

Out of the Destruction of Hiroshima: the Social History from Primary Sources of Rebuilding Human Lives during the City's Reconstruction

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Abstract:

This paper reconsiders the war damage reconstruction of Hiroshima, an A-bomb damaged city. In particular, we will focus on the feelings and experiences of the inhabitants, because many of them were forced to evacuate due to land demarcation and the construction of roads or parks in the process of the reconstruction. The historical reality of their story has been omitted from the history of postwar Japan, which has been hailed as a proud achievement of reconstruction from the ruins, and local cases have not been investigated enough. We will dig up and review the experiences of the individual inhabitants, mainly by analyzing the petitions that were written objecting to the reconstruction works during the period from 1945 through the 1950s.

The reconstruction projects aimed to revive the A-bombed city, but they failed to consider the complicated psychologies of inhabitants who lost their lands, homes, and livelihoods through the reconstruction plan. The narrative of the petitions enables us to know how people were trying to improve the situation that they found themselves in through the arbitrary changing of the boundary lines of their houses and their lands. The inhabitants are an important constituent of a city by their concrete conception of their living place. This study shows why studying war-damage reconstruction from local cases and people's viewpoints is important.

Keywords: *history from experience, reconstruction of air bombed city, eviction*

1. Introduction

“How was Hiroshima reconstructed from its A-bombed ruins?”

This question has often been asked about Hiroshima's post-war history, because the city has been reconstructed as a modern “Peace City”. Indeed, the reconstruction is considered as a great historic achievement. Moreover, the citizens of Hiroshima and the city itself have been showcased as if they were a living example, a precedent for the revival of a war-damaged city with a marvelous landscape.

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Received on 2018/12/19, accepted after peer reviews on 2019/5/14.

In the aftermath of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, the reconstruction history of Hiroshima increasingly came to be a showcase for a reconstruction model, in particular with regard to city planning, the planners, and the results of their projects. For example, the autobiography of Mayor Shinzo Hamai entitled “*Genbaku Shicho*”, which means “*the A-bomb Mayor*”, was revised and republished. The autobiography was originally published in 1967. Hamai was a key person in the post-war Hiroshima city government, so this book was not focused only on city reconstruction at that time but also on various aspects of citizens’ lives and the tasks of city governance. However, the republished version in 2011 was newly entitled, “*A-bomb Mayor: reviving a city by reconstruction*”. This book has also been translated by Elizabeth W. Baldwin and published in English as “*A-bomb Mayor Warnings and Hope from Hiroshima*” [Paperback, 2010]. Moreover, in 2013, a TV drama about Hamai’s reconstruction concept entitled “*Hiroshima: the Men Who Dreamed of Reconstructing the City*”, was broadcast by NHK TV. This renewed people’s interest in Hiroshima’s postwar reconstruction.

Why should we look and think about Hiroshima’s post war history as if it were a showcase of hope, powerfulness, and success? Isn’t this just a stereotypical image about post-war Hiroshima? Rather, shouldn’t we be raising questions about how people actually lived in the A-bomb ruins?

How did they actually survive and where did they shelter? To answer this question it is important to investigate the opening question more deeply: How was Hiroshima *actually* reconstructed from its A-bombed ruins?” This paper will attempt to answer this question in depth. The national and local governments could declare their achievement of reconstruction when the work that they had planned such as the building of memorials, roads, infrastructures and so on, was completed. With the final success, we often prefer to remember the entire process as if it was predestined to be successful. Instead, this paper will attempt to overcome this way of looking at history. It is important to have an awareness of history not just from the aspect of planning, but from the viewpoint of the feelings and experiences of people who actually lived through it.

The objective of this research is to study how a city’s inhabitants experienced reconstruction in their everyday lives by reconsidering war damage reconstruction in post-war Japan’s history, especially by studying housing and the reorganization of land boundaries. This historical research is not being undertaken to confirm the results of reconstruction projects, but to restore a picture of human rights and images of human lives among the ruins of war by investigating the local history.

From the recent view point of Cultural History studies about the 1950’s, the image of Hiroshima’s war damage and reconstruction is globally characterized. For example, Ann Sherif considered the impact of the cold war on post-war Japan’s culture from the view point of “Cold War Culture”. This study is kind of global history of discourse about nuclear anxiety. Moreover, to study 1950’s history in the scale of East Asia is also important. Osamu Yakabi, a historian, pointed out that as the backdrop to the history of the Japanese mainland’s reconstruction and economic growth, the Korean Peninsula had become a battlefield and was being destroyed in the Korean War, and the occupation of Okinawa by U.S forces continued after the 1952 Treaty of San Francisco. This divided experience led to the divided historical awareness in Japan [Yakabi 2006].

Hiroshima is also located in Japan’s mainland, and the history of Hiroshima can easily follow the discourse of reconstruction and economic growth. Akiko Hashimoto, a sociologist, describes post-war Japan’s cultural history as “the culture of defeat in war” from the viewpoint of sociology. It tends to give a positive spin to Japan’s defeat in the war, and reproduce that narrative like this: “Japan achieved a miraculous revival from the burnt ground, thanks to many sacrifices, and accomplished astounding

economic growth”. This definition points to a cultural history about memories of war in Japan, especially the discourses and narratives of war memories in popular culture and in newspapers.

However, when this discourse is critically connected to the problem of historical awareness, this trend of study and view point makes it difficult to consider the history of human lives *during* this reconstruction, in which there were many kinds of difficulties for the population. It is important to make a deep study of both national history and local history, but at present, study of the latter is insufficient. The study of the history of Japan's mainland cities, especially Hiroshima as a living place for various types of concrete lives, should not only be a war memory discourse, but should try to recapture an image of life in the ruins beyond the narrow “culture of defeat in war”, which still supports the narrative of post war Japan.

Today, we can't imagine the specific lives of many people from the words and narratives of reconstruction because of this word's positive, forward-looking, and result-based image. Thus, we will challenge this cultural and historical condition by clarifying the actual conditions of people's housing and their feelings during the reconstruction of Hiroshima from the 1940's to 1950's.

2. Literature Review of Preceding Works

The research field of the preceding works in conjunction with this article diverges into many branches. Yorifusa Ishida, a scholar of city planning, stated when looking over the history of modern Japanese city planning, “The war damage reconstruction was an extremely big operation. If the study on each city advances conclusively, we can learn many useful lessons.” [Ishida 1987: 229]. However, other than the studies of Tokyo by Akira Koshizawa and Hiroshima by Norioki Ishimaru, the local case studies that Ishida emphasized the importance of in the 1970s have not been sufficiently developed.

On the other hand, there are many powerful works in urban studies which focus on Urban Sociology or Human Geography studies of the black market, and a city's lower layers in particular. “*The Post War City*” by Kosei Hatsuda discusses how the black market in Tokyo was born, flourished, and became extinct. This work is written both from the view point of the citizens' personal experiences and the history of city planning. These black markets became extinct due to land demarcation works as a part of the war damage reconstruction [Hatsuda 2011]. This author has learned a great deal from these studies with respect to capturing the history of a city from the point of view of the citizens who lived there. In addition, in later years in the studies on city air raids by Shizue Osa, a historian, she briefly refers to war damage reconstruction planning [Osa 2013]. However, the principal objective of those studies is to describe an air raid and its aftermath, as a lasting reminder of the horror of such acts of destruction.

Then, a study about the memory of the war came up. In 2005, “*Hiroshima Traces*” by Lisa Yoneyama was translated and published in Japanese [Yoneyama 2005]. After the appearance of this work, Hiroshima became a field of war-memory studies. In those studies, Hiroshima's reconstruction in particular has been mentioned as an indispensable matter because it has been promoted under the name of “the Peace City Hiroshima” since 1949.

In preceding studies, two problems have been given much attention. First, it was pointed out that Hiroshima was transformed from “the Military City”, as one of the central military bases of the Imperial Japanese Army during the war, to “the Peace City” after the war. This fact induced many critical opinions on the city's reconstruction because this rapid change from “the base of war” to “the peace city” appeared to be a concealment of the historical truth [Zwigenberg 2014]. The second point

is that the reconstruction of Hiroshima as ‘the Peace City’ also concealed the anger, resentment, and sorrow felt by the people who were exposed to radiation by the A-bomb, known as the *Hibakusha*. [Naono 2015]

It was really the inhabitants themselves who were uncomfortable with the vision and theme of the reconstruction project. However, these indications are not criticisms from a historical study perspective. Concrete historical studies about the problems of the city’s reconstruction are only to be found in a study by Norioki Ishimaru, although he mostly focused on city planning, and not on the voices of people [Ishimaru 2008]. Recently, Nozomu Semba, a sociologist, clarifies from historical sources how Hiroshima city and the local media came up with the concept to make the ‘Peace City’ [Semba 2018]. We need to understand that Hiroshima is a real city in which people actually live, not just a representation of “Peace” or an “A-bombed city”. A city's inhabitants are not always in a position to dispute with the government. A simple composition entitled something like “*Administration vs. Inhabitants*” also does not pass muster here. The important thing is not just to criticize, but to expand the answer to the opening question’s “How *actually*?”, and proceed with a clear and definitive study. It is necessary to clarify “*for whom*” and “*why*” the reconstruction process came to be a problem. In this paper we shed light on this point which has been neglected in previous studies, by examining the petitions to the city government from the inhabitants, who objected to the public reconstruction works.

3. Elaboration of the Theme, Research Subjects and Method

In the war-damage reconstruction of Hiroshima, a demarcation of land order was carried out within a radius of approximately 2km from the hypocenter of the A-bomb; an area which was almost completely destroyed and burned to the ground. Figure 1 is a map of the bomb damaged area of Hiroshima city demarcated by city planning in the postwar period. The dark gray area indicates the completely destroyed area. The light gray area indicates the partially destroyed area [Figure 1]¹. We will examine the petitions of the inhabitants, who were ordered to move out and, therefore, submitted petitions to the city government to state their complaints regarding these public works.

For the reconstruction the city government made a zoning plan for the land use, such as roads, parks, government offices, streets, residential areas, and commercial districts. According to this plan, the ruins were demarcated and reorganized. There were also many cases where the land boundaries had become vague because of the houses' destruction by the blast and subsequent fires. In this process, city maps were redrawn according to newly readjusted lines. When these lines were redrawn and reflected on the map, they became the boundary lines of each piece of land, which had the effect of drastically changing people’s lives.



Figure 1. A-Bomb damaged demarcated by the post war city planning office. The dark gray area was completely destroyed. The light grey area was partially destroyed

1 Hiroshima-shi, 1991, *The History of War Damage Reconstruction Work*, Hiroshima, p.41.

This process included works to settle the removal of a barracks and the remaining structures which straddled the border lines, and to regulate the balance of the before and after value differences. The land demarcation was the most definitive and practical work of the war damage reconstruction.

As a result of this public work, some people were ordered to simply move out from their residential area, or to move to a piece of land which was inconvenient for their life and conducting their business. So, as we mentioned above, many inhabitants submitted petitions to the administrative branch office called "the Reconstruction Office". There were two reconstruction offices, namely, *the East Reconstruction Office* and *the Hiroshima Reconstruction Office*. These two offices dealt respectively with Hiroshima city and Hiroshima prefecture, and the historical records of these reconstruction offices include many petitions.

The petitions from the people were submitted from 1947 through the 1970's, and there were phased changes in their volume and contents through these three decades. The span of these years almost overlaps with the period when the land demarcation project was carried out. There are various types of petitions; brief or long, by a postcard or on a letter paper, by pen or a writing brush, formal or emotional, and so on. Through these petitions the people demanded to retain the place from which they had been asked to move out or at least to be compensated in reasonable terms.

We will analyze petitions submitted to both reconstruction offices from the 1940s through the late 1950s. These petitions are saved in binders, and a list of the names and addresses of petitioners are attached to each binder. From these lists, we can know how many people submitted petitions. However, it is difficult to determine the exact total number of petitions because lists are often not attached or have been lost, especially regarding the binders of petitions of the Hiroshima Reconstruction Office. According to the existing lists for the East Reconstruction Offices, the volume of petitions submitted from 1947 through 1956 for which there are lists is 1,263. There must be more unlisted numbers, but at least this gives us an indication of the scale.

The important point is that we are not concerned with the volume, but with the individual concrete examples. We will analyze the petitions' various types of demand and how the content changed over time, as the historical material of personal-narratives. Recently, history studies have positively analyzed letters, diaries, and autobiographies as historical materials. These are called ego-documents, or personal-narratives. These were written in the first person.

In 1970's history studies in Germany, history from personal experiences was proposed as a critique for social structure history. Studies on ego-documents fall into this category. Jürgen Kocka, a historian, said that social-history with no personal experience is a one-sided and incomplete history, but history from personal experience can never describe history generally [Kocka1989]. As he said that social-structure history was "incomplete", people's experience was located as the piece which could fill the gap.

However, studies from ego-documents as history from personal experience try not only to consider people's narratives, but also use them in reconstructing the country's history and social conditions at that time - in the case of this paper, it's the city society. Particularly, in recent history studies, this method is linked to the presentation of a new historical image, by utilizing them to improve the methodology of history studies. This trend is related to the importance of "The study of global history from the bottom up" that Lynn Hunt, an American historian pointed out [Hunt 2014].

For example, Takuya Onodera, a professor of German history, analyzed the military communications of German soldiers in WWII [Onodera 2012]. He locates his study as "a history of military affairs from the bottom up" and captures not only the reception of Nazi ideology by the German soldiers, but

also their psychology and actions, in order to elucidate the views enabling the invasion and motion of the ideology. A personal document is a clue for considering a certain shared psychology in society that moves military affairs, and reveals the individual's situation. Takahiko Hasegawa, a professor of English history, pointed out that it is important that we read personal-narratives carefully as “a thing which is prescribed in social structure, by which we can observe the degree of independence of will of a person under specific conditions” [Rekishikagaku Kyogikai 2015].

These petitions in Hiroshima were written for negotiation, so it is difficult to describe them simply as “the true voice of the inhabitants”. They are “claims”[Spector 1977], so they contain constructed subjects. In this paper, people’s experience and feelings does not always mean the inhabitants' true condition. However, the important thing is not to divide “truth” and “construction”, but to analyze them as an expression of personal experience and feelings, and reveal what the people demanded. This paper has selected petitions for analysis which were written for personal reasons such as explaining why help was needed, in order to clarify from the Personal Narratives what the people did to try to improve their lives.

4. Findings

(1) Living Conditions During the Peace Memorial City Reconstruction

The relation between demarcation and housing in the war damage reconstruction is rather complex. From September to November 1945, the main concern for accommodating victims was "wintering", so as not to let the people with burnt out homes freeze to death. Specifically, it meant the opening of houses which remained and were not being used, unburned buildings which contained many rooms, and in addition, the construction of "simple houses for wintering". Anyway, this was a policy to shelter people in a house with a roof during the cold winter season. However, construction materials and labor was being poured into providing buildings for the occupation forces and houses for miners who were given precedence, so the rebuilding of temporary shelters for citizens in the war damaged area was mostly carried out by the homeless people themselves.

In February 1946, the temporary shelters, so called 'barracks' in Japanese, which people had built by themselves amounted to five to six-thousand houses. Then in spring, the people who had evacuated came back, and the population began to increase. The repatriation and demobilization of Japanese forces also increased the population. By August, 1946, there were 37,608 houses around Hiroshima City. These included repaired barracks, buildings which had collapsed, and a few new buildings. The demarcation on the burnt out land where people began to build houses was started under these circumstances, based on the Special City Planning and Zoning Act of September 1946. The name “Special City Planning” signified that this law was for a war-damaged city, which meant planning in extraordinary circumstances. This was the most important regulation affecting the war damage reconstruction in post-war Japan.

Hiroshima city government started the demarcation of burnt land for city reconstruction under this law from October, 1946. At first it was expected to be completed in 5 years; however this couldn't be done due to a shortage of funds and because many objections from the inhabitants about the reconstruction work occurred one after the other.

In particular regarding funding, it was difficult to carry out reconstruction using only the limited resources of the local administration. Therefore Hiroshima city government pursued special financial help from the government through a Diet member from Hiroshima. As a result, a special local law

called "the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Law" was passed by the Diet after legislation was introduced by a Diet member, and was established after a referendum about this law among the Hiroshima citizens which was held on July 7, 1949. From then on the reconstruction project of Hiroshima was changed from "the Special City plan" to "the Peace City Construction Project" which signified a specific plan only for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as these two cities got a higher rate of support from the national budget than other cities.

The basic national policy for war damaged cities' reconstruction planning, which reflected the ideal zoning such as wide roads and large green tracts of land, was adopted at a Cabinet meeting in December, 1945, however it was reviewed by the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Finance, and the Economic Stabilization Board in 1949 in line with the curtailed budget policy for economic revival dictated by Joseph. M. Dodge's Plan under the occupation. The reconstruction under the Peace City Law subsequently faced a budget problem. In June, 1949, the whole national budget for war damage reconstruction projects was reduced, including Hiroshima's Peace City Construction project.

As a result, when it was changed to the Peace City Construction project which could get a higher rate of support from the national budget, public housing was excluded from the 11 original reconstruction projects. From then on, the construction of "the Peace City" meant only the 5 projects including the construction of peaceful commemorative facilities (such as an A-bomb museum or a monument) and the maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and drainage facilities. The state subsidy rate was reduced to a half from two-thirds and a Five-Year Plan required these projects to be completed in a very short time. Therefore, the city government was forced to complete the planned reconstruction work hastily. As a result, people who were ordered to move out to make way for the new reconstruction project had no choice but to live on public land, and the war damage reconstruction work of their homes was prolonged until the 1970s.

Next, let's examine the concrete construction process of the Peace Memorial Park in particular. The Nakajima area that was to be the place for the construction of the park had two serious problems. One problem was providing substitute lots for residents who would lose ownership of their inherited land by the construction of the park. The second problem concerned the barracks which had been built to accommodate the inflow of people into this district after the war.

Regarding the problem of substitute lots for the inhabitants of Nakajima, this area was a commercial area before its destruction, so the claimants of land or buildings or their families who survived demanded substitute lots in places where the reopening of their businesses was possible. However, the city government had already decided on the Yoshijima area for substitute lots for commercial businesses. For the people who wished to restart their business in order to live, relocating to the Yoshijima area, which was a residential area outside the streetcar transportation system and far from the city center, was a serious blow to the rebuilding of their livelihoods [Figure2]². Therefore

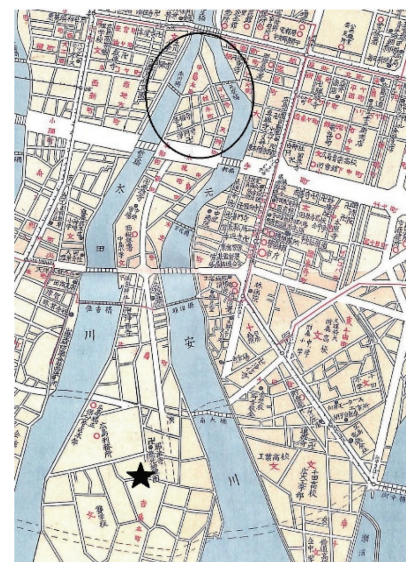


Figure 2. Relative location of Nakajima ○ and Yoshijima ★

2 This author made this figure from a picture by Tokyo Kotsu-sha, 1951, *Nihon Shokogyo Meisaizu Hiroshima*, Tokyo, recreated by Aki Shobo, 2008, Hiroshima.

many petitions for suitable and convenient land were sent to the Reconstruction Office.

For example, a man submitted a petition on November 29, 1948. He claimed about relocating to the Yoshijima area that “it will deprive us of the basis of our life” and he demanded land which was nearer to city center. Besides this, a woman whose family name was same as this man submitted a petition on December 18, 1948 from Takada-gun which was a rural district in the north of Hiroshima prefecture. This woman said “we lost my husband and father by Pika”. Pika meant the atomic bomb in those days. We found that the presenter of the petition dated November 29, her husband, had actually already died from the effects of the A-bomb. The woman had submitted it using the name of her dead husband who was the registration holder. She had evacuated to a rural district with her child without being able to come back to the city because the distribution of the land had not been decided. She needed land suitable for a shop to make her living.

Now, let’s examine the problem of the eviction of the inhabitants of the barracks which were built to house the people who flowed into this district after the war. The Nakajima area suffered crushing damage as it was directly under the bomb's hypocenter. On November 1, 1946, the city planners decided that the Nakajima area would become the Peace Memorial Park which meant that it was virtually forbidden to reconstruct it as a commercial area. In addition, the actual construction of the park started in 1950. Meanwhile, there were many cases of the illegal occupation of land plots and the building of temporary shelters by people who didn’t have any legal rights regarding possession and use of the land. For the construction of the Peace Memorial Park which was the focus of the reconstruction of Hiroshima as the Peace City, it was necessary to get such barracks inhabitants to move out. However, this would deprive the people who had started a new life in this place of their livelihoods. For example, a woman who introduced herself as “a widow” and “a repatriate” demanded the postponement of the time limit through a petition which she submitted on February 21, 1952 to the East Reconstruction Office. She was evacuee and lived there with her child. She was running a restaurant business in this area

The eviction order was enforced from April, 1951, first in the southern half, then the northern half. On August 6, 1952, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Monument, which is called the Memorial for A-bomb Victims today, was completed and unveiled in a memorial ceremony [Figure 3]³.

However, the sponsor of this ceremony hung a curtain behind this memorial to hide the barracks which were still left on the north side of the Peace Memorial Park. By about 1955, most of the barracks had disappeared from the Peace Park area, and trees had been planted.

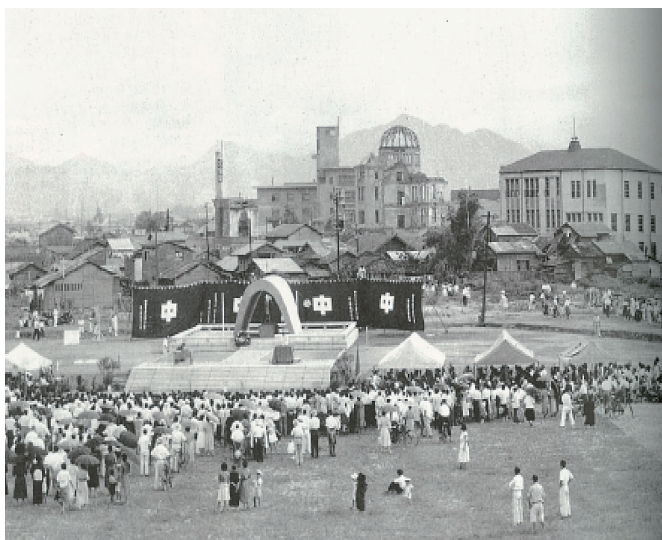


Figure 3. The Memorial Unveiling Ceremony on August 6th, 1952. We can see the A-bomb Dome and barracks behind curtain.

3 Hiroshima-shi, *Reconstruction of the City; 40 years History from A-bomb*, Hiroshima-shi Culture Section of Planning and Coordination, 1985, p.84.

Then a question arises: Where were the people moved to? By reading and deciphering petitions and eviction letters, it was found that in some cases people who were moved out from the southern half of the park area just flowed into northern half. People who couldn't find a place there might have flowed into the neighboring barracks built around the A-bomb Dome or on the banks of rivers around the city, which were public land. By this forced evacuation, Hiroshima city could keep to the deadline of the Five Year Plan which had to be completed on time in order to get the state subsidy for constructing this park. The construction of the Peace Memorial Park was completed in 1955. However, the completion of the space that was idealized as "peaceful" was in no way related to the rebuilding of the lives of the inhabitants who were forced to move out. While the city government did supply some people with temporary housing through a lottery as a relief measure, certainly all the inhabitants were not relieved.

(2) The Meaning of Lands in Ruin for the Inhabitants

In this sub-section and sub-section (3), we will consider the changes in the contents of the petitions which inhabitants submitted as time progressed. These contents can be mainly divided into two types by the passage of time. In this sub-section, we will look at petitions submitted from the late 1940's to early 1950's, which was the first half of the early period of war damage reconstruction.

There were many petitions submitted by claimants of lands or houses who had read the announcement about a substitute lot, and were hoping to exchange the lot appointed by the administration, such as the example about the Yoshijima area mentioned above. In addition, people claimed, "the Reconstruction Office has made a mistake in the calculation of the area of the land"; "do not demolish the building which I have built already"; "the substitute lot is not suitable for business, please change it"; and "the substitute lot is too far from city center", and so on.

In addition, some of the tenants claimed in their petitions that the negotiations with the landowner about substitute lots and moving out did not go well, and they seem to have been forced to move. In this time people needed lands which they could use immediately, so the image of the future held by the haves and have-nots put them into conflict in this unstable situation. Furthermore, some people who had lived in Hiroshima for a long time claimed their land "was passed down from our ancestors by inheritance". They said their fate was entwined with the land and refused to move, arguing that they were the native inhabitants. This type of claim had two purposes. One was refusing eviction by reason of attachment, and the other was removing a stranger from the local community. After the A-bomb, there was still a strong attachment to the memory of dead family members, so there were people who refused to move out because their family had been killed by the A-bomb on the land.

In summary, what we find from petitions submitted during this time is that people felt anxiety about every aspect of their lives because of the damage they had suffered from the A-bomb to which had been added the hardship of facing the realities of the land demarcation for city reconstruction. Especially, there were problems about what a house and land meant for the inhabitants of Hiroshima. They had had their houses, their families, and their occupations snatched away by the A-bomb and the war. The uneasiness that people wrote of in their petitions during this time reveals anxiety for their present and future lives, a sense of fear at the loss of prospects for rebuilding their lives, and sorrow about being cut off by demarcation from any connection to memories associated with the land and house where they used to live with their lost family.

The feelings for their land actualized by the demarcation caused more complicated problems. Some people insisted in their petition: "If the land that I have always lived on becomes land for the

community such as a road or a park, it is OK; however, if it becomes residential land belonging to another person that is unacceptable to me". Several petitions were written in such a tone. Of course we should think that people also didn't feel good about construction of a road or a park. This is a characteristic idea about owning land, which preceding works which have studied just the superficial representation of war memories have not yet revealed. It means that people not only felt repulsion for the administration that was pushing forward with its reconstruction plan, but they also had financial problems and harbored feelings of injustice against neighbors and acquaintances who appeared to have got a better deal. Actually, there were also many petitions about trouble with neighbors. In the reconstruction works, people's differences and divisions in terms of economy, feelings, and situations was actualized mostly around the topic of land demarcation, and it became a serious problem for the rebuilding of the lives of the inhabitants.

(3) A Sense of Unfairness and Conflict in the Petitions

Next we will examine petitions submitted throughout the whole 1950's. The attributes of the petitioners partly overlapped with the above, but the petitions from people occupying places illegally who did not have any right to land and buildings increased mainly from this period. Having received an eviction notice, they appealed in their petitions for the postponement of the time limit for moving out.

The life circumstances of petitioners and the methods that they used in their petitions varied. For example, from this period, they began submitting medical certificates with their petitions to testify to their physical condition such as a disease, pregnancy, and so on, in order to postpone their evacuation. Such petitions expressed the fact that removal from their home cut right into the heart of people's lives, but at the same time, we can also observe how people dealt with that difficult situation.

Incidentally, we can confirm a significant tendency in some of the petitions submitted at this time. These were brief petitions written on postcards demanding that the Reconstruction Office avoid a particular house or building. These were mostly anonymous and took on the character of an accusation.

The words that people used in their petitions were spun in an effort to realize the real lives that they hoped for, but the contents of these demands appear to change as the reconstruction advanced. During this period, as for the act called a petition, it began to be used as a tool to remove an obstructive "this building" or "this resident" whose existence was unpleasant for the inhabitant's own life. Furthermore, petitioners who appealed like this had already cooperated by moving out to somewhere else in the city because of reconstruction, so they often claimed that they were still in a painful situation.

For example, in a petition submitted anonymously in April 1952, the petitioner points out that a particular building was under construction without a license on "Kyobashi-cho and Inari Bridge riverside". This petitioner said, "I also want to build on another city-owned land if it is not necessary to get building permission"; "I'm going to visit the Reconstruction Office with building permission. I live on the second floor of a rented house with a big family and have no spare cash. Thanking you in advance". Of course, this person most likely couldn't get building permission because this area was a public area, so his words "with building permission" were just an insubstantial threat to the city government. Subsequently, the construction of this riverside building was canceled by the Reconstruction Office. The purpose of the petitioner was to prevent the building of a house in a better condition than their own, and this purpose was accomplished. The words "If you permit this person to

do that I'll do the same thing" implied a kind of threat or an objection to the administration. This expression was typical of most of the petitions of an accusatory character, although the petitioners probably didn't have any mutual discussions in advance.

For the city government which wanted to push forward with reconstruction works, the problem of people making illegal buildings by themselves was a dilemma. Furthermore, many people imitated them, and so illegal buildings increased even more. The people who were submitting anonymous petitions foresaw this precisely. Therefore they might write a petition demanding that the authorities remove a specific, obstructive building for them, by expressing a feeling of inequity about the reconstruction works.

In addition, as a result of investigation by the Reconstruction Office, the contents of a certain petition might prove to be false. On September 28, 1955, a petition reported to the Reconstruction Office that someone had "built an illegal building and lent it out and collected rent". However, the sender of this petition used a false name, and as a result of investigation the contents were proved to be untrue. In addition, some neighborhood inhabitants demanded the evacuation of the resident of a house by reason of their occupation or ethnicity, like "Pan-Pan" (a prostitute for Occupation soldiers) or Korean. In other words, at this time the reconstruction of the city had advanced practically and people's living conditions were relatively improving, so submitting petitions to the Reconstruction Office came to be a tool for removing hindrances to a better living environment for people who had already accomplished the rebuilding of their lives.

An industrial exhibition entitled the '*Hiroshima Reconstruction Exhibition*' was held in Hiroshima in April 1958. Prior to this, several shopping center associations submitted a joint petition in 1957. They demanded the pushing forward of the evacuation of the crowded barracks district on the opposite bank of the river to the Peace Memorial Park, which was to be the first site of the exhibition. The important point here is that shopping center associations, although they were not located geographically near to the barracks district were also concerned and sent a petition. The petition was written with concern for the impression of people visiting the Peace Memorial Park which was an exhibition site and also a tourist attraction. The associations of shopping centers in far-off places linked their names on this petition concerning the district where the barracks remained because they thought that this district's barracks adversely affected the sightseeing image of Hiroshima and so the income of these shopping centers from sightseeing would decrease. What this petition wanted to say was that this was a serious problem for the whole economic zone of Hiroshima.

The petitions of this period show us that people in the city under reconstruction were not only victims of land demarcation. The reconstruction of the city forced the people to newly recognize the importance of land in their lives from the perspective of the city as a living environment.

5. Conclusion

This paper has aimed to analyze the history of war damage reconstruction from the viewpoint of those who actually lived in post war Hiroshima, by investigating the primary sources to understand their feelings and experiences in their everyday lives.

Hiroshima certainly achieved physical reconstruction and realized it in the late 1950s, and declared it by the Reconstruction Exhibition. However, under the influence of demarcation for city reconstruction, as we have discovered in the above narratives written by claimants, a substantial number of people couldn't rebuild their shops or houses in the places they were before the A-bomb

was dropped. In addition, people who had lost their homes because of the A-bomb and were moved out during city reconstruction had still not been provided with enough houses by city administration, even by the time that the Hiroshima Reconstruction Exhibition, which was claimed to be on behalf of the whole city, was held. They had to make houses themselves and still lived on large public lands such as the banks of rivers or other public land right up to the 1970s.

In the city where reconstruction works were carried out, various conflicts about life and feelings broke out among the inhabitants. False petitions were written to remove a house which was preventing another's way for living. The reconstruction projects aimed to revive the city, but they also incited the various, complicated psychologies of its inhabitants. The narrative of the petitions enables us to know how people were trying to change the situation that they found themselves in through the arbitrary changing of a boundary line of their house and their land.

In addition, the inhabitants were not only unwillingly manipulated by the reconstruction works. Their status as an important constituent of the city by their concrete conception of their living place had been ignored. These people attempted to intervene in the treatment of their house or land by submitting petitions. From this micro position, they surely participated in the reconstruction of this city in spite of being treated as an insignificant part of the reconstruction process. This significant point has not been taken up by studies about Hiroshima's war-memory representation. The issues of Hiroshima's existing researches are limited to discourses on nuclear weapons, peace, memories of war-damages, the fading memories of the war-perpetrators, and the anti-nuclear social movement. Therefore this paper takes up the important issue that we can and should restart our post war studies by taking into account the records of participants' personal experiences.

Judging from people's narratives, it can be seen that the reconstruction of Hiroshima was never simply an example of "success". It only appears to be so because the image of Hiroshima as "the city that was reconstructed peacefully from the ashes of the A-bomb wreckage" was carefully crafted, and its history has been written from an administrative viewpoint. Today, the city landscape also projects this image of "Peace". Therefore, after the Iraqi War, it attracted observation from the Middle Eastern war zones and is still promoted as a showcase city rousing hope from destruction to revival for the entire world to see. Rather this author believes that this is the time to dig up and review the experiences of the individual inhabitants that have not yet been considered, and learn an important lesson from them. It is worth emphasizing here the cases that expressed a sense of unfairness and discrimination from the process of reconstruction which needs to be investigated from the local history. That is why the author considers the history of life and local history to be so important.

In reality, the reconstruction of Hiroshima meant many processes by which people suffered mental conflict due to differences between what they lost by the A-bomb and their present life situation. They were consistently pressured to change their housing or move out. Therefore, there was conflict not only between the administration and the inhabitants, but also between inhabitants who were opposed to each other because of the various arbitrary boundary lines drawn between them. These boundaries were the real cracks in the reconstruction plan.

The war-damage reconstruction gradually became the basis for Japanese postwar history, and the rebuilding of its cities. However, the concrete examples vary according to each city. It is important to research what reconstruction really means for people living in a destroyed town, not only the methods, process, and results, but also the narrative of the reconstruction in local cases. What matters here is to pay attention to people's living conditions, listen to the opinions of the community, examine the character and purpose of the reconstruction plan, and write it in history.

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