean War, also resulted in a chasm in the memorializing of the atom bomb dead. Members of Zainippon Chitenjin Shiyose (Siren, for short), or the General Federation of Korean Residents in Japan, an organization which provides various administrative services for those affiliated with north Korea, believe that they have been excluded from the commemoration at the existing memorial, and since 1975 have been requesting the...
city to allow them to construct their own memorial. To the contrary, Zainippon Taikan Minkoku Kyoryumindan (Mindan, for short), or the Association for Korean Residents in Japan, officially holds the view that the memorial stands for both north and south Koreans, based on the grounds that Chugoku, or Kantō in Japanese, was the official name of Korea before the Japanese occupation. For example, the head of the Hiroshima Prefectural Headquarters of the Special Committee for the Atomic Bomb Victims repeated Mindan’s official view that “the memorial stands for the Great Korean People, with no distinction between south or north” (Chigoku shinbun, 19 April 1990). Despite the disputes, the ownership of the memorial appears to be rather self-evident, at least in the eyes of those affiliated with the Republic of Korea. Later I will return to the question of the memorial’s nationalist character.

Another interpretive crisis concerns the memorial’s location. As it has often been pointed out by the media and many other observers, the memorial stands outside the administrative boundaries of the Peace Park. The Korean memorial, to be sure, is not the only memorial that stands outside the official territory. Yet while the eastern and southern peripheries appear to be integral to the park due to the spatial arrangement of the extended greenery and paths, the park’s north-west end is much more secluded from the central commemorative sites. Over the past decade, the visitors to the memorial have construed the site/sight of isolation as indicating the alienation of Koreans in Japanese society.

One letter written in 1986 and addressed to the municipal government, by a Japanese man in collaboration with Oh Tokai, a first generation zainichi poet whose activism I will describe later, expressed both perplexity and resentment: “But how could this be? Discrimination even against the dead? Discrimination even among the victims of the atomic bomb? ... We demand that Hiroshima be a ‘unified memorial’ so that there is no distinction between both north and south’” (from Pika and Zenkoku, eds. 1989:55). Since the letter was written, voices questioning the memorial ownership of the memorial appears to be rather self-evident, at least in the eyes of those affiliated with the Republic of Korea. Later I will return to the question of the Memorial's nationalist character.

The visitors to the Memorial, therefore, paradigmatically portrays how official history has suppressed Korean ethnicity through the marginalization of their memories. The visitors to the Memorial embody these feelings.

Monument to Homeland

Despite the ever-growing public discontent, some Koreans do not regard the present location of the memorial as “a sign of discrimination.” One such person is Chō Te-hi, an iseijin, or first generation, retired president of a small business, who served as a representative of the committee which both initiated and executed

First, the city has insisted that it must observe the regulation it established in 1967 which restricts any further construction of memorials inside the official zone of the Peace Memorial Park. Second, the city has argued that the memorial, even if it were to be relocated in the official territory of the Peace Park, needs to be a “unified memorial” so that those affiliated not only with the Republic of Korea but also with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea can pay their respects without inciting political controversy. The city administrators have maintained that the Peace Park is a sacred site where prayers for the peace of all of humanity are offered, and it should therefore not be desecrated by bringing in any political issues. Third, the mayor and the city administrators in general have contended that the central cenotaph in the Peace Park embodies all souls lost to the bomb without regard to nationality or race and that therefore there is no need to have a separate memorial dedicated solely to the Korean atom bomb victims (Pika and Zenkoku, eds. 1989:84–85).8

At least for those who have comprehended the Memorial’s present location, the way in which the memorial has been treated is understood as an index of ongoing discrimination against Korean minorities and their continuing alienation. The physical location of the Memorial, therefore, paradigmatically portrays how official history has suppressed Korean ethnicity through the marginalization of their memories. The visitors to the Memorial embody these feelings.

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Despite the ever-growing public discontent, some Koreans do not regard the present location of the Memorial as "a sign of discrimination." One such person is Chō Te-hi, an iseijin, or first generation, retired president of a small business, who served as a representative of the committee which both initiated and executed
the memorial's construction. In responding to interviews by the media and activists he has repeatedly asserted that although he wishes to see the memorial placed within the Peace Park as promised by the former mayor, he does not believe that the present location of the memorial is in any sense "discriminatory," nor a "disgrace," as is often suggested by "outsiders." As on numerous other occasions, in responding to my personal interview, Cho reiterated the significance he saw in the memorial's present location:

[The location where the memorial stands today] was the site where the Korean Prince [Yi Gu] was found at the time of the bombing. The river was already filled with dead corpses floating like rafts. There they found one body glittering with accessories. "This must be someone important," people thought, and they pulled the body out of the river.

A nephew of the Yi Dynasty's twenty-seventh King, Prince Yi Gu was killed by the bomb while serving as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Japanese Imperial Army. A nephew of the Yi Dynasty's twenty-seventh King, Prince Yi Gu was killed by the bomb while serving as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Japanese Imperial Army. Without a pause, Cho went on to describe how the Korean royalty has been unfairly viewed:

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." When we were preparing for the construction of the memorial, many wanted us to use the word "kankoku," as [the character kan] had been used in nikkankan heigo [Korea-Japan annexation] [of 1910].

What prompted the founder of the memorial to choose Yi Gu to represent the Korean people who had fallen victim to the bomb, if in fact the Prince is among those who, as Cho indicated, are "regarded as national traitors?" His narrative suggests that Prince Yi Gu and Korean royalty as a group are victims of Japan's colonial policy, just as much as any other Koreans, including zainichi and Korean victims of the atom bomb. Perhaps Cho was projecting onto Prince Yi Gu's tribulations his own personal history of having been formerly accused of collaborating in Japan's war effort and colonial rule. The choice of Prince Yi Gu to represent the other Korean atom bomb victims may have been part of his personal effort to restore the good name of many Koreans who were coerced into cooperating with Japan, and who have long been disparaged as collaborators. And as the memorial redeems the Yi family and other colonial subjects who presumably shared the same historical destiny, it at the same time, in Cho's interpretation of history, resurrects the essential character (han or kan in Japanese) of the name of their sovereign country, the name which was forcibly taken from them during Japan's colonial regime.

The nation's name, its language, its history, and the Prince, though tarnished, denote the memorial's referent by distinguishing the dead enshrined there from the rest of the atom bomb victims. The althea trees and pebbles are also from Korea. These objects from the soil of the home country are said to have consoled the souls of those who died while yearning for their homeland.

Moreover, the memorial, embellished as it is with Korean national symbols, signifies the victories of Koreans who survived Japanese colonialism, the war, and even the atom bomb. The memorial honors the national culture and the existing political regime; it also celebrates paternalistic ties with Korea. For instance, on the left side of the memorial the Republic of Korea's national flag is engraved. Below the flag are the names and titles of two individuals: the chairperson of the national congress of the Republic of Korea at the time of the memorial's construction, who provided the calligraphy for the main inscription; and a Seoul University professor who provided the memorial's description about the history of the Korean victims. Referring to this icon of Korean national and anticolonial pride, one of the construction committee members wrote, "Like a [magnificent] flock among a [common] flock of chickens, this solememorial, which evokes images of a king's tomb that crystallizes the pure spirits of Shilla, stands absolutely [peerless] among numerous monument stones in the Peace Park" (Pika and Zenkoku, eds. 1989:31).

In this particular sense, unlike Hiroshima's other memorials which register defeat in the war, this icon of remembrance bears witness to the victory of the martyrs of independence. The Korean memorial stands for the triumph over Japanese aggression and emancipation from colonial injustice. While registering the emotions of grief, atonement, and consolation, the Korean memorial simultaneously serves as a nationalist monument, embodying the pride and glory of the
Republic of Korea. It is likely that CH0's way of remembering the Hiroshima holocaust is predominant among first and perhaps many second generation Korean resident aliens. Nevertheless, it is certainly not the only way remembrance takes place, even among those who supposedly share a similar generational history.

Oh Tokai, the zainichi poet mentioned earlier as one of the writers of a letter criticizing the memorial's location, does not subscribe to the narrative of great Korean national glories. Born in 1919, Oh Tokai considers himself one of the oldest of those who claim to be zainichi. Oh is a poet who has earned most of his living as a construction worker and day-laborer. Today he receives social welfare. Practically homeless, he lives in the corner of a common room in a university students' dormitory. He is also known as the first person who protested against the legal restrictions on resident Koreans by publicly burning his alien registration card.

Underlying CH0's notion of being a Korean, radically different from that of CH0 and most other issei Koreans, is the obstinate refusal of any communal boundaries regarding what is assumed to be the shared experience of Korean victimization. At one meeting in Hiroshima, Oh began his speech by criticizing the largest peace and anti-nuclear organization, the Gensuikin (Japan Congress Against Atom and Hydrogen Bombs): "When the [Japanese peace and anti-nuclear] movement gained popularity, in the cries that called attention to the cruelty of the atomic bomb, I did not even once hear the claim that there are survivors in Korea." His criticism of the Japanese majority's treatment of the Korean atom bomb victims furthermore extends to the general question of postwar reparations. He points to the unfair situation in which former colonial subjects who fought and labored as Japanese imperial subjects before and during the war have not received monetary reparations equal to those given Japanese nationals. He concluded, "In Japan, the object of rescue is always limited to the Japanese. And people don't think it's odd."

While he criticizes the self-centrism in Japan's national memory, Oh at the same time distances himself from those zainichi who employ such words as "dōshū" (fellow country people), or "sokoku" (homeland) in order to reinforce the sense of solidarity of greater Korea. For him, such a tie is illusory and dangerous not only because it may further create a boundary of empathy, but also because it obscures the hierarchies within the boundary. From his point of view, it is hypocritical for Koreans in Japan to identify with Koreans in Korea, as if they share the same subjective world. As a way to demonstrate his own notion of being an ethnic Korean in Japan, he refuses to pronounce his name in the Korean reading of the Chinese characters, Son To-he, but insists that his name should be pronounced in the Japanese reading. He also considers it natural that most Koreans in Japan speak Japanese as their first language. He maintained, "I once told a zainichi activist who always summons camaraderie with the Koreans back in the homeland that they shouldn't dare say that Koreans in Japan and Koreans in Korea share the same horizon. We were making money in Japan when Korea was suffering during the [1950-53] Korean War. Our roads were separated a long time ago."

Oh's refusal of the nationalist narrative has also led him to form a critical outlook on the Korean memorial which subverts the established authorities of class and the state:

But that memorial itself is in fact quite nonsensical. Why is a specific individual's name inscribed? ... Moreover, why does only the prince receive special treatment when tens of thousands of other Koreans also died? ... What does the memorial exist for? That there is only an inscription for the Republic of Korea's national flag [when in fact there are two separate sovereign nations for the Korean people] should also be a matter of controversy.

In concluding his populist narrative—a view that contrasts sharply with CH0's—Oh further cautioned that transferal of the Korean memorial into the park proper might result in the municipal government's cooption of ethnic minority issues:

The fact that the memorial for the Korean atomic bomb victims stands across the river is very suggestive. It expresses the reality of zainichi. The fact that it is located across the river from the Peace Park is in itself very significant. It's important. Isn't it quite natural that the memo-
rial should stand across the river precisely because the zainichi exist across the river?

A partial fulfillment of demands might lead to the further occlusion of yet unresolved questions. Oh's narrative, undoubtedly shared by very few nurses and high-ranking members of Mindan, situates the memorial within the context of the zainichi's current location within Japanese society, that is, in the midst of the ongoing endeavors to build their futures in a society that casts them as others who should be assimilated. Oh's position, one that relentlessly denies yearning for the homeland and advocates a radical politics of difference, resonates curiously with recent strategies of ethnic politics pursued by many second and third generation youth. We will later return to some of the younger generations' narratives on the politics of Korean ethnicity.

Excess of Memory

Shortly before the forty-fifth anniversary of the city's atom bombing, the Hiroshima city government, despite its decade-long refusal to consider any requests for the memorial's relocation, suddenly shifted its position. Unilaterally disregarding the 1967 regulation, the city announced that relocation would be welcomed, provided that the North and South Koreans could agree upon a unified memorial. The spring of 1990 was indeed a time when the speculations and motives of different political constituencies—the South Korean government, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the Japanese government, Sorens, Mindan, and the municipal government—came to converge on issues regarding the Korea-Japan relationship. Several incidents staged on the national political scene during the earlier half of that year, including a visit by President Roh Tae-ku of the Republic of Korea in May, finally brought the long deferred question to the majority's attention. 11

Hiroshima city administrators along with economic and political elites, have also discovered their own interests in relocating the Korean memorial. The city administration's two most pressing matters at the end of this century have been the hosting of the 1994 Asian Games, and the fiftieth commemoration of the atom bombing to be held in 1995. To the dismay of city officials, however, visitors from the very Asian countries with which the city has been promoting "international friendship," have become increasingly visible and vocal in denouncing the peripheral location of the Korean atomic bomb victims' memorial. "Discrimination persists even after death?" With news captions such as this, the local media has unfailingly reported on tourists' outrage toward the city and the Japanese people for their irresponsibility regarding the memorial's marginal status. With continuing exposure of the suppression of memories of Japanese aggression, it appears likely that the city will experience yet more embarrassment at such international events.

The 1990 proposal for the Korean memorial's relocation is symptomatic of the current broader nationalist agenda, namely, the attempt to officially come to terms with memories of Japan's aggression. To secure political and economic stability in the adjacent Asian and Pacific region, it has become necessary for the government to incorporate memories of Japan's colonial and military atrocities into national history, but in a manner that does not threaten the present order of knowledge. Hiroshima city government's agreement to grant permission for the Korean memorial's relocation must be understood in this context.

This process of cooptation, however, could only be effective if the memorial were converted into something innocuous. Following the city's official announcement of the memorial's relocation, an administrative advisory committee consisting of several local celebrities stated that in order to unify the memorial for North and South Koreans, the present engravings should be replaced with a new inscription. In short, the 1990 proposal required careful tailoring of the Korean memorial's form and content.

After many debates and complications, the committee ultimately submitted the following suggestions to the city for unifying the memorial. 12 The committee suggested that the main inscription on the front of the memorial should be changed to "genbaku giseisha ireki" (memorial for the atom bomb victims), eliminating the term kankoku (Republic of Korea), as well as Prince Yi Gu's name. It also recommended that four Chinese characters, which in Japanese read, "banko ryoshu," should be placed above the main inscription. Taken from classical Korean literature, according to an official interpretation, this phrase means that "the precious death of the people will remain as a fragrant stream forever in people's
hearts." And finally, two small Hangul, or Korean letters, chudo, reading “tribute to the dead” should be added across the top of the inscription.

Despite strong support from the high-ranking members of Mindan and Siren, the attempt to move the memorial into the park by August 6, 1990 ultimately failed, due to strong protests from other citizens and members of the two organizations. Those in Mindan and Siren who tentatively agreed to the memorial’s alteration certainly had hoped for a positive outcome from unifying and relocating the memorial. Some argued that it would indeed be humiliating for the memorial to remain at the present site. Others saw it as an opportunity to eliminate the name of Prince Yi Gu, a name that provokes difficult memories for many in Korea. Though not without some reservations, many also expressed the desire to see the dream for the “unified homeland” fulfilled, at least in the unified memorialization of those who fell victim to the bomb.

When seen from this perspective, it may seem as if the opportunity to relocate was spoiled only because of objections against the proposed alterations to the present inscriptions. However, the failure of the plan should ultimately be attributed to the city officials’ original insistence on making the memorial into a site that they believed could be free of “ideological conflicts.” The irony of the matter is, however, that given the immanence of the fiftieth annual commemoration of the atom bombing, it would have been to the city’s advantage to relocate the memorial into the park proper, rather than to have it remain where it is, certain to incite further international rebuke. What, then, was at stake for the city officials and others that compelled them to obstinately refuse relocation of the memorial as is and to propose controversial alterations, which led to their failure to move the memorial?

The present memorial is central to at least two processes of signification. On the one hand, in the eyes of some the memorial has served as a site for discursive intervention. It is a location where knowledge about the consequences of Japanese colonial rule in Korea is enunciated by evoking memories of the adversities that faced Korean atom bomb survivors. At one public symposium organized by several citizens’ groups in Hiroshima, an invited speaker, Kim Son-on, commended as a nisei (second generation) entrepreneur who at one time had served as a member of the memorial construction committee:

For the memorial not only consoles the souls of the victims; it also helps urge people to think about the very fact that there were this many Korean survivors [and] why Korean victims [of Hiroshima and Nagasaki], who amount to at least 100,000 and perhaps more survivors and 20,000 dead, have been ignored ever since the war’s end. I think it is an obvious outcome of the discriminatory policy against us Koreans.

At the same time, from its inception the memorial has been “a tribute to the dead.” As a shrine where the dead are memorialized, as a public grave for those whose souls have never been individually consolated, it has always had qualities that are closely associated with the sentiments for the dead broadly shared by people in general and not limited to the Korean minority. In this regard, the Korean memorial is similar to a number of other memorials in Hiroshima: it is a unanimous and universal tribute to those who were equally killed by the bomb. After all, it could be argued that the U.S. attacked and indiscriminately massacred as a collectivity those who were present in Hiroshima on that day, regardless of their military or civilian status, or age, class, sex, or nationality. Besides, can there be any differences in the importance of individual human lives, in the sentiments of the bereaved, in their deepest desires to offer proper homage to the deceased?

Yet, it should not be overlooked that this universalist understanding of the human attitude toward death often serves to obscure important cleavages, incongruities, and impossibilities that are both politically and culturally constituted and therefore need to be addressed precisely in those terms. In the case of the differences between Japanese and Korean atom bomb victims, the second generation Korean survivors almost invariably recall how their first generation parents were mistreated by Japanese soldiers and others at the relief stations, even while remembering the shared horrific experience of survival itself. 13

Moreover, a journalist Nakajima Tatsuyoshi, who has been writing extensively on Korean survivors’ issues, has argued that Korean atom bomb survivors, and especially those who returned to Korea and thus endured what he calls “triple afflictions,” suffered in multiple ways in contrast to other survivors in Japan. According to Nakajima, the Korean population first of all was concentrated in the city proper, and hence were close to the hypocenter. Due to immigration...
and forcible mobilization, many were confined to an area where munitions factor-
ies were clustered together. Second, unlike many Japanese survivors who sought
shelter outside the city through familial and other affiliations, the majority of the
Korean survivors had no option but to remain in the city and were thus exposed
to radiation considerably longer than most others. And finally, those Koreans
who returned to Korea have not been able to receive medical care comparable
to survivors in Japan (Zaikan Hibakusha Mondai Shimin Kaigi, ed. 1988).

Ku proclaimed that in order for the memorial to "urge people to think about the very fact that
there were this many Korean survivors," the referents of memory—that is, who
the memorial is memorializing—must be obvious. Moreover, he contends that
it is insufficient for only those who are the ethnic curators of the memories of
the dead to be aware of the nationality of the enshrined. The communicative
dynamics of this memorial ought not to be confined to the Korean minority alone,
but should extend to the broader Japanese society and reach out as far as the Korean
peninsula. The memories it involves must constantly spill over the boundaries of
ethnic memory. Ku concluded that from the newly proposed inscription, "it is
impossible to know the nation and the people, as well as the reason, for which
this memorial stands."

The existing memorial marks just that kind of difference, a distinctly "Korean"
kind of memory. The Korean memorial speaks specifically to the nation's victimization by Japanese colonialism and the war of expansion. It embodies
memories that have been collectively reconstituted and distinguished from those
of the perpetrators. As such, the memorial stands for the irreconcilable chasm
between the colonizers and the colonized and for the disparity of memories that
even the sincerest sentiments for the dead cannot easily conflate under a common
denominator.

The proposed alteration of the inscriptions would have obscured this incom-
memorability of memories. As a monument, the present icon not only mourns
the victims; but also, for the reasons described earlier, it celebrates the Korean
nation's independence and its emancipation from Japanese colonial rule. Moreover
over its messages delegitimize the Japanese government's policies toward Koreans
in the past and present. By defacing these memories, the city and committee's
proposal would transform the memorial in such a way that it would be commensu-
rate with other memorial icons in the Peace Memorial Park. It tried to convert
the magnificent, the monumental, and the accusatory to a banal, universalizing
"tribute to the dead." What the city and committee would have prohibited was

precisely such an excess of memory in Japan's official remembering of the Hiro-
shima holocaust.

Memory Matters: Korean Ethnicity in Japan

The 1990 blueprint for the Korean memorial's relocation was yet another attempt
to contain and domesticate one of the many disruptive memories in Japan's histori-
cal consciousness. Yet resistance to the 1990 relocation plan demonstrates how
struggles over endangered memories are a crucial part of engaging in the politics
of difference. Those Koreans and their non-Korean supporters who objected to
rewriting the memorial inscription did so precisely because they saw that the
city and committee's intervention in their acts of remembering threatened to erase
their difference as Koreans.

For most nisei and sansei (third generation) Korean resident aliens, the memo-
rial issue took on a further significance that did not converge with the narrative
of the South Korean nation. In objecting to the memorial's alteration they resisted
containment of the politics of their ethnic memories: they rejected surveillance
of how they remember the past as ethnic subjects (minka toshite). The younger
generation of Koreans in Hiroshima regarded the relocation issue as a pressing
concern that needed to be addressed in the city's administrative policies, along
with a number of other issues relevant to their ongoing civil rights struggles. A
sansei grocer, Kan Son-duk who is a member of several ethnic organizations
understood the memorial issue as follows:

Those who belong to our generation do not have an awareness of being
Korean citizens residing abroad. Precisely because we believe that our
future lies here in Japan, we protest such legal discriminations as the
alien registration act, and at the same time we wish to retain our ethnic
culture in a symbolic manner. We regard the Korean memorial relocation
issue as an integral part of such issues. (Chugoku shinbun, 1 Au-
gust 1990)

Kan's remark succinctly captures the idea of citizenship or civil rights
(kōminkei) that is divorced from the concept of nationality. That non-nationals
should be treated on equal terms with nationals in local/national communities
because both groups are residents who share various obligations equally, including
paying taxes and taking on responsibility for determining the community's fu-
ture—such is the emerging awareness that has generally guided the protests of
especially the third generation of Korean resident aliens.
In order to create "an environment in which we can live as ethnic subjects," Kan has pushed the city administration to create conditions in which "the municipal community would approve our membership as community residents." He has urged the city to pursue policies that would provide the zainichi population with an environment where all ethnic Koreans would be granted permanent residency unconditionally, where there would be community services for minorities, including opportunities for ethnic education, and where it would be possible to vote as resident aliens, at least at the prefectoral level. He and others believe that eliminating all so-called "nationality requirements" in the city government's hiring practices (the requirement that public employees be Japanese nationals) is especially crucial for stabilizing the socio-economic conditions of resident aliens. This protest local communities in Japan. "Their protests," writes Hon Te-pyo, "are not so much rebellions against Japanese society as excruciating love calls, in which political participation, not in the homeland, but in their everyday lives, can subjugate women and girls, while empowering them to live as ethnic subjects, without losing sight of their positions as members of the Korean minority.

14. During the past decade, critics such as Clifford (1988), Marcus and Fisher (1986) and Rosaldo (1989), among others, have criticized the anthropological notion of culture as a bounded and timeless entity that prescribes actions and emotions. See also Dirks, ed., 1992 for an important discussion of how the above concept of culture was produced and has functioned in the contexts of colonial rule.

15. It is important to note that I am observing the narratives produced by those Korean resident aliens who are living in an environment in which it is not possible to organize their lives around a stable and institutionally distinguishable community, such as ethnic language schools or a Koreatown. See Maruyama 1983 for a historical and sociological observation of the Korean community in Hiroshima.
Given the extensive variety of regional, economic, political, and gender disparities, the lived reality of Korean resident aliens appears almost as fragmented as those of Asian Americans who have immigrated in different historical periods and from many disparate countries and class backgrounds. How each individual views his or her difference from other members of society, and the ways in which that person perceives conditions as oppressive and discriminatory are never consistent. In this sense, the Korean resident aliens' indeterminate idea of Koreanness confirms Michael M. J. Fischer's argument that the ethnic process is a dream-like work of memory, that is, in the making of ethnicity, fragments of images, stories, and cultural forms are "worked out through, and integrated with, [each individual's] ongoing experience" (1986:208). Conventional sociological studies, unable to capture the fluidity and multifacetedness of individual ethnic subjectivity, have often dismissed such allegorical dimensions of ethnicity. Rather, they have tended to conceptualize ethnicity as a uniform entity with a coherent social agency that is grounded upon stable and unproblematic linkages with the unified past.

Nonetheless, the construction of ethnic subjectivity, though often differing wildly according to each individual's condition, is not an entirely arbitrary invention. Regardless of what individuals deem appropriate to articulate differences, to live as an ethnic subject means for individuals to live through the ways in which they have been interpellated, to live with that which has been suppressed, with elements that have been consistently and forcibly taken from their lives. The relocation issue is crucial because the memorial crystallizes for many people, though in various ways, the indicators of difference that they believe they have been denied by other memorializations of the Hiroshima holocaust.

The Korean family name is one such indicator. In responding to the city's official account that the central cenotaph in the Peace Park enshrines all souls lost to the bomb indiscriminately, Cha, for instance, describes the memorial's relation to ethnic names as follows:

"Japanese are enshrined in the central cenotaph, but not Koreans. There are individuals whose names are recognizable as Korean, such as Kimura or Kasemoto [which are Japanese-like names often adopted by people of Korean ethnic background], but they are enshrined with their Japanese names. They are [in that sense] indistinguishable.

Most Korean resident aliens use at least two family names: an ethnically Korean name succeeded through the paternal lineage, which is read in either or both of the Japanese and Korean readings of the Chinese characters, and a Japanese-like surname, often referred to as the "commonly used name." At schools, progressive teachers encourage students to use their "real names." But it is often the case in the corporate world that Korean resident aliens are dissuaded from using ethnic names by informal administrative guidance or in the workplace. Above all, the imposition of "commonly used names" upon zainichi often converges with the memories of Japanese colonial rule over Korea, when the Japanese government legally coerced the Korean population into adopting Japanese-like surnames.

In addition to alteration of the main inscription, the 1990 relocation proposal further called for not only the disposal of a plaque adjacent to the memorial that explains the background of the memorial's construction in English, Korean, and Japanese, but also the erasure of the historical description of Japanese colonialism in Korea on the memorial's backside, that is written in Hangul. In place of the present inscription, the new proposal suggested that the following be written in both Hangul and Japanese: "This memorial was constructed in order to enshrine the souls of those from the Korean peninsula who fell victim to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and also to pray for eternal world peace."

For the younger generation of Koreans, the defacing of colonial memories implied by the elimination of engravings and also by the proposed disposal of the plaque suggested a delimitation of the possibilities of their politics in the present and the future. Kim, too, angrily contended that:

"to retain [the present inscription together with the explanatory plaque] means to keep such words as forceful mobilization, civilian war workers, soldiers and so on—namely, those things that are upsetting and unacceptable for high-ranking city officials. We simply wrote down what is obvious to us. The fact that we are Koreans will be erased. The fact of forceful mobilization will be erased. How could we continue to live here in Japan? It truly makes me feel anxious about our future.

16. According to a 1984 survey in Kanagawa prefecture, about two thirds of the Korean residents there usually or exclusively use their real name, while about twenty percent use both depending on the occasion. The survey also shows that while more than ninety percent of Korean residents hold two names, over eighty percent of Chinese residents in Kanagawa use only their Chinese surnames. See Rokubasugoson Kenkyu! Kai and Nitonous Kenkyu! Kai, eds. (1985:41) and Kousho Sakai, et al., ed. (1986:180). A series of surveys in which ethnic Koreans who had been forced to adopt Japanese family names at the time of naturalization recently demanded the government to recognize their ethnic names, has introduced the new category of "Korean Japanese," that is, Japanese nationals who are unassimilated Koreans. See Minzokusho (1991) and Tomozumi Katô, ed. (1990). This is a path for emancipation envisioned differently from the one I describe here, namely, one that pursues civil rights not as nationals but as non-national residents."
This anxiety of Korean resident aliens about their future is a fundamental uneasiness about the fact that their existence is not and cannot be represented in the world. Takeda Seiji, a zainichi literary critic, described it as a form of dysphoria or aphasia (1989: 13-15). Adrienne Rich called such dismay at not being able to find oneself in the authoritative discourse, a "psychic disequilibrium."

A Korean woman survivor, referred to a similar condition of her existence as "ghostly."

To retain the inscriptions on the present memorial was therefore not to pledge loyalty to the homeland. Rather, to transfer it is as onto the official territory of memorialization was to help recuperate the very suppression of "the suppressed," of "the excluded," with all the agony and enmity that it might evoke. Moreover such a move would open up an opportunity to reclaim the materiality of memory, that is to recover the "matter" of memory, with which individuals might articulate their being. "Their" historical "truth," the irreducible and unassimilable whole of historical self-evidence—Kim's "what to us is obvious"—would be allegorically interjected onto society's memory processes through this space of rupture.

Such desires to restore the materiality of difference in discourses on the Hiroshima holocaust, however, does not necessarily mean that these zainichi believe that one historical truth must be excavated in order to replace another. Likewise, to say that one believes in the urgency of recuperating certain cultural practices is not the same as to say that there is an authentic and essential cultural heritage that inherently unifies Koreans and differentiates them from others. Perhaps the younger generations of Korean resident aliens themselves most acutely sense the strategic quality of their politics of difference. As mentioned earlier, the Korean women are aware that aspirations for "authentic" Korean familial relations can in turn create oppressive conditions of male domination and patriarchy. The sociologist Jung, introduced earlier, told me as many others often did, that ethnoicity (miyokara) has no ultimate significance in life. "Though I may sound contradictory," she claims, "I feel that in order to be able to say that miyokara is insignificant, we must first have it."

I want to make it clear that this claim only bears an apparent resemblance to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak once called, in referring to feminisms' deployment of the category of woman, "strategic essentialism." To mobilize political alliances around a shared narrative about how one has been interpellated historically is not the same as claiming solidarity based on ahistorical categories of difference that are assumed to be naturally and prediscursively given. Nor is it the same as subscribing to the idea that certain historical knowledges can exist prior to discursive mediations and that past events can reveal the inherent significance in and of themselves. The names, language, ethnic cuisine, ancestral rites, and the recently excavated historical knowledges that have long been concealed are materialities of differences which matter to the extent that they are endangered and require discursive restitution.

Unsettling Memories: Some Concluding Thoughts

As we can see from the controversy over the Korean memorial's relocation, the narrative space of Hiroshima constitutes a discursive border where atom bomb memories are produced by multiple, polyglot elements. It is a site where narratives about the past, the status of self, the condition of the nation, and the future of the world converge and compete. Pilgrims and storytellers transform the Korean atom bomb memorial and other sites of memories into components of history in dialectical praxis. Rather than the sublime object of sacred prayers, or the frozen site of a past catastrophe, Hiroshima is a moving crossroad where things and people ceaselessly intermingle, where the voices of the dead intersect with the outrages of the living. It is a hybrid space where travellers and their heterogeneous voices continue to encounter one another.

Yet, the crossings of memory boundaries often entail pain and violence. Immediately after the announcement of the 1990 relocation plan, arsonists attacked the Korean atom bomb memorial. Many zainichi perceived this as yet another assault on their own bodies. Furthermore, just as the choice between remaining as a Korean resident alien and naturalizing to become a Korean Japanese are never understood as symmetrical alternatives for many ethnic Koreans, border-crossings are not smooth and free movements between two or more interchangeable spaces or identically weighted choices. Like the state forces that police national borders, the boundaries shaping the discourse of authentic memorialization, which exclude and domesticate heterogeneous and ambiguous elements, are invisible to most people until they are encountered directly. But for those in subjugated positions, the boundary walls reveal...
themselves with clear force and violence. In as much as they are effects of power, any endeavor to challenge or blur boundaries provokes conflict and entails pain and brutality. In sum, the politics of ethnic memory over the 1990 relocation issue intensified by a seemingly paradoxical sense of alarm: to remember the past in a particular way might be tantamount to closing the possibilities of the present and aborting the future. Protests against the 1990 relocation plan ought to be understood within the context of this particular dialectics of memory, one in which assaults on memories about the past were translated into struggles over future memories. Injustices to memories of and about earlier generations in turn become construed as an attack, above all, on the contemporary history of ethnic political struggles. Here, the commonsensical directionality of memory becomes reversed. It is not an effort to make the past account for the present; rather, it is one in which present attempts to wrest ethnic differences from the homogenizing processes of society work to recover memories of struggles against colonial and postcolonial domination. Out of this struggle came an awareness that settling accounts of the past in the manner that the city proposed would produce a conciliatory remembering that would placate the yet critical memories which continue to constitute present ethnic politics and would once again render them invisible to mainstream Japanese society.

Walter Benjamin once wrote about the dialectics of historical knowledge, "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irrevocably" (1969:255). Those who objected to the 1990 relocation plan sought to situate memories of colonialism and discrimination in official historical representations in such a way that they would be the present's "own concerns—that is, so that these critical ethnic memories would not become assimilated into the nation’s "homogeneous, empty" history of linear progress, but instead would "place the present in the critical position." When writing this conclusion in December 1994, the Korean atom bomb memorial still had not been relocated. The most recent proposal, a plan devised solely by top level representatives of Mindan and Soren, suggested the addition of the three Chinese characters that read "chosenjin" and placing it alongside the word, "kankokujin." The memorial would then explicitly refer to the nationals of two separate countries. The plan was not executed because of disagreements over the rewriting of the memorial's other inscriptions. It is certainly still possible that the memorial may be relocated as we draw nearer to the fiftieth commemoration of Hiroshima's atom bombing in the summer of 1995. If the memorial is to be incorporated within the official terrain of Hiroshima’s memorialization, it must be done without effacing critical differences in remembering. Similarly, the Japanese politicians' recent official admissions of and apologies for Japan's colonial and military aggressions—that is, their attempts to move beyond amnesia and silence—pose serious threats to heretofore marginalized memories. To cope with the current reprogramming and domesticating of popular memories requires a dialectics of memory in which the long suppressed past can be "redeemed" while preserving its power to challenge yet another hegemony of remembering and forgetting.


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