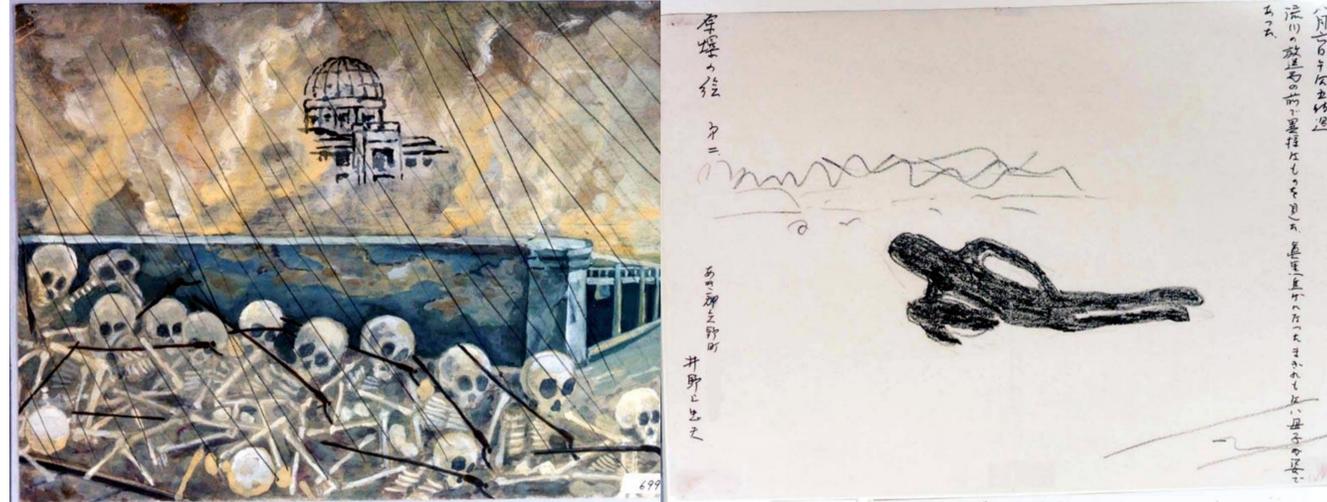




Abstract

In this research project, I examine the social and cultural effects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, specifically how memories and experiences of survivors exist in various forms of commemoration. I explore records and commemorations such as interviews and art of survivors, as well as museums and peace parks related to the events. A picture of Japanese collective memory about nuclear trauma is formed through the inclusion of non-traditional commemorative works such as film and media. I also analyze similarities between the events following Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Chernobyl Disaster of 1986. My research highlights the ways in which trauma is recorded and preserved, how collective memory is formed among communities through personal testimony and media, and the importance of preservation of memory and commemoration.

Commemorating and Understanding Nuclear Issues in Japan 1945 - 2020



Figures 1, 2 (above) and 3 (left): Paintings by Hiroshima survivors. 04_09, 09_07, 12-40. MIT Visualizing Cultures: Ground Zero 1945 Image Gallery. <https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/groundzero1945/gallery/index.htm>



Figure 6: Tomiko Konishi (b. 1919) created a picture book with details of her experiences the day of the bomb dropping in Hiroshima, August 6, 1945 (MIT Visualizing Cultures).



Historical Context

On August 6 and August 9, 1945, the United States military dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Following the end of World War II, both the US occupying forces and local Japanese government encouraged tourism from United States military forces to view the destruction of the cityscape of Hiroshima (Zwigenberg 2016). Up until the past few decades, the focus of commemoration of the atomic bombings has been on the loss of the city and how the tragedy affected Japan as a whole. Little mention was made about *hibakusha*, the survivors of the bombings who were categorically othered within Japanese society.



Figure 4: Iri and Toshi Maruki. *Mother and Child* from The Hiroshima Panels. <https://chiekot.wordpress.com/2008/08/>

Analysis

The images selected for this poster showcase some of the ways in which individuals in Japan, especially survivors, use different forms of artistic commemoration to memorialize and to represent the tragedy of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Figures 1-3 and 6 are part of a larger collection of works displayed online by MIT in a collection of illustrations by *hibakusha*, survivors of the bombings. This collection provides a window into the feelings and experiences of *hibakusha* and serves to memorialize them through preserving their memories on a global, accessible scale. Figure 4 is a standing panel by Iri and Toshi Maruki entitled "Mother and Child" (1959) from a larger collection called *The Hiroshima Panels* (1950-1982). Iri and Toshi Maruki were Hiroshima natives who returned to the city in the aftermath of the bombing. *The Hiroshima Panels* were an attempt to process what they saw upon returning home just three days after the event. Many of the panels include imagery related to Buddhist interpretations of hell. The couple writes, "Three years passed before we began to paint what we had seen... We thought we had painted a tremendous number of people, but there were 260,000 who died in Hiroshima" (Maruki Gallery for The Hiroshima Panels Foundation). Figure 5 is an image of Godzilla from Toho Cinema's 1954 film, *Gojira*. Released almost ten years after the bombing, Godzilla is a figurative representation of the destructive capabilities of the atomic bomb and American nuclear power. The triumph of the movie's protagonist, a Japanese scientist, enabled a postwar Japanese audience to "rewrite or at least to reimagine their tragic wartime experiences" (Napier 1993, p. 327).



Figure 5: *Godzilla* 1954 [https://godzilla.fandom.com/wiki/Godzilla_\(1954\)](https://godzilla.fandom.com/wiki/Godzilla_(1954))

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