

The Construction of *Tokkō* Memorial Sites in Chiran and the Politics of “Risk-Free” Memories

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This paper takes a historical sociological approach to exploring the construction of war-related tourism sites in Chiran, a town famous as the “home” of the *tokkō* (or kamikaze) pilots. Today, despite poor access to the town, many tourists visit its *tokkō*-focused Peace Museum and Tokkō temple (Tokkō Heiwa Kannon-dō). In the early postwar period, however, Chiran did not present itself as a *tokkō* town. While locals have come to embrace an identity tied to the *tokkō*, those who died in the *tokkō* operations carried out from Chiran were not local residents, but rather pilots from throughout Japan. When did Chiran emerge as a home of *tokkō*, and in what social context? Through exploring these questions, this paper analyzes the historical processes involved in the construction of war memorial sites in postwar Japan.

Keywords: *tokkō* images, war memories, Chiran, media, veteran associations, locality, de-historization, war dead memorialization, replicas, borrowed memories

Introduction

Chiran 知覧 (now part of Minamikyūshū 南九州) in Kagoshima prefecture used to have an army base from which *tokkō* 特攻 missions were launched.¹ Currently, the town is a popular war-related tourist site. Its primary attraction, the Chiran Peace Museum (Tokkō Heiwa Kaikan 特攻平和会館), which exhibits farewell notes and mementos left by *tokkō* pilots, can attract over 600,000 visitors a year.² While visitor numbers are much lower than the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum (1.74 million visitors in 2016), a site with much better access, they are roughly equivalent to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum (680,000 visitors in 2016), which has long attracted school excursion groups, the Himeyuri Peace Museum (Himeyuri Heiwa Kinen Shiryōkan ひめゆり平和祈念資料館, 580,000 visitors in

1 While typically called “kamikaze” in English, in this paper the term “*tokkō*,” the more neutral term common in Japan, is used. “*Tokkō*” is an abbreviation of Tokubetsu Kōgekitaī 特別攻撃隊 (or Tokkō-tai 特攻隊), meaning “special attack unit.” The term “*tokkō*” refers to both pilots in this unit, and to the unit itself.

2 In 2016, the year of the Kumamoto earthquakes, visitors to the museum numbered less than 400,000. The average number of annual visitors for the three previous years was about 526,000. Data based on Chiran Peace Museum 2012, and a telephone interview with the city’s Tourism Section on 17 August 2018.

2016) in Okinawa prefecture and the National Showa Memorial Museum (Shōwakan 昭和館, 350,000 visitors in 2016) in Tokyo.

Chiran has neither prominent sightseeing spots within or close to the town, nor good access. It takes about ninety minutes to reach Chiran from Kagoshima by car, and the only means of public transportation there is bus. Aside from Himeyuri, the other peace museums mentioned above are located in cities and are easily accessible. Considering this, the number of visitors to the Chiran Peace Museum is remarkable, and demonstrates Chiran's reputation as home of the *tokkō*.

In the early postwar period, however, Chiran was not a center of *tokkō*-related tourism. At the start of the Pacific War, Chiran was transformed from a major center of tea production with the establishment of an army air base. After the war, the town was soon “demobilized” and returned to the tea and potato fields of the past. In 1955, at the suggestion of former senior ranking members of the Imperial Japanese Army's air force division, Tokkō Heiwa Kannon-dō 特攻平和観音堂 (hereafter Tokkō Kannon) was erected to mourn *tokkō* pilots killed in action. The local community, however, was not unified in support of the temple, and attention was not drawn to its memorial services in town newsletters.

Tokkō missions were not a direct part of the war experiences of local Chiran citizens. The Battle of Okinawa and atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in contrast, were central to residents' war experiences. While Chiran was a base, it was not Chiran citizens, but pilots gathered from around Japan that carried out *tokkō* missions. Why and when were the experiences of people from outside Chiran borrowed and incorporated within the war memories of local citizens?

Needless to say, the presence of the base precipitated connections between the local community and *tokkō* operations during the war. Middle school and women's high school students were often mobilized for labor services at the base, and *tokkō* unit members often spent their free time at nearby restaurants. Nevertheless, rather than narrating their own personal experiences of the war, such as being mobilized for labor services, the stories of local residents overwhelmingly focus on accounts heard from pilots about their missions. Further, locals do not tend to emphasize their own experiences of interacting with the pilots, but pilots' experiences and feelings as (ostensibly) told directly to them. In this sense, the war memories articulated by citizens in Chiran are distinct from the narratives of people living in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa, and Tokyo, which focus on their own personal experiences.

Local wartime memories in Chiran have never been homogenous, however. In recent years, the City of Minamikyūshū has been working towards registering a collection of *tokkō* pilots' farewell notes with UNESCO's Memory of the World. In support of this, the city attempted to conclude a friendship agreement with Oświęcim, the Polish town close to the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp, intending to make a shared appeal for peace. Due to strong objections from the bereaved, however, the attempt was abandoned. Regardless of whether this decision was appropriate, the example demonstrates conflict between city administrators and surviving relatives over memories of the *tokkō*. What other discords have emerged over memories of the pilots during Chiran's development as a “*tokkō* town”? And how have these emerged, and been dealt with, in war-related tourism?

Keeping these questions in mind, this paper examines the processes by which Chiran was constructed as a *tokkō* memorial site, and the distortions of memories that have concomitantly occurred. In so doing, the paper aims to shed light on the politics of

war-related tourism in Japan today by comparing the development of war memorial sites in Chiran with those of Hiroshima and Okinawa.

There are few historical and empirical studies of how war-related destinations, and war-related tourism, have developed in postwar Japan, or of how this process has affected people's ability or failure to pass on experiences of war to younger generations. There has been considerable research, however, in religious studies, cultural anthropology, and geography into local memories of war at battle sites and memorialization practices for the war dead. These studies tend to focus on how the significance of mourning has changed within local communities.³ Also, postcolonial or historical approaches have looked at war memorial sites and the politics of memory in postwar Japan.⁴

These studies, however, have failed to address important questions about social and historical change at war-related sites. For example, how has the meaning of Japan's major war sites shifted after their "rediscovery" in the postwar? What are the spatial processes by which places of memory emerge and develop? Yamaguchi Makoto's 山口誠 study of Guam provides insights here.⁵ His research explores how pleasure tourism and war-related tourist sites have developed through complex interactions between the media, local communities, and international relations. In previous research, I have compared Hiroshima, Okinawa, and Chiran to examine relationships between the media and local communities in the postwar development of war-related sites in Japan.⁶ War-related sites develop not only through their connection with local communities and ceremonies for the war dead, but also in interaction with media and images from popular culture, which they (re-)import and incorporate. The aim here is to reveal the historical processes and social mechanisms behind the establishment and transformation of war-related sites.

To address these questions, this paper examines the historical development of sites related to war in postwar Chiran. Findings about Chiran can illustrate trends in Japan more widely as the town has emerged as a principal center of war-related tourism. Chiran also demonstrates the significance, and complexity, of war memory. As in other countries, in Japan the role of conveying memories of war to younger generations has increasingly been taken over by the "postmemory" generation of those without war experience. What memories will be favored in the future, and how will this selection be influenced by social-political contexts? The distinctive aspect of borrowed or, more precisely, "other people's memories"—in this case, of the *tokkō*—found in Chiran can provide important clues to addressing such questions.⁷

Previous studies, including by this author, have examined the development of war-related sites in Chiran.⁸ This paper first clarifies and extends these findings by examining the social and media background behind the "discovery" of *tokkō* sites, and developments since the 1990s. Second, it discusses continuities and discontinuities in war-related tourism

3 See Nishimura 2006; Uesugi 2009.

4 For example, Eades and Cooper 2013; Osa 2013; Yoneyama 1999.

5 Yamaguchi 2007.

6 Fukuma 2015b. The current paper is both an extension of this study, and of Yamaguchi's argument regarding Guam.

7 For research on *tokkō*-related tourism in Chiran from multiple perspectives, see Fukuma and Yamaguchi 2015. For international studies of the relationships between war-related sites and tourism, see Butler and Suntikul 2013. For research on *tokkō*-related contents tourism in English, see Seaton 2018.

8 Fukuma 2015a; Fukuma 2015b.

in Chiran by comparing the period between the late 1960s and early 1980s—when veterans’ associations and a media-led boom in war accounts led to the discovery of war-related sites—to tourism in Chiran today, in which school excursion groups and tourists are the primary visitors. The paper mainly focuses on the periods from the early postwar to the mid-1970s and from the 1990s onward. This is because, while important for the founding of the Chiran Peace Museum, there was little change in local memories of *tokkō* from the mid-1970s to 1980s. However, as will be explained later, there were major changes from the 1990s, when visits by veterans taking part in memorial services began to rapidly decline.

Forgetting the *Tokkō*

Burial of the Tokkō Base

The Chiran Branch of the Tachiarai 太刀洗 Army Flight School opened in March 1942. Located on the southern end of the Satsuma peninsula, this facility was the southernmost army air force base in Japan. Partly because of its location, the base saw many *tokkō* aircraft making sorties during the Battle of Okinawa. Of the 1,036 *tokkō* pilots killed in the Battle of Okinawa, over 40% (439 pilots) departed from Chiran or relay bases on Tokunoshima 徳之島 and Kikaijima 喜界島 islands. In fact, in the final years of the Pacific War, Chiran became the primary *tokkō* base.⁹

As mentioned above, however, it was not local citizens in Chiran but army pilots from around Japan who went on *tokkō* attacks. Many local citizens were certainly mobilized for labor services, but their main experiences of the war were working at the base and hastily escaping air raids. In fact, the relationship between Chiran and the *tokkō* base was not harmonious even during the war. In anticipation of an invigorated local economy and new jobs, some senior members of the Chiran government were certainly enthusiastic about the army base, even though it meant damage to tea production. At the time, Chiran was a leading tea production center; tea grown in Chiran won national awards in 1934, and locally produced black tea was offered to the emperor in 1938. The Kisanukibaru 木佐貫原 area of Chiran, where the air base was constructed, had originally been a prefecture-run plantation assigned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to test black teas. The construction of the base caused tea fields and related facilities to be relocated or abandoned.¹⁰ The Imperial Army, however, offered surprisingly low purchase prices to the plantation owners. Some of the affected people commented retrospectively: “All six of us—my parents, three children, and grandmother—had only a cow, with no electricity, water, kitchen, or hearth, and only an adjacent house to shelter us from rainfall”; and “Our cultivated land was so infertile that it produced only less than half the crops of other households. Even if it produced a poor crop, we had to contribute all the crop to the government, instead of consuming it for ourselves.”¹¹ From the viewpoint of those engaged in tea production, the major prewar industry of Chiran, the construction of the base was actually a threat to their livelihoods.

It was natural, therefore, that the base’s facilities were removed soon after the war ended. The office building and barracks on the base site were dismantled and used in the reconstruction of houses burned down in air raids. The base site itself was returned to tea

9 Chiran Tokkō Irei Kenshōkai 2014.

10 Chiran-chō Kyōdoshi Hensan linkai 1982, p. 96.

11 Setoguchi 1993, p. 250.

and potato fields, and in 1952 the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry established a tea seed production farm on part of the site.

The postwar treatment of the Chiran air base contrasts sharply with that of other war-related tourist destinations. Elsewhere, the ruins of war-devastated structures—including the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall (Atomic Bomb Dome), and the trench used for the Third Surgery Department of the Army Hospital (Himeyuri Memorial)—remain as tangible proof of war, and are central to these area’s war-related tourism. The equivalent structures in Chiran, meanwhile, were removed. Chiran was “mobilized” during the war, then rapidly “demobilized” to its previous state. In this process, the ruins that could have demonstrated the existence of the *tokkō* were buried under tea fields.¹²

This process was not unique to Chiran, however. Postwar reconstruction and the repatriation of demobilized soldiers led people across Japan to rapidly replace former military facilities and war-devastated buildings with fields and houses. In early postwar Hiroshima, for example, there was even a move to utilize national funds to remove the ruins of the Atomic Bomb Dome.¹³ In this sense, it is unsurprising that Chiran’s war-related ruins no longer exist.

Prioritizing Local War Dead over Tokkō

As the case of Tokkō Kannon demonstrates, the *tokkō* were not entirely forgotten in the early postwar. Tokkō Kannon temple was erected on 28 September 1955 in Kisanukibaru, the same area as the former *tokkō* base. Former Army General Kawabe Masakazu 河辺正三 (Air General Army Commander during the final days of the Pacific War), former Army Lieutenant General Sugawara Michiō 菅原道大 (Commander of the 6th Air Force), former 6th Air Force Staff Officer Hamu Keitarō 羽牟慶太郎, and others proposed the construction of the temple to mourn the *tokkō* unit members who were killed in the war.

Tokkō Kannon was erected not long after the Treaty of San Francisco came into force in 1952. The Occupation generally suppressed nationalistic discourse that could lead to praise of the former imperial military. After the Occupation, however, reactionary discourses emerged, including criticism of the Occupation army and Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, and nostalgia for the former military. Many monuments to dead loyal soldiers were constructed throughout Japan. The project to build Tokkō Kannon was planned and implemented within this social context.

There was no consensus in Chiran, however, about Tokkō Kannon. A local newspaper at that time reported that Hamu Keitarō, who was in charge of the administrative work for construction, began approaching influential people in and around Chiran town after becoming “determined to erect Tokkō Kannon, even without anyone’s support, to console the spirits of young soldiers who had died a heroic death and to help ensure that this tragedy was never repeated.”¹⁴ However, it also reported that, “Coldhearted citizens, who blamed the military for the defeat, did not listen carefully to his proposal. Although locals with influence understood his intention, many of them refused to cooperate with the project because of the current social situation.” In the early postwar, therefore, memories of the *tokkō* were not unified.

12 For a comparison of the processes of war memorial site establishment in Hiroshima, Okinawa, and Chiran, see Fukuma 2015b.

13 Fukuma 2015b. See also Zwigenberg in this special issue.

14 *Shin Kagoshima* 1956.

Only ten years had passed since Japan's defeat, and while some glorified the military soon after the Occupation, many others remained very skeptical about war. These conflicting discourses are reflected in the publishing and movie industry of the time. In 1952, former students of the Air Force Reserve edited and published *Kumo nagaruru hate ni* 雲ながるる果てに a posthumous collection of *tokkō* pilot writings. This was aimed at focusing on the “calmer and purer feelings” of those who had “died a glorious death,” and implicitly criticized *Kike wadatsumi no koe* きけわだつみのこえ (1949), an antiwar collection of writings by students killed in the Asia-Pacific War. Some people criticized *Kumo nagaruru hate ni*, as well as the movie version released in 1953, with comments like, “I wonder whether it is appropriate to praise the *tokkō* so hastily now.”¹⁵ Because they were released within a decade of the war's end, people were still suspicious about narratives, images, and places that glorified it. Local resistance to the plan to construct Tokkō Kannon in Chiran reflected a similar concern.

Further, the relationship between Chiran's Gokoku Jinja 護国神社—a Shinto shrine dedicated to local war dead—and Tokkō Kannon suggests that local war dead were given preference over the *tokkō* in the early postwar period. Chiran's Gokoku Jinja was constructed in the prewar near the town's center, but partly due to land development for municipal housing, was relocated in 1959 next to Tokkō Kannon. This does not mean that *tokkō* began to be memorialized alongside local war dead, however. As the majority of Chiran's war dead were noncommissioned army officers and lower-ranked soldiers, it was natural that their memorial shrine was relocated to the site of the former air base, Chiran's only army facility. On the way to the site from the prefectural road, a stone marker reads: “Approach to Gokoku Jinja, Chiran.” Although Gokoku Jinja was relocated to this area after the construction of Tokkō Kannon, this inscription implies that the area was viewed as a place dedicated to local war dead, rather than the *tokkō*.

There was an annual joint memorial service at Gokoku Jinja and Tokkō Kannon, and the choice of date reflects the position of the *tokkō* in the local consciousness. After the relocation of Gokoku Jinja, a joint memorial service for the war dead began at the two places. It took place on July 28, the established date for memorial services at Gokoku Jinja. If priority had been given to *tokkō*, 28 September, the date Tokkō Kannon was established in 1955, might have been more appropriate.¹⁶ It is clear enough that Chiran residents prioritized Gokoku Jinja over Tokkō Kannon, and that *tokkō* were not emblematic of local citizens' memories of the war at this time.

Discovery of a “Tokkō Town”

“Tokkō Manjū”

The status of the *tokkō* began to change over the following decade. From the late 1960s, coverage of the joint memorial service in *Chōhō Chiran* 町報ちらん, a local newsletter, not only began to give greater coverage to the event but also to mention *tokkō* more frequently.¹⁷ The August 1966 issue of the newsletter carried an article titled “Summer Festival at Gokoku Jinja and Tokkō Kannon,” which reported that, “About 300 people, including

15 Fukuma 2007, p. 49.

16 Chiran Tokkō Irei Kenshōkai 2014.

17 Fukuma 2015a.

Shibata Shin'ya 柴田信也 from Tokyo, a former *tokkō* unit member, and members of the Town Association for Surviving Families of War Dead, attended the festival to pray for the souls of 1,115 *tokkō* unit members who died a noble death in the sky.” This article demonstrates that local citizens paid tribute to, and expressed their affinity with, dead *tokkō* pilots.

In this period, a rapidly growing number of members of veteran associations began to visit the Chiran memorial service, including those of the Shōhikai 少飛会 (Association of Former Juvenile Army Aviators) and the Tokusōkai 特操会 (Association of Former Special Army Probationary Pilots). Although the memorial service in 1964 was attended only by Kawabe Masakazu, Sugawara Michiō, and twelve former juvenile aviators from Kagoshima prefecture, the memorial service in 1969 was attended by over one hundred former juvenile aviators. The town newsletter provided the memorial service with extensive coverage almost every year, reporting that former *tokkō* unit members sang “nostalgic war songs,” and a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Band performed *Umi yukaba* 海ゆかば (lit. “If I go away to sea”).¹⁸

These facts indicate that Tokkō Kannon was emerging as a war-related tourist site. Tokkō Kannon and the former site of the air base were “rediscovered” as destinations for war-related pilgrimage through visits by veterans attending memorial services. Probably because of this, a *Mainichi gurafu* 毎日グラフ special issue on the history of war in Japan included photos from Chiran of signboards advertising *Tokkō manjū* 特攻饅頭 sweet buns and *Heiwa Kannon senbei* 平和観音せんべい rice crackers in a series of war-related photos (figure 1).¹⁹ Souvenirs, media coverage, and rising interest in Tokkō Kannon and the site of the former base indicate that *tokkō* had developed into a symbol of Chiran.

Borrowing Others' Memories

The media played an important role in the development of Chiran as a *tokkō*-related tourist destination. The mid-1960s saw a boom in war-related books and films in general. Books such as Agawa Hiroyuki's 阿川弘之 *Yamamoto Isoroku* 山本五十六 (1965) and *Ā dōki no sakura* あゝ同期の桜 (1966), edited by an association of former students of the Air Force Reserve, were bestsellers. *Japan's Longest Day* (*Nihon no ichiban nagai hi* 日本のいちばん長い日), which depicted the Kyūjō Incident 宮城事件, a failed coup by young army officers opposed to Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration and the broadcast of the emperor's announcement of surrender, was the second most popular Japanese movie of 1967. Many *tokkō*-themed movies were also produced, including a particularly high-profile trilogy released by Toei in 1968, which began with a cinematization of *Ā dōki no sakura*.²⁰

Media coverage focused specifically on Chiran played a significant role in the growing public recognition of Chiran as a “*tokkō* town.” In 1964, Takagi Toshirō 高木俊朗, a former member of the Army News Footage unit who had previously stayed in Chiran, started publishing a series of articles titled “Chiran” in the weekly magazine *Shūkan Asahi* 週刊朝日. These articles, which sympathetically described the anguish and suffering of *tokkō* unit members, were compiled into *Tokkō kichi Chiran* 特攻基地知覧 (*Tokkō* Base Chiran,

18 *Chōhō Chiran* 9.1964; *Chōhō Chiran* 8.1969; Nogami 1969, p. 26.

19 *Mainichi Shibunsha* 1965.

20 For a discussion of the reception of *tokkō*-themed movies (and linkage with the *yakuza* movie boom of the late 1960s), see Fukuma 2007.



Figure 1. Photo of a signboard advertising *Tokkō manjū* and *Heiwa Kannon senbei*. Mainichi Shinbunsha 1965. Courtesy of *Mainichi gurafu*.

hereafter *Chiran*), a book that went through multiple reprints. Prior to the publication of this series, in August 1961, NHK broadcast a dramatized documentary titled *Izoku* 遺族 (The Bereaved), scripted by Yamada Yōji 山田洋次, based on writings about Chiran by Takagi.

Veterans also played an important role in the growing interest in Chiran. Veterans became particularly active in the 1960s, and the number of new veterans associations reached a second postwar peak.²¹ At a time when the generation gap between those with and without war experience appeared to be widening, veterans sought a place to converse with each other about the war.²² Many veteran association leaders were at the peak of their careers, and had gained significant social influence. Visits by veteran associations, therefore, became increasingly important to the identity of Chiran.

Chiran citizens came to internalize the image of Chiran created by the national media and visitors to the town. The signboards advertising *Tokkō manjū* and *Heiwa Kannon senbei* mentioned previously indicate that visitors expected Chiran to be a *tokkō*-related destination, and that locals played a role in fulfilling these expectations. In 1974, voluntary members of the local youth association built a full-scale model of a fighter plane, and placed it near the entrance to Tokkō Kannon. *Konpaku no kiroku* 魂魄の記録, a publication edited by a Chiran-based organization for memorializing the *tokkō*, carries an image of tourists taking photos in front of the model fighter (figure 2). Chiran thus took on a *tokkō* identity, performing the role of a *tokkō* town to satisfy the expectations of tourists and the media.

21 Takahashi 1983; Yoshida 2011.

22 Fukuma 2009.

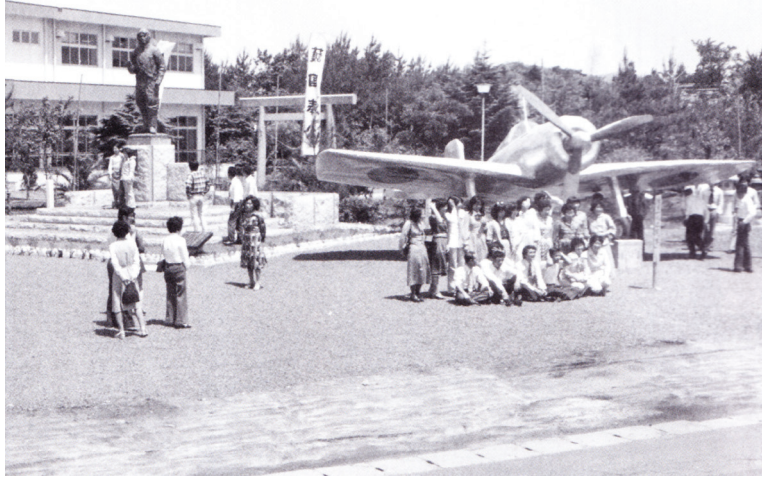


Figure 2. Display of a model fighter (ca. 1975). Courtesy of the Chiran Tokkō Irei Kenshōkai.

Such developments were not unique to Chiran, however. In U.S.-occupied Okinawa in the 1960s, campaigns for the reversion of the islands to Japan spread alongside a rapid influx in mainland tourists. Such campaigns partly aimed to build support among mainland Japanese. Visiting veteran and bereaved associations led a surge in the construction of war monuments. In particular, such associations built monuments for the war dead from prefectures across Japan in Mabuni 摩文仁, which developed into a major war-related tourist destination. Partly because Okinawans wanted to gain mainland Japanese support for reversion, however, the history of the Japanese military’s violence against Okinawans—including forcing local people to fight and commit mass suicide—was left unresolved, reinforcing the perception of Okinawans as having fought bravely alongside Japanese.²³

In 1966, around the same time as the above developments in Chiran and Okinawa, the City of Hiroshima decided to preserve the Atomic Bomb Dome. The many memoirs of A-bomb survivors published as part of the 1960s boom in war-related books stimulated interest in the city’s experience of the bomb. Although the dome was on the verge of collapse, the national media advocated its preservation with the support of well-known intellectuals such as Yukawa Hideki 湯川秀樹. This helped convince the City of Hiroshima to preserve rather than demolish the building, and position it as a major tourist attraction. According to newspaper reports, in the early postwar period many people argued that the dome “stands like an eerie haunted mansion in the heart of Hiroshima” and should be “removed as soon as possible.”²⁴ However, such voices were effectively drowned out. Thus, not only in Chiran but in other parts of Japan, local citizens and governments were influenced by media trends and visitor expectations—especially those of veterans and the bereaved—in working to develop war-related sites into tourist destinations.

23 Fukuma 2015b.

24 *Yūkan Chūgoku shinbun* 1950. See Fukuma 2015b.

Nevertheless, Chiran was unique among these cases in that others' experiences of the war were redefined as local. Okinawans directly experienced ground combat, and citizens of Hiroshima the atomic bomb attack. Yet it was not Chiran citizens but army pilots mobilized from around Japan who carried out *tokkō* attacks. Chiran's search for a source of self-identity in the *tokkō* thus required local people to turn other people's experiences into their own.

The internalization of others' experiences is demonstrated in the program of a town sports day held in November 1974, which featured a costumed play in which local youth association members reproduced a *tokkō* attack. The town newsletter published photos not only of young men playing *tokkō* pilots departing on a mission, but young women as school students sending off an aircraft (figure 3).²⁵ An almost full-scale model fighter was also produced for the meet, with an engine installed to move the propeller. As mentioned above, the model fighter was later put on display for tourists. This *tokkō* performance touched the audience. One woman shared her impressions in a Chiran Women's Association newsletter:

A youth, who like all youth today is not even supposed to know how to salute, gave a convincing performance as a commander ordering *tokkō* pilots to attack, [...] saying to each of them, "Do your best," or "See you again at Yasukuni Jinja." [...] I was unable to stop the tears from running down my cheeks.²⁶

There is something peculiar about this *tokkō* play. It would seem unlikely for local people in Hiroshima or Okinawa to perform a costumed play about their war experience at a local sports day. But for some reason, such events were possible in Chiran. *Tokkō* featured prominently here even though they were not necessarily part of local war experiences. Neighborhood gatherings like this are generally exclusive to local citizens, and not intended for the entertainment of visitors from outside the area. Thus, the play demonstrates how people of Chiran shared their "memories" of *tokkō* with each other at an event for local enjoyment.

The above play was modeled after a photo taken in Chiran in March 1945 (figure 4), which became well-known after it was published in a November 1965 special issue of *Mainichi gurafu* on the Japanese history of the war.²⁷ As seen in the tears shed by the woman watching the reenactment of a *tokkō* mission at a town sports day, national perceptions associating Chiran with the *tokkō* had become thoroughly internalized at the local level.

Depopulation and "Discovery" of the Tokkō

Chiran's choice of *tokkō* tourism was a product of social circumstances. In the 1960s, Japan went through a period of high economic growth that accelerated population outflows from provincial to urban areas. Consequently, many rural villages such as Chiran began to suffer from depopulation. Moreover, tariff reductions on black tea imports put Chiran's tea production into decline. Chiran utilized the *tokkō*, therefore, in order to develop this aspect of its history into a tourist resource to invigorate the town. The front page of the June 1970 issue of *Chōhō Chiran* featured an article titled, "Town Designated as Depopulated Area:

25 *Chōhō Chiran* 9.1974.

26 Orita 1975, p. 29.

27 *Mainichi Shinbunsha* 1965.



Figure 3. *Tokkō* costume performance at a Chiran sports day. *Chōhō Chiran* 1974. Courtesy of *Chōhō Chiran*.



Figure 4. Chiran Women's High School students sending off *tokkō* unit members. Photo taken in March 1945 and included in *Mainichi Shinbunsha* 1965. Courtesy of *Mainichi gurafu*.

Emergency Countermeasures Being Planned,” alongside an article on a “Tokkō Kannon Summer Festival.”²⁸ This combination of articles shows how the problem of depopulation was inextricably linked with the local internalization of *tokkō* memories.

The connection between depopulation and *tokkō* tourism is also demonstrated in Chiran’s growing reliance on the *tokkō* from the 1970s. In 1975, Chiran opened the Tokkō Ihin Kan 特攻遺品館, a museum exhibiting *tokkō* mementos and farewell notes, displaying out front the warplane replica mentioned earlier. In 1989, the museum was expanded into the Chiran Peace Museum, cementing its central position in Chiran’s *tokkō* tourism.

The focus of Chiran’s tourism on the exhibition of replicas developed out of a lack of significant war-related structures. Although some facilities remained, such as a water tower and ammunition depot, they could not demonstrate what the *tokkō* base had looked like during the war. Unlike Hiroshima and Okinawa, Chiran had no large-scale buildings or other physical remains of the war. Chiran’s museum certainly exhibited authentic items left by *tokkō* pilots killed during the war, but replicas such as the warplane were also central. In 1980, a Zero fighter was displayed at the Tokkō Ihin Kan. This plane was salvaged from the sea west of the Satsuma peninsula after sinking there in the final days of the Asia-Pacific War. However, as Zero fighters were naval aircraft, this plane would not have flown from Chiran, a base run by the army. As a result, there was no reason for this Zero fighter to be displayed in Chiran’s museum. In that sense, this Zero was another kind of “replica.”

Historically, *Tokkō* were commonly associated with naval aircraft such as the Zero. As explained earlier, collections of writings left by *tokkō* unit members became bestsellers in the late 1960s, and were adapted into extremely successful movies. However, these works dealt with naval rather than army *tokkō* unit members. This was part of a “navy boom” that emerged, to some extent, from widespread ideas comparing the “barbarous” and “irrational” army and “smart” and “rational” navy, that focused especially on their approach to the United States in the buildup to the Pacific War.²⁹ Another reason for the use of the Zero was its positive image as a Japanese fighter plane, especially its incredible agility, seen as giving pilots an important advantage in dogfights against U.S. forces early in the war. Chiran paid the huge costs of salvaging the Zero, and put it on display, therefore, partly because of these public perceptions. It was not an “authentic” army *tokkō* fighter closely related to Chiran, however, but just a naval fighter that served as a substitute, or “replica,” for such army aircraft. This example suggests Chiran’s relative indifference toward historical facts and authenticity in tourism.

One benefit of “replicas” is that they gave Chiran significant control over tourist representations.³⁰ “Authentic” objects and ruins would have included elements superfluous to the town’s needs. In addition, exploring and transporting authentic objects would have required significant financial and human costs. In contrast, replicas could be created to conform with the desired self-image. As the Zero fighter was salvaged from a spot relatively near to Chiran, it was not a replica in the strict sense. However, appropriation of the fighter enabled Chiran to utilize widespread associations tying together the *tokkō*, the Zero, and the navy. Rather than being a handicap, the lack of authentic objects and wartime remains was

28 *Chōhō Chiran* 6.1970.

29 Although these impressions differed from the actual history, among some they inspired admiration for the navy and criticism for the army, and even the war in general. See Yoshida 1995.

30 For more on this argument, see Yamaguchi 2015.

an opportunity for Chiran to represent itself by borrowing the image that visitors had of the town.

“Replicas” have also played an important role in other war memorial sites in Japan. The Atomic Bomb Dome is a case in point. The dome has not been left untouched. Preservation work conducted in 1967 corrected slanting walls and pillars, and filled wall cracks with strong adhesive. The city removed trash and moss, planted roadside trees, and constructed a fountain in the surrounding area. Today, the Dome site is laid with a beautiful lawn. Although debris from the A-bomb attack was placed there, it is neatly arranged, and not mixed with trash, human bones, or blood. Such presentation may make tourists feel comfortable, but the Dome and surrounding area look completely different today from the horrific, chaotic, ruined site that it was just after the atomic bomb detonated. In this sense, the Atomic Bomb Dome was “renovated” to conform with the expectations of tourists, and so is distinctly different from the original ruins of the devastated building, making it also a kind of “replica.” In 1970, Matsumoto Hiroshi 松元寛, an English-literature scholar at Hiroshima University, made a suggestive remark about the preservation works:

When the repairs on the Atomic Bomb Dome were planned, I agreed with the aim and offered minor cooperation. However, when the repair work was finished, and the completed dome reappeared in front of us, I remember that I suddenly felt I might have made a mistake. State-of-the-art chemicals were used for reinforcement and to prevent it from further weathering. But it seemed to me that the dome suddenly lost its life at the same time as the weathering was stopped.

Essentially, the repairs have changed it into a completely different dome. It lost its meaning as physical evidence of our experience on 6 August 1945, and changed into something equivalent to the many monuments built after the war. I wondered if the weathering had been accelerated rather than stopped [...]³¹

As a result of repairs, that is, artificial intervention, the Atomic Bomb Dome “suddenly lost its life” and became “a completely different dome.” Although it looked as if “the weathering” were stopped, it was actually accelerated. However, people did not notice this. The preservation work transformed the Dome into a state that was ideal for some, but also into a kind of “replica.” Together with its neatly-arranged surroundings, the new Dome helped represent a less confronting past to tourists, and masked the grisly ruins of the atomic bomb. The process in which a “replica” is foregrounded while something from the past is concealed, therefore, is not just found in Chiran but in other war-related sites too. Chiran, however, offers a powerful, and conspicuous, embodiment of this relationship between “replica” and the past.

Mechanisms of Forgetting

While the profile of *tokkō* in Chiran increased, that of the Gokoku Jinja decreased. As mentioned above, Tokkō Kannon’s memorial service corresponded with that of Gokoku Jinja, but from 1970 onward, Tokkō Kannon’s memorial service was held on 28 May, two months earlier than previously. The date was supposedly changed at the request of

31 Matsumoto 1970.

veteran and bereaved associations so that they could avoid the peak of the hot southern-Kyushu summer. In 1974, the date was again changed for the convenience of attendees, to fall within a period of consecutive holidays on 3 May.³² Gokoku Jinja and Tokkō Kannon thus began to hold separate memorial services. These date changes demonstrate how the convenience of veterans and the bereaved was increasingly prioritized. It also reconfirms Chiran's sensitivity to, and tendency to internalize, external perspectives. Lastly, it indicates the declining status of Gokoku Jinja, a point also demonstrated by the fact that, following the date change to 3 May, *Chōhō Chiran* stopped reporting Gokoku Jinja's memorial service while continuing to feature that at Tokkō Kannon.

In accordance with this, there was a shift in the conventional naming practices of the route to these shrines. Although from a period some years after that under discussion in this section, the municipal publication *Chiran: Inishie no toki ga himotokareru* ちらん: いにしえの時が繻かれる (lit. "Chiran: Our History Unravelling"; 1987) includes a photograph of the stone marker announcing the approach to the shrines; its caption reads "Approach to Tokkō Kannon."³³ Thus, contradicting the actual inscription on the stone marker itself, the road formerly recognized as the entrance to Gokoku Jinja was now being viewed as the road to Tokkō Kannon.

This process of recreating "local war memories" led to the forgetting of other memories and experiences. The *Chōhō Chiran* had often carried stories about war experiences in places like New Guinea, or about the collection of war dead remains from abroad, but this stopped around the end of the 1960s. The contrast with the increased coverage of Tokkō Kannon's memorial services indicates that, while the profile of *tokkō* "memories" increased, the presence of local peoples' experiences of the war rapidly receded. For example, locals rarely recalled their past passion for fighting the war. A December 1938 edition of *Chiran Chōhō* carried a report by a female student overjoyed at the Capture of Wuhan by the Japanese forces, that reads:

"Capture of Wuhan"—How pleasing the term sounds! [...] When the Ministry of War announced it, we couldn't help but shout "*banzai!*" [...] We marched in a grand procession with flags in hand the next day. I saw fireworks exploding and people waving flags, and I heard war songs and cheers come from within the fluttering flags. It seemed that our small town was filled with national flags that day.³⁴

This passage provides a vivid description of Chiran citizens' excitement at the "fruits of battle" won by Japanese forces deployed in mainland China. Such scenes were not unique to Chiran, but found throughout Japan. A quarter of a century after World War II ended, this wartime excitement felt by people in Chiran—and across Japan—had become obscured, I argue, by Japanese people's postwar immersion in a catharsis of grief about the *tokkō*.

Incidentally, the report above was by a student from what became Chiran Women's High School. Students at this school were often mobilized for labor services at the army air base, and sent off *tokkō* pilots on their missions. As mentioned earlier, a photo of one such scene became well-known from the mid-1960s, and inspired a local *tokkō* costume play.

32 Chiran Tokkō Irei Kenshōkai 2014.

33 Chiran-chō 1987.

34 Nanba 1938.

These students were full of joy at the Japanese forces' invasion of mainland China during the second Sino-Japanese War. Their experiences, however, are today clouded by postwar "memories" of the *tokkō*.

Dehistoricized Memories

The above can be read as a kind of dehistoricization of Chiran's memories of war. That is, the replacement of local memories by others has devalued local citizens' own war experiences, and resulted in the loss of local histories of war. Furthermore, such tendencies have sidelined the context and wider history of the *tokkō* and war in general. In a prospectus published to request support for the construction of a bronze statue of a *tokkō* pilot and the Tokkō Ihin Kan Museum in Chiran, Kagoshima prefecture Governor Kanemaru Saburō 金丸三郎 stated the following:

The *tokkō* heroically carried out unflinching suicide attacks, unprecedented in the history of world war. *Tokkō* planes waited to make their attacks with the rising sun clearly on their wings, and a deadly bomb in the fuselage. Their tanks had only sufficient fuel for a one-way flight to dive upon the enemy. With a gallant headband with the slogan, *shichishō hōkoku* 七生報国 ("Serving my country for seven lives"), pilots held the control stick filled with passion to sink an enemy ship and help the country to victory. With great determination, they looked sublime and absolutely pure, like demonic guardians of the country.³⁵

Chiran, increasingly dependent on "memories" of the *tokkō*, promoted the construction of new attractions.³⁶ It is likely, therefore, that the perspective of the *tokkō* reflected in this passage was not only held by the prefectural governor, but was also widespread in official discourse about the *tokkō* in Chiran. Moreover, given that those to whom the prefecture and town distributed the prospectus to request donations included many surviving families of dead *tokkō* pilots and members of veterans associations, it can be supposed that such discourse was not uncommon at Tokkō Kannon's memorial services. Speakers who chose to use this discourse wished to honor the "beauty" of individual *tokkō* unit members' "sentiment of self-sacrifice for their country."

This way of seeing *tokkō*, however, occludes the military's systemic violence, and the process by which this category of "beauty" had been officially imposed on Japanese people. During the war, violence permeated the Japanese military and forced soldiers to "volunteer" to take part in *tokkō* attacks, even though they were not strategically successful. In the initial stages of the Battle of Okinawa, the military already knew that *tokkō* operations were barely effective due to the air resistance of aircraft fuselage, and the difficulties of slipping through a barrage of enemy bullets. Nevertheless, *tokkō* attacks were continued in order to gather fictitious "fruits" of battle.

Systemic violence affected not only the *tokkō* but also the entire war operation. Impatient for victory, commanders often forced soldiers to charge towards or strike the enemy in ill-considered ways, leading to a growing number of unnecessary casualties.

³⁵ Kanemaru 1971.

³⁶ The secretariat of the construction committee for these structures was located in Chiran Town Hall.

In utter despair, many lower-ranked soldiers committed mindless violence against local residents. The exclusive emphasis on the “beauty” of dead soldiers’ personal sentiments for self-sacrifice conceals the historical context of such rhetoric, and the pathological nature of Japan’s military and government during the war. Thus, these efforts to “hand down” memories simply served to deflect people’s attention from wartime history and violence.

This idea of the *tokkō* was an extension of Chiran’s memorial services for the war dead. Although memorial services were held to relive past memories, questions of responsibility and criticism of the military were circumvented in several ways. First, criticism would have made such gatherings awkward as they were attended by former superior officers and commanders. Second, the focus of memorial services on *honoring* war dead allowed the issue of responsibility to be put aside. Lastly, criticism was discouraged because it suggested to the many bereaved in attendance that the deaths of *tokkō* pilots were meaningless. Services thus often emphasized the “beauty” of the sentiments of the dead in order to avoid upsetting the bereaved.

Yoshida Yutaka’s 吉田裕 research on the testimony-suppressing function of veteran associations is useful here.³⁷ Yoshida argues that veteran associations and other places for deepening friendships between former “comrades-in-arms,” have helped “regulate and control veteran association members’ discussions and writings about the horror and cruelty of the battlefield, and criticisms against superiors.”³⁸ The creation of an “intimate sphere” among former soldiers prevented, rather than encouraged, them from offering testimony or talking about their memories. According to Yoshida, their consideration for the bereaved had a similar function. Because former soldiers shared the understanding that they should not let surviving relatives of dead soldiers know about the “miserable, ugly realities of the battlefield,” “consideration for surviving families” became a powerful expression used to block testimony.³⁹ In this sense, veteran associations functioned to control members and suppress admissions of responsibility.

Attendees of memorial services, therefore, avoided criticism of the military and focused on “honoring” the war dead in an inoffensive way, in part because both veterans and surviving relatives were present. Statements “honoring” the war dead, such as by the Kagoshima governor, utilized a logic that was inoffensive and acceptable at a gathering of surviving relatives, former *tokkō* unit members, and superior officers. These memorial services illustrate a dehistoricization process, in which admiration for the sentiment of individual pilots diverted people’s attention away from the historical context, and the perversions of the wartime military.

Same Bed, Different Dreams

Some writers expressed their discomfort with those who glorified the war in Chiran from the 1960s. The aforementioned Takagi Toshirō, for example, severely criticized Chiran’s narratives of the *tokkō*:

37 Yoshida 2011.

38 Yoshida 2011, p. 111.

39 Yoshida 2011, p. 187.

People's memories and traditions change with the passage of time. Women who were students at Chiran Women's High School during the war must, deep down, still have unforgettable memories. But one states: "*Tokkō* unit members went on missions with the hope of peace for Japan." However, this is based on a lie.

Today, Chiran has *Tokkō* Heiwa Kannon and the Ihin Kan Museum. The municipality positions them as tourist destinations to bring prosperity to the town. Being proud of these features, municipal authorities state that: "Knowledge about *tokkō* pilots who underwent rigorous training will help youth develop." This is just the repetition of wartime military thought.⁴⁰

Takagi, who had stayed in Imphal and Leyte as a member of the Army Press Corps, strongly questioned the systemic pathology of the Japanese military, which forced soldiers to die in vain.⁴¹ He also expressed this in his book *Chiran*. In reference to Lieutenant General Tominaga Kyōji 富永恭次, who had commanded *tokkō* attacks in the Battle of Leyte Gulf but escaped to Taiwan just before the conquest of Luzon, Takagi stated:

The army's first *tokkō* units were Banda Tai 万朶隊, which used light bombers, and Fugaku Tai 富嶽隊, with heavy bombers. Members of the two units were indignant over the inconsistencies and thoughtlessness of the *tokkō* plan. One member wrote in his diary: "I now feel as if I am a condemned criminal." Another member, who had been honored by double promotion [...], later returned alive and was ordered to die, leading to him being almost shot to death. Commander Tominaga Kyōji fled even though he had directed and encouraged these *tokkō* unit members and said, "I will also dive against the enemy on the last fighter." He was the darkest stain on the history of the Pacific War.⁴²

Instead of depicting the deaths of *tokkō* unit members as "beautiful," Takagi explored their indignation at being forced to die in vain, and the military's systemic pathology and lack of responsibility. It seemed to Takagi that the public's idea of *tokkō* unit members as "youth who sacrificed themselves to protect their country and bring eternal peace while in agony between life and death," had made people blind to the violence that forced them to die in vain.

The reference to *tokkō* as "youth who sacrificed themselves to protect their country and bring eternal peace while in agony between life and death," which Takagi cites, was originally from *Chiran tokkō kichi* 知覧特攻基地 ("Chiran *Tokkō* Base"; 1979), a publication edited by the Nadeshiko Kai なでしこ会 alumnae association of Chiran Women's High School.⁴³ Alumnae from this school, who had been mobilized for labor services at the Chiran base, often praised *tokkō* unit members for their passion in protecting the country. However, it seemed to Takagi that the tendency in Chiran to glorify the *tokkō*, as typified by these students, made them blind to the warped culture of the military, and their history of violence.

40 Takagi 1995, p. 364.

41 See, for example, Takagi 1983.

42 Takagi 1995, p. 360.

43 Chiran Kōjo Nadeshiko Kai 1979.

Takagi's criticisms of Chiran and the glorification of the *tokkō* seem to find a sympathetic audience among some Japanese, as indicated by the publication of these views in national newspapers. In August 1968, for example, the *Asahi shinbun* carried an article by Takagi which referred to Chiran and criticized "people who spread fabrication and falsification about *tokkō* unit members, and praised them after the war."⁴⁴

Chiran constructed a bronze statue of a *tokkō* pilot titled "*Tokoshie ni*" とこしえに (Forever) in 1974, then established the Tokkō Ihin Kan the following year. Along with Tokkō Kannon, these structures helped transform the former air base site into a *tokkō* holy ground. Attendance at Tokkō Kannon's memorial service also grew each year, from about four hundred in 1974, to eight hundred in 1982, and two thousand in 1985.

Chiran's rapid metamorphosis into a *tokkō* holy ground, and the singing of war songs at the memorial service, were unacceptable to Takagi. Despite his views of the *tokkō* and criticism of Chiran, however, Takagi's writings also helped facilitate this transformation, as his book *Chiran* was sometimes seen as a beautiful story about the purity of *tokkō* unit members. Referring to Takagi's *Chiran*, Shimizu Shūji 清水秀治, first president of the National Veteran Association for Juvenile Army Aviators, stated at the association's founding ceremony that:

I have recently read a novel titled *Chiran*, which depicts our comrades who flew as *tokkō* unit members. The novel describes how one officer refused to join a *tokkō* attack, and finally crashed his plane at the air base. At the same time, it also depicts pure young aviators taking off in their precious aircraft with a smile and great pride in serving the country. I believe that this is exactly how we felt when we were juvenile aviators.⁴⁵

Such interpretations of *Chiran* were inconsistent with Takagi's intentions in writing it. Given that a former juvenile aviator read this work in such a way, it is understandable that local citizens in Chiran did likewise. What was behind this misreading? Like the consensus formed at *tokkō* memorial services, narratives of *tokkō* reproduced through interactions between veteran associations, the national media, and Chiran itself, were so powerful that people overlooked Takagi's criticism of the Japanese military.

The "Preciousness of Peace"

Emphasizing "Peace"

The most significant change in Chiran's tourism from the 1990s was an increase in tours by school excursion groups. In 1989, groups from 255 schools (a total of 38,912 students from elementary, junior high, senior high, and other schools) visited the Chiran Peace Museum, and the number increased to 444 schools (65,534 students) in 1993, and to 621 schools (56,144 students) in 2011.⁴⁶ The increase in student visitors paralleled a decrease in the number of visits by veterans and surviving relatives. Over sixty years had passed since the war, and this generation had reached a highly advanced age, and were in need

⁴⁴ Takagi 1968.

⁴⁵ Shimizu 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Chiran Peace Museum 2012.

of long-term care or had already passed away. It had become difficult for many to attend memorial services in southernmost Kyushu.

The number of visitors to the Chiran Peace Museum, however, skyrocketed. Soon after the establishment of Tokkō Ihin Kan in 1976, the museum attracted 42,292 visitors annually. In 1987, when the museum was reopened as the Chiran Peace Museum, the figure increased to 351,041, then roughly doubled to 719,573 in 2001. Since then, the figure has remained around 600,000 a year. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of visitors to Chiran today, including to the Chiran Peace Museum, are not surviving relatives and veterans but school groups and general tourists.

This shift in visitor types has influenced *tokkō* narratives in the town, as shown in the so-called “Peace Speech Contest from Chiran” (*Heiwa e no messēji from Chiran supīchi kontesuto* 平和へのメッセージ from 知覧 スピーチ・コンテスト). Launched by Chiran in 1990, and administered by the Chiran Peace Museum, this contest aims to “deliver messages of hope and pray for eternal peace worldwide” by “inviting participants from around Japan, under the theme: ‘*Ashita inochi kagayake*’ あした いのち かがやけ (May your life shine for tomorrow).”⁴⁷ According to the museum, contestants have so far delivered many “passionate messages about the meaning of pursuing the ‘preciousness of life’ and the ‘value of peace.’”

Significantly, Chiran (and the Chiran Peace Museum) use the terms “preciousness of life” and “value of peace” here, instead of the contents of the actual speech contest. Rather than directly “honoring” youth who sacrificed themselves to protect the country, as with memorial services, these phrases have a stronger affinity with postwar pacifism and the principles of human rights. This implies that narratives of *tokkō* in Chiran have shifted from honoring the war dead to peace. Certainly, some people have previously argued that honoring the war dead should lead to peace, but the entry guidelines for this speech contest mention “peace” without any reference to “honoring war dead.”

As discussed above, many visitors to Chiran from the 1990s onward were born not in the prewar or wartime periods, but in the postwar period, predominantly after the beginning of Japan’s high economic growth. Narratives of *tokkō* and war reflect this, and have come to focus on postwar visions of “peace” instead of the war dead themselves.

“Memory of the World” and a Failure to Think

Chiran’s peace discourse of the 1990s was not without challenges, however. Sometimes conflict erupted between the conventional narrative of “honoring” the war dead and the new narrative of peace. This conflict is clearly demonstrated in the failed friendship agreement between Minamikyūshū, where Chiran is located, and Oświęcim in southern Poland.

On 15 July 2015, the City of Minamikyūshū announced its plan to conclude a friendship agreement with Oświęcim, where the former Auschwitz concentration camp is located. The friendship agreement plan was partly intended to support efforts by the City of Minamikyūshū to have *tokkō* pilot farewell notes registered with UNESCO’s Memory of the World. The city’s bid had failed the previous year, but municipal staff were enthusiastic about success in 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II. In order to strengthen their bid, they attempted to move from a narrow national perspective to a more universal perspective. This was one factor behind the plan to conclude the friendship

47 See Chiran Peace Museum 2017a; 2017b.

agreement. After the plan was announced, however, many veterans and surviving relatives objected strongly. The city received more than one hundred complaints including protests that missions by *tokkō* pilots wishing to protect their homeland and families should not be equated with the Nazi genocide of Jews. The manager of the General Affairs Section of Minamikyūshū city hall stated, “I explained the position of the city (to those who phoned us to file objections), but no one understood what I said.” The city therefore abandoned the plan to conclude the friendship agreement.⁴⁸

People who questioned the relationship between the *tokkō* and the Holocaust may have been correct. Minamikyūshū’s failure to fully consider this caused confusion. However, the issue that should be examined here—and one at the heart of changes in war-related tourism mentioned above—is why the city decided to initiate such a friendship agreement.

Objections that *tokkō* sorties should not be identified with the Nazi massacre of the Jews were based on a logic of honoring the war dead. This logic, premised on the idea that *tokkō* pilots wanted to protect their homeland and families, was crucial to conventional war-related tourism targeted at veterans and surviving relatives. In contrast, the city’s attempt to conclude a friendship agreement with Oświęcim was closer to the logic of “peace” associated with school excursion groups. The city clearly expressed its willingness to expand narratives of the *tokkō* beyond honoring them to include narratives of the value of peace and preciousness of life. This is why the city chose Auschwitz, the most powerful symbol of suffering and violence in World War II, as its partner.

However, as explained above, the city had not fully considered how to answer doubts about the connection between Chiran and Auschwitz. Although they shared characteristics as places related to the destruction in World War II, they had nothing else in common. From any perspective, it would be difficult to treat the Nazi genocide as equivalent to *tokkō* pilots who wished to protect their homeland and families.

As the above suggests, the narratives of peace aimed at recent student excursion groups and general tourists were not constructed through in-depth consideration; rather, such narratives have fostered a lack of critical thought.⁴⁹ As part of education, school excursions are often required to be politically neutral, and avoid value judgments concerning controversial topics. While “peace” can be accepted by everyone as a value-neutral concept, emphasis on honoring the war dead or war responsibility might be criticized as tendentious. In addition, mainstream tourism often avoids controversial topics because it depends on the acceptance of a wide range of visitors with diverse values and backgrounds. This is why the colorless and transparent word of “peace” is often utilized in tourism promotion. Such empty appeals for peace, however, prevent deep consideration of history and its complexities. By simply confirming the undisputable value of peace, this type of tourism works as an obstacle to candid and critical thinking about history on the part of participants.

The same can be said about conventional, “memorial-service” style narratives of the *tokkō*. As mentioned previously, such “memories” of the past prevent people from fully considering wartime society and its systemic pathology, and facilitate the de-historicization of war memories. On the surface, conventional narratives of “honoring” rooted in pilgrimage by veterans and the bereaved differ greatly from newer narratives of “peace”

48 *Sankei shinbun* 29.7.2015.

49 On the politics of peace discourses, see Yamamoto 2015.

targeting school groups and general tourists. However, there is collusion between these narratives, in that both prevent an in-depth, thoughtful exploration of history, and respond in similar ways to visitor desires for comfort and inoffensiveness. Whether in the name of “honoring” or “peace,” therefore, both have facilitated de-historicization.

Conclusion: The Politics of “Risk-Free Memories”

Twenty-five years after the end of the war, memories of *tokkō* began to be rediscovered as local memories in Chiran. The image of Chiran as a hometown of the *tokkō* was a social construct born of complex interactions between increasingly active veteran associations, a boom in war-related books and movies, and Chiran’s depopulation. This image was then “borrowed” as part of local Chiran identity. However, the narrative of the *tokkō* buried and obliterated certain memories. The war experiences of local citizens and warped history of the *tokkō* were obscured. As the “beauty” of the personal feelings of *tokkō* pilots drew attention, the historical realities of coercion that made young pilots embody such “beauty” was disregarded, accelerating the de-historization process. Collaboration at local and national levels between veteran associations, government, and the media, played a key role in this. Such dynamics underpinned efforts in Chiran to pass on memories of war.

Today, when school pupils and general tourists account for the overwhelming majority of visitors to Chiran, memories placing a greater focus on “peace” than “honoring” have entered the foreground. However, narratives of peace have also accelerated de-historicization, because they have been constructed to conform with other people’s expectations, rather than Chiran’s own memories—which would include agony and regret. These new “memories” are inoffensive, risk-free, and comfortable, but also empty of meaning.

Similar ways of transmitting memories of the war can be found in places across Japan. With over seventy years having passed since the Asia-Pacific War ended, the number of survivors who can share their experiences of war is rapidly declining. It is now the norm that those who have never experienced war play the role of storytellers in place of actual war survivors. This is also the case in Hiroshima and Okinawa. In the future narratives based on “memories” that internalize other people’s expectations may become increasingly mass-produced. These narratives will certainly tell much about the value of peace, but as this paper suggests, they may induce a refusal to think deeply about important issues. Disputes over historical issues, such as politician’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, and the responsibility of the Japanese military for wartime mass suicides by Okinawans, still remain unresolved. War-related tourist destinations visited by a wide range of people skillfully avoid controversial topics. Consequently, even people who purposefully visit places connected to memories of the past are prevented from deepening their understanding of these events and their historical contexts.

Perhaps, then, the case of Chiran is not so unusual. In terms of how we pass on war memories to future generations, Chiran may actually be typical. “Memories” in and about Chiran are a problem of postwar history, and at the same time, a problem of the present and future. How will current generations face the tendency to de-historicize in their own efforts to pass on memories? Chiran’s postwar history teaches us about the complex politics of “memories” produced by war-related sites generally.

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