

# KOREAN A-BOMB VICTIMS' MOVEMENT AND THE POWER OF NATIONALISM

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This chapter discusses “the A-bombed nationalism” that emphasizes the victimhood of the Japanese nation, and that developed through the redress movement of the Japanese victims of the 1945 atomic bombings. A-bombed nationalism has unintentionally excluded other atomic-bomb victims, most notably Koreans who experienced the bombings as colonized subjects of the Japanese Empire at that time. These Korean victims brought nationalism to the fore throughout their own movement, by attributing their victimization to Japan’s colonization of Korea. Their A-bombed nationalism, however, showed a positive potential unlike that of the Japanese victims, as it stimulated a sense of atonement among Japanese citizens as former colonizers who consequently determined to work for redress of Korean atomic-bomb victims. While the diplomatic rift over the colonial past still lingers between Korea and Japan, Korean victims’ A-bombed nationalism may present a possibility where citizens of the two countries can face the past and work together towards a new relationship.

**Keywords:** Atomic bombings, Korean A-bomb victims (*Hibakusha*), nationalism, social movement

## 1. Introduction

Korea and Japan often have diplomatic rifts over issues related to Japanese colonial rule over Korea between 1910 and 1945. Whether at a governmental, local, or even individual level, issues arise from and are discussed within the historical colonizer-colonized relationship between the two countries, with the Korean side typically questioning Japan’s responsibility for its past colonial rule, and the Japanese side tending to resist such views.

Debates are further complicated by strands in discourses that see ordinary Japanese people as victims of Japan’s colonial rule and war aggression, not as

complicit, which contrasts starkly with the view of Japanese as perpetrators in the eyes of Koreans. One example is the issue of victims of the atomic bombings, or *hibakusha*, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. In Korea, it is widely understood that the atomic bombings led to the surrender of Japan and liberated Korea from Japanese colonial rule, and were the price that Japan paid for its war aggression. In contrast, the Japanese, and particularly *hibakusha* themselves, feel a sense of victimhood related to the unprecedented nuclear attacks.

This latter "ideology of victimhood" (Orr 2001, 64) in Japan, which has placed the *hibakusha* issue in the national narrative, has been analyzed by some scholars. Orr (2001) discusses, focusing on individual activists such as Kaoru Yasui and different political factions as examples, how the issue of *hibakusha* and Japan's atomic victimhood was nationalized during the early years of the postwar Japanese anti-bomb movement<sup>1</sup> up to the 1960s. Yoneyama (1999) spends a chapter of her book *Hiroshima Traces* analyzing the discourse surrounding the cenotaph for Korean atomic-bomb victims in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, and discusses how debates on the Japanese colonial past have been repressed, and how the former colonized, that is Koreans, have resisted this repression. Naono (2015) provides a detailed analysis of the expansion of the subjectivity of Japanese *hibakusha*'s redress movement that contributed to the creation of solidarity and the development of a national movement. This solidarity, supported by the sense of a national atomic victimhood, can be labeled "A-bombed nationalism" (Naono 2015, 112). Some scholars, and also prominent non-scholarly figures such as the *hibakusha* poet Sadako Kurihara and the journalist Tatsumi Nakajima, further point out that this A-bombed nationalism has long excluded non-Japanese *hibakusha* from the *hibakusha* movement (Yoneyama 1999, 152–153; Naono 2015, 7, 113, 227).

These arguments are certainly central to understanding the political dynamics behind the development of the Japanese *hibakusha*/anti-bomb movement.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, however, to how it is most often discussed, A-bombed nationalism can foster the expansion of the movement, and even solidarity among its participants, and beyond national borders. This can be observed in the case of Korean *hibakusha* who were compelled to immigrate to the Japanese mainland during

<sup>1</sup> The term "anti-bomb movement" is used in this chapter to refer to the movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs. The anti-bomb movement should be distinguished from the anti-nuclear movement (Naono 2011, 11), which opposes not only nuclear weapons, but also the so-called "peaceful" use of nuclear power such as nuclear power generation.

<sup>2</sup> While A-bombed nationalism is often a focus of criticism of the "exclusive" Japanese *hibakusha* movement, Naono argues that such criticism fails to take into account the history of A-bombed nationalism that has developed as a strategy of the *hibakusha* movement to counter the Japanese government, and to examine both opportunities and limits, as well as consequences, that A-bombed nationalism has led to throughout the movement (Naono 2015, 7).

the colonial period, experienced the atomic bombings, and returned to the Korean Peninsula following the collapse of the Japanese Empire in 1945. Throughout their post-liberation redress movement, Korean *hibakusha* brought nationalism to the fore by attributing their experience of the atomic bombings to Japan's colonization of Korea, and demanded compensation from the Japanese government. At the same time, their movement has been pushed forward in cooperation with Japanese citizens who supported the Korean victims in atonement for the treatment of the former colonized people—a sentiment that was induced by Korean *hibakusha*'s nationalism.

This chapter examines the Korean *hibakusha* movement and questions the exclusionist A-bombed nationalism for which the Japanese counterpart is often criticized. The remainder of the chapter first addresses the historical development of A-bombed nationalism of the Japanese *hibakusha* movement. It is discussed in reference to arguments by scholars such as Naono, Nemoto and Orr, and also examined in relation to theories of nationalism and social movements discussed by prominent scholars such as Smith and Tarrow. The discussion moves on to the history of the movement of Korean *hibakusha* who have developed their own A-bombed nationalism. Following this, the influence that Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism has had on Japanese citizens is explored, through the specific example of the Association of Citizens for the Support of A-bomb Victims in South Korea (韓国の前爆被害者を支援する市民の会 *Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai*: hereafter the "Japanese Citizens Association"), a Japanese citizens' group which has been committed to support for Korean *hibakusha* since 1971. The examination is based primarily on archival research, looking at the discourses that appear in the bulletins of the citizens' group. In conclusion, the power of nationalism is discussed, specifically as observed in the movement of Korean *hibakusha* and their collaborative relationship with Japanese citizens, and from which lessons for future-oriented Korean-Japanese relations may be derived.

## 2. The Japanese *hibakusha* movement and the development of A-bombed nationalism

Following Japan's surrender in WWII in 1945, Japan was placed under US occupation for seven years. During the occupation period, the censorship introduced by the GHQ/SCAP permitted little information on the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to be disclosed to the public. Social movements were no exception, and the emergence of the *hibakusha* movement calling for their relief and nuclear abolition had to wait until the end of the US occupation in 1952.

Preceding the rise of the *hibakusha* movement, the anti-bomb movement in Japan developed following the Lucky Dragon Incident in 1954. This incident occurred

in the middle of the Pacific, where a Japanese fishing trawler named Lucky Dragon No. 5 was exposed to contaminated ashes from the US nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll. After arriving back in Japan, the crew members of Lucky Dragon developed acute radiation syndrome, and one of them, chief radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama, passed away a half year later. The entire nation became significantly concerned about contamination of fish in the markets. These events consequently led to a nationwide anti-bomb movement, with one of the earliest events being a signature campaign initiated by a women's group from Sugunami Ward, Tokyo, which later spread across the country with over 30 million signatures collected by August 1955 (Orr 2001, 47–48; Daigo Fukuryū Maru Heiwa Kyōkai 2015, 25–43).

At first, the anti-bomb movement was not specifically focused on the 1945 atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Naono 2015, 102). It soon, however, expanded its scope. In 1955, a year after the Lucky Dragon Incident, the first World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Hiroshima. During the conference, the plight of and relief for *hibakusha* became one of the major focuses, and a discussion arose that the Japanese government should provide care for *hibakusha*. Consequently, the anti-bomb call came to embrace not only the prevention of nuclear war but also relief for the atomic-bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Fujiwara 1991, 70–72; Orr 2001, 60–62; Naono 2015, 102).

When this annual conference was held in 1963, however, an ideological split occurred. Those participants who lent their support to Communism defended the USSR's nuclear development which they regarded as self-defense against the United States, and those who lent their support to socialism were opposed to nuclear developments by "any countries" (*ikanaru kuni*) (Ubuki 2014, 215–219).

Having witnessed the political and ideological split of the anti-bomb movement, *hibakusha* tried to distance themselves from this political turmoil, and began concentrating their focus on the issue of *hibakusha*. As they attempted to depoliticize their movement and gain support nationwide, *hibakusha* became "representatives of the victims' community, Japan" (Naono 2015, 102–104; Nemoto 2018, 119–120). *Hibakusha* stressed that their victimization was a result of Japan's entry into war, and that it was the Japanese government's responsibility to help its own citizens, that is, the victimized and atomic-bombed Japanese nation (Orr 2001, 142–143; Naono 2018, 224–225).<sup>3</sup> Depoliticizing the *hibakusha* movement,

<sup>3</sup> This is represented by the activities of a nationwide *hibakusha* organization called the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, or *Nihon Hidankyo*. One of the most prominent examples of their insistence on the Japanese government's responsibility can be found in the "Crane Pamphlet" that they issued in 1966. The pamphlet is officially entitled *The Special Quality of Atomic Bomb Damages and Demand for Hibakusha Relief Law*, and it has an illustration of a paper crane on its front page (the reason that it is also known as the *Crane Pamphlet*). The publication detailed the unique and long-lasting damages caused by the atomic bombings to *hibakusha* ranging from physical to social aspects. It further stated

focusing on their own experiences of the atomic bombings, and placing the *hibakusha* issue in a national context were all effective at organizing and consolidating the *hibakusha* movement and developing it into a national movement. It was through these processes that A-bombed nationalism developed in the Japanese *hibakusha* movement.

This A-bombed nationalism of the Japanese *hibakusha* movement can be associated with arguments by some theorists. Smith argues that nationalism is “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith 2010, 9). His association of ideological movements and identity in the discussion on nationalism is supported by the work of Tarrow on social movements. He argues that the development of collective identity is effective in mobilizing and uniting people in a social movement (Tarrow 2011, 151–152). Collective identity is “an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientation of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (Melucci 1995, 44). A prominent example of collective identity playing a significant role in mobilizing and uniting participants in social movements is national identity, which, following the above argument by Smith, is attained based on people’s sense of nationalism.

Taking the arguments by Smith and Tarrow together, the correlation between nationalism and social movements through the mediation of (national) identity can be pointed out, where nationalism nurtures a collective (national) identity shared among people who regard themselves as belonging to the same nation, and where their shared national identity may further contribute to an organized social movement through which the participants are aligned towards the shared goal of their national interests. When this is applied to the case of the Japanese *hibakusha* movement, this process can be understood as follows: A-bombed nationalism developed as *hibakusha* began raising their voices and placing themselves in the national context (whether through gaining support from the Japanese nation, or negotiating with the national government); around this A-bombed nationalism, they established and consolidated their collective identity as the atomic-bombed Japanese nation, that is, Japanese *hibakusha*; this collective identity played a crucial role in their movement since it was based on this collective identity that they maintained unity and solidarity, oriented their focus toward a shared goal, and took autonomous initiative.

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their demand for state compensation and a *hibakusha* relief law to be enacted in acknowledgment of the responsibility of the Japanese government for the war and the bombings (Nihon Gensuibaku Higaisha Dantai Kyōgikai Nihon Hidankyō-shi Henshū linkai 2009a, 110–111; 2009b, 35–60).

It should be noted that the fact that their collective identity as Japanese *hibakusha* carried a nationalistic connotation is understandable given that their collective identity was formed as part of the strategy of their movement which was raised vis-à-vis the Japanese nation-state. Nevertheless, it should also be stressed that it was not a conscious, intentional attempt through which Japanese *hibakusha* developed A-bombed nationalism. It was rather a by-product of their struggle to press forward in their movement and realize their demand for relief and state compensation. In fact, the participants in the Japanese *hibakusha* movement often stress a "universality" rather than any nationalistic view (Orr 2001, 65). The nationwide *hibakusha* organization *Nihon Hidankyō* (日本原水爆被害者団体協議会 The Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organizations) issued, for example, its inaugural message in 1956, which stated: "[W]e have reassured our will to save humanity from its crisis through the lessons learned from our experiences [...]. Humanity must never again inflict nor suffer the sacrifice and torture we have experienced" (Nihon Gensuibaku Higaisha Dantai Kyōgikai 1956). As expressed here, their call for "No More Hiroshima/Nagasaki" propounds a "universalistic" cause, that is, nuclear abolition for humanity.

Nemoto points out the political mechanism behind what he calls the "universalism of Hiroshima," that he argues developed out of Japanese *hibakusha*'s attempt to depoliticize their movement and concentrate their focus on their own experiences of the atomic bombings through their story-telling activities<sup>44</sup> (Nemoto 2018, 119–120). He further argues that the depoliticization of the *hibakusha* movement turned their personal experiences of the bombings—which they often do not wish to remember and relate—into a "collective experience" that is now regarded as a "lesson for humanity" and "heritage to pass on." This transformation consequently made their story-telling activities an indispensable component of their movement (Nemoto 2018, 130–133).

Nevertheless, the "universalism of Hiroshima" that Nemoto discusses may not be truly "universal" because it has the potential to exclude discourses that do not conform with this idealistic nature. Historically speaking, the "universalistic" *hibakusha* movement and particularly *hibakusha*'s activities that relate their testimonies has largely been carried out by Japanese *hibakusha*, at least until overseas *hibakusha* began raising their voices and drawing the attention of the public.<sup>5</sup> Under these

<sup>4</sup> In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, story-telling activities are widely practiced by *hibakusha*, and have become institutionalized in the 1980s as an educational resource for students from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and across the country who visit the cities on school trips (Nemoto 2018, 142–152).

<sup>5</sup> One of the early cases of non-Japanese overseas *hibakusha* that drew the attention of the public in Japan was Korean *hibakusha* Son Chin-du's so-called "certificate lawsuit" in the 1970s, which is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. At the same time, *hibakusha* organizations were established in various countries: one in South Korea in 1967 (with its preceding organ-

circumstances, it is possible that some experiences and testimonies are marginalized or even excluded if they do not fit in the category of this “universalism of Hiroshima,” that is, the category of Japanese *hibakusha*. Consequently, the ideal transitions from an intended universalism to an exclusionist localism.

This dilemma of the “universalism of Hiroshima” is also faced by the Japanese *hibakusha* movement with respect to A-bombed nationalism. Their movement was oriented towards “depoliticization” and “universalism,” however, it led to the development of A-bombed nationalism that consequently and ironically marginalized and excluded voices, experiences, and testimonies of those *hibakusha* who do not conform with the A-bombed Japanese nation. A prominent example of those marginalized is Korean *hibakusha*, as pointed out by Yoneyama and Naono (Yoneyama 1999, 152–153; Naono 2015, 113). These former colonized and atomic-bombed people, nevertheless, developed their own A-bombed nationalism through their redress movement. The following sections will examine the A-bombed nationalism of Korean *hibakusha* in an attempt to deconstruct the A-bombed nationalism that is usually regarded as having an exclusionist nature.

### 3. Who are Korean *hibakusha*?

Before examining the history of the Korean *hibakusha* movement, this section discusses the historical background of the Korean *hibakusha* themselves. Following the colonization of Korea by Japan in 1910, the number of Korean immigrants to Japan began to increase. In the early period of the colonial era, many Koreans who had been deprived of their means of making a living in Korea immigrated to Japan. Some Korean immigrants followed their family members, relatives, or neighbors from the same village when choosing a place to settle. The increase in the Korean population in Japan surged significantly from the second half of the 1930s as Japan’s entry into war with China and then in the Asia-Pacific region caused a “manpower vacuum” that Japan needed to fill with colonial subjects, particularly those from the Korean Peninsula. Some of these Koreans were sent to cities where military factories and facilities were concentrated. These places included Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where Korean laborers and military personnel as well as ordinary Korean residents consequently experienced the atomic bombings. When the war ended, it is estimated that there were more than 2 million Koreans living in Japan (Rekishi Kyōkasho Zainichi Korian no Rekishi Sakusei Iinkai 2006, 9; Mizuno and Mun 2015, 80–81).

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ization formed in 1966), two in the US in the 1970s, and one in Brazil in 1984. However, it is from around the 1990s onwards that the issue of overseas *hibakusha* came to be discussed more widely when *hibakusha* from these countries began filing a number of lawsuits in Japan, petitioning for support and relief from the Japanese government.

The table below shows the Korean populations in Japan, Hiroshima Prefecture, and Nagasaki Prefecture<sup>6</sup> between 1935 and 1944. It should be noted that, during this period, the rates of the increase of Korean population in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Prefectures were higher than the national level. This reflects the fact that the two prefectures were centers of military industry which led to a significant number of Koreans immigrating to these prefectures as forced laborers.

**Table 1: Korean population in Japan between 1935 and 1944**

Year	The entire country	Hiroshima Prefecture	Nagasaki Prefecture
1935	625,678	17,385	7,229
1936	690,501 (10.4%)	19,491 (12.1%)	7,046 (-2.5%)
1937	735,689 (6.5%)	19,525 (0.2%)	7,625 (8.2%)
1938	799,878 (8.7%)	24,878 (27.4%)	8,852 (16.1%)
1939	961,591 (20.2%)	30,864 (24.1%)	11,343 (28.1%)
1940	1,190,444 (23.8%)	38,221 (23.8%)	18,144 (60.0%)
1941	1,469,230 (23.4%)	48,746 (27.5%)	22,408 (23.5%)
1942	1,625,054 (10.6%)	53,951 (10.7%)	34,515 (54.0%)
1943	1,882,456 (15.8%)	68,274 (26.5%)	47,415 (37.4%)
1944	1,936,843 (2.9%)	81,863 (19.9%)	59,573 (25.6%)

Note: The figures show the populations as of the end of each year. The percentages in brackets show the increase rates compared to the preceding year.

Source: *Hiroshima City and Nagasaki City* (1979, 350–351); *Taeil Hangaengi Kangje Tongwŏn P'ihae Chosa Mit Kugoe Kangje Tongwŏn Hŭisaengja Tŭng Chiwŏn Wiwŏnhoe* (2015, 21–22)

Since the data available is at the prefectural level, and no specific information about the Korean population in the cities is available, the numbers of Korean victims of the atomic bombings can only be estimated. The tables below show the estimates of Korean *hibakusha* that were publicized in 1972 and 1979 respectively, by the Association of A-bomb Victims in South Korea (한국원폭피해자협회 *Hanguk Wŏnp'ok P'ihaeja Hyŏphoe*: hereafter the Korean Victims Association) which is the only *hibakusha* organization in South Korea.

**Table 2: The 1972 estimation of the numbers of Korean *hibakusha***

	All victims	Deaths	Survivors	Returnees	Remained in Japan
Hiroshima	50,000	30,000	20,000	15,000	5,000
Nagasaki	20,000	10,000	10,000	8,000	2,000
Total	70,000	40,000	30,000	23,000	7,000

Source: *Ichiba* (2005, 27)

<sup>6</sup> Japan consists of 47 prefectures, each with a prefectural capital. The prefectural capitals of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Prefectures are Hiroshima and Nagasaki Cities respectively.



**Table 3: The 1979 estimation of the numbers of Korean *hibakusha***

	All victims	Deaths	Survivors	Returnees	Remained in Japan
Hiroshima	70,000	35,000	35,000	30,000	5,000
Nagasaki	30,000	15,000	15,000	13,000	2,000
Total	100,000	50,000	50,000	43,000	7,000

Source: *Hanguk Wönp'ok P'ihajja Hyöphoe* (2011, 428)

According to the 1972 estimates, approximately 23,000 Korean *hibakusha* returned to the Korean Peninsula following Japan's surrender and Korea's liberation. Of these returnees, it is estimated that approximately 21,000 returned to what is today the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the remaining 2,000 to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) (Hirano 2009, 89).

Here, it is worth noting the strong tie between Hiroshima and Hapch'ön County (*Hapch'ön-gun*) in South Kyöngsang Province, South Korea. Hapch'ön is often called "the Hiroshima of Korea" because it is the region of origin of a significant number of Korean *hibakusha* (Ichiba 2005, 137). This fact is represented in historical statistical data. In 1978, out of a total of 9,362 members who were registered with the Korean Victims Association, 3,570 belonged to its Hapch'ön chapter. As of the end of 1998, 594 were registered with the Hapch'ön chapter out of the total number of 2,288 (Ichiba 2005, 136). The proportions of those registered with the Hapch'ön chapter were 38.1% and 26.0% in 1978 and 1998 respectively. Ichiba analyzes how the decrease in proportion of the *hibakusha* registered with the Hapch'ön chapter is largely a result of the depopulation in rural areas that took place in the 1970s across the country (Ichiba 2005, 137). More recently, Oh Eunjeong conducted a study on the regions of origin of the *hibakusha* who were registered with the association and about whom data on domicile of origin were available. According to the study, as of 2011, 1,730 out of the total of 3,320 were from Hapch'ön, representing 52.1% of the total number (Oh 2022, 44).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. A-bombed nationalism in the Korean *hibakusha* movement

It was as long as 20 years after the atomic bombings that Korean *hibakusha* returnees embarked on their own movement calling for recognition and relief. In this section, the development of Korean *hibakusha*'s own A-bombed nationalism will be examined in their movement, which is divided into four stages: the embryonic early stage of the Korean *hibakusha* movement; the development of the Korean *hibakusha* movement and their A-bombed nationalism; the strengthening

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that these total numbers merely represent the number of Korean *hibakusha* who were registered with the Korean Victims Association, and therefore do not represent the actual total number of Korean *hibakusha*.

of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism and the demand for state compensation; and the subordination to the Japanese bureaucratic system and the restraint of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism.

#### 4.1 The embryonic early stage of the Korean *hibakusha* movement

Korean *hibakusha* who returned to South Korea experienced various forms of suffering. They could not work to make a living due to radiation-induced illnesses. Having lived in Japan for many years, they did not have any base, experience, or network to rely on in Korea. The lack of knowledge about and the prevalent prejudice against the atomic bombings, radiation, and victims in South Korean society led them to conceal that they were *hibakusha*, and could not consequently raise their voices and ask for support (Ichiba 2005, 30–31, 43).

The political situation at that time also made their life difficult. In South Korea, it was widely regarded that the atomic bombings liberated Korea from Japanese colonial rule, and consequently, criticizing the atomic bombings was not acceptable in South Korean society. The political and military relations with the US and the anti-communist stance further made it unacceptable to criticize the bombings (Jung 2008, 20–22). Lastly, the devastation caused by the Korean War left few resources for the South Korean government and wider society, and therefore little motivation to pay attention to or materially assist *hibakusha* (Ichiba 2005, 31, 43).

In contrast, the governmental support for *hibakusha* began to take shape in Japan from the mid-1950s. The *Atomic Bomb Survivors Medical Care Law* and the *Atomic Bomb Survivors Special Measures Law* were enacted in 1957 and 1968 respectively, under which *hibakusha* could, although only upon obtaining the *Atomic Bomb Survivor's Certificate* (hereafter the Hibakusha Certificate), receive allowances and various social services. These two laws were later integrated into the *Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law*, enacted in 1994 and put into effect in 1995.

It should be noted, however, that the introduction of these laws did not solve all the issues for *hibakusha* living in Japan. For example, the definition of "*hibakusha*" stipulated in these laws was rather limited and had to be revised many times so that more *hibakusha* could benefit from the support system. Despite a number of revisions, the bureaucratic classification system does not fully recognize the physical, social, and psychological damages that were actually caused to the victims, meaning it has inevitably divided victims into those recognized as *hibakusha* and those excluded from the support system.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Many of those people who were not recognized as *hibakusha* brought lawsuits to be recognized as such. One of the most recent examples is the so-called "black rain" lawsuit that 64 people brought against Hiroshima Prefecture and City in November 2015. (These local governments were in charge of the actual procedure of issuance of the Hibakusha Certificate, entrusted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, or today's Ministry of Health, Labour and

What Japanese *hibakusha* have been demanding is more than legal support and relief. In fact, *Nihon Hidankyo* has long been petitioning the Japanese government for state compensation. Their decades-long demands have not, however, been met to this day. One of the major grounds offered in the denial of state compensation for *hibakusha* is a statement issued by the Japanese government in 1980, which stipulated that all damages caused in the “total war” must be endured by the whole nation, irrespective of whether they are *hibakusha* or other war victims.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, *hibakusha*, as well as other war-damaged citizens (i.e. civilians), have never been provided with state compensation.

The Korean *hibakusha* movement emerged a decade after its Japanese counterpart. In 1966, the Korean Victims Association was formed by Kim Jae-gŭn and Sŏ Sŏk-u, both of whom experienced the atomic bombing in Hiroshima, and Bae Du-hwan who was not a *hibakusha*, but financially supported the organization’s establishment (Ichiba 2005, 42). This newly-founded organization was officially recognized by the South Korean government as an incorporated association in the following year.

The Prospectus of Establishment of the association published in February 1967 repeatedly stresses that Korean *hibakusha* experienced the atomic bombings as a result of the Japanese colonial rule. They were “forcibly taken [to Japan] by Japanese imperialists for wartime labor, experienced the bombings, developed radiation-induced illnesses to suffer for the rest of their life, were made unable to work and make a living, and only wait for death” (Pak, Sin, and Kwak 1975, 285). As this excerpt from the Prospectus demonstrates, from the beginning of their movement, Korean *hibakusha* stressed the peculiarity of their historical background, and how it could not be regarded on equal terms with that of Japanese

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Welfare.) The plaintiffs demanded the local and national governments expand the legally recognized area where people were exposed to radioactive “black rain” that fell following the bombing. All plaintiffs, whose number later grew from 64 to 84, were recognized as *hibakusha* both at the first and the second trials. Following the ruling at the Hiroshima High Court on 14 July 2021, the Japanese government decided not to appeal to the Supreme Court, and the new criteria to recognize those people who were exposed to radioactive “black rain” as *hibakusha* came into effect on 4 April 2022. Nevertheless, there are some deficiencies pointed out regarding these new criteria, such as that the development of certain diseases is specified as a necessary condition to be recognized as *hibakusha*.

<sup>9</sup> This statement, or the “endurance doctrine” (*junin-ron*), was developed by the Committee to Discuss the Basic Issues of the Policy Regarding the Atomic Bomb Survivors (*Genbaku Higaisha Taisaku Kihon Mondai Kondankai*). The committee was established in 1979 following the legal win by Korean *hibakusha* Son Chin-du in his “certificate lawsuit” (see 4-(2) in this chapter) for the purpose of studying the Japanese government’s policy regarding *hibakusha*. The study concluded that the Japanese state was to bear responsibility only for health issues of *hibakusha*, thus, exempting it from responsibility for other civilian war victims.

*hibakusha*. By doing so, they developed their own A-bombed nationalism from the early stage of their movement.

From this stage, the Korean Victims Association made specific demands of the South Korean, Japanese, and US governments: surveys on Korean *hibakusha*; the study of medical treatments for their radiation-induced illnesses; compensation for the deceased (to be received by their bereaved families); and medical and financial support for survivors (Ichiba 2005, 43–44; Hanguk Wŏnp'ok P'ihajja Hyŏphoe 2011, 109–112). None of these demands were met, however, by either of the three governments, mainly due to South Korea's weak economy and, more critically, the normalization talks between the South Korean and Japanese governments that had been concluded in 1965. When South Korea and Japan normalized their diplomatic relations in that year, the two governments agreed that Japan's colonial reparations were "settled," and therefore the issue of Korean *hibakusha* was now to be handled as a "domestic" issue (Ichiba 2005, 45; Oh 2013, 133).<sup>10</sup> The association's weak financial resources were another factor that limited their ability to take effective action, and made it a challenge to even sustain their movement (Ichiba 2005, 45). Therefore, the primary objective of their movement during this early period was shifted to simply supporting the *hibakusha* rebuilding their basic daily lives.

The members of the Korean Victims Association were well aware of the weakness, instability, and vulnerability of their organization. This is represented by the words of the then chairperson Sin Yŏng-su in 1972 who called for the necessity for Korean *hibakusha* themselves to become independent and make efforts:

[If we are to develop our movement to a substantial one through strengthening support and expanding interests from Japanese citizens,] Korean *hibakusha* themselves must become motivated, united, strengthen the organization, and raise our voices. [...] If Korean *hibakusha* do not make efforts themselves, we can achieve nothing. [...] The fact that this issue [of Korean *hibakusha*] has been abandoned for the past 27 years was the responsibility of external institutions [i.e. the Japanese and South Korean governments]. However, a huge responsibility should also be borne on the part of [Korean] *hibakusha* themselves who have not been responsible, united, and raised our voices. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1972, 2)

In 1973, the Korean Victims Association removed the word "support" (원호 *wŏnho*) from its official name in Korean (thus, renaming it from 한국원폭피해자원호협회 *Hanguk Wŏnp'ok P'ihajja Wŏnho Hyŏphoe* to 한국원폭피해자협회 *Hanguk*

<sup>10</sup> During the normalization talks, the issue of Korean *hibakusha*, as well as the issues of the so-called "comfort women" and Korean workers left in Sakhalin, was not actually discussed.

*Wŏnp'ok P'ihaeja Hyŏphoe*). This change represented their wish and determination that they would become an independent, self-reliant organization.

## 4.2 The development of the Korean *hibakusha* movement and their A-bombed nationalism

From the mid-1970s, the Korean *hibakusha* movement became more active and direct, embarking on lobbying the Japanese government. The catalyst for this change was the so-called "certificate lawsuit" that Korean *hibakusha* Son Chin-du brought in Japan in 1972.

In 1970, Busan-resident Son Chin-du attempted to illegally enter Japan. Having experienced the atomic bombing in Hiroshima in 1945, his purpose for entering Japan was to receive specialized medical treatments for his radiation-induced illnesses. He was detained, however, at Kushiura Port in Saga Prefecture, and later hospitalized in Fukuoka. In November 1971, while still hospitalized, Son applied for a Hibakusha Certificate. His application was declined in July 1972, on the grounds that he was not a resident in Japan. The place of residence was not, however, stipulated as a condition in the two *hibakusha* support laws that were in effect at that time. Therefore, in October of the same year, Son brought a lawsuit against Fukuoka Prefecture which was entrusted the procedure of certificate issuance by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (today's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), demanding that the Japanese authorities withdraw their decision to decline his application.

After six years of legal battles, Son won the "certificate lawsuit" at the Japanese Supreme Court in 1978. Following Son's unprecedented win, in June 1979, the ruling parties of Japan and South Korea concluded an agreement on the issue of Korean *hibakusha*, upon which the two governments initiated the "medical visit" program in 1980 under which Korean *hibakusha* could visit Japan and receive medical treatments.

This program had, however, a number of deficiencies. For example, the longest period that a *hibakusha* could stay in Japan was up to two months, which was insufficient to treat radiation-induced illnesses and injuries. Moreover, it was only those *hibakusha* with treatable conditions who were allowed to participate in the program, and not those with serious conditions or elderly people. Even if one was in a treatable condition, many were unable to take time off from work to visit Japan for treatment, as they needed to take care of their families (Ichiba 2005, 74–75).

To their further disappointment, the possibility of discontinuation of the "medical visit" program arose in 1985. The direct reason for the possible termination was the financial burden on the South Korean government that bore all costs apart from the medical expenses which were borne by the Japanese government (Ichiba 2005, 76; Kim 2010, 4–5). The South Korean government had some other,

psychological motivation for wishing not to continue the program. According to a member of the Korean Victims Association, the then Director General of Medical Administration, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, South Korea, commented that it was a "disgrace" that Korean *hibakusha* had to travel to Japan to receive treatment for their radiation-induced illnesses when South Korea was no longer "backward" in its medical technologies and services (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1985, 3). In 1986, after six years since its commencement, the "medical visit" program was discontinued.<sup>11</sup>

The "medical visit" program, which was one of the consequences of Son Chin-du's "certificate lawsuit," was short-lived. Nevertheless, the lawsuit also brought about some other changes to the Korean *hibakusha* movement. Having witnessed Son's legal challenge eventually bringing the two governments to the negotiating table, the Korean Victims Association began making more direct and drastic demands of the Japanese government. For example, in September 1979, three months after the Japanese and South Korean governments reached the above-mentioned agreement, the Korean Victims Association presented a petition to the Japanese government. In this petition, the association demanded, in addition to the realization of the "medical visit" program, establishment of a special hospital for *hibakusha* in Korea; provision of welfare support for Korean *hibakusha*; enactment of a support law for overseas *hibakusha* living outside Japan; and most importantly, state compensation (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1979a, 7–8). This change in the strategy and contents of their movement shows that they realized that diplomatic negotiation was now a viable option. In fact, when he delivered a public talk in Ōsaka, Japan, in 1982, the then chairperson of the Korean Victims Association Sin Yōng-su said: "The association is no longer the same association as before. [...] From now on, we can demand the Japanese government for free medical treatments and welfare support through official diplomatic routes. We have come as far as the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs [of South Korea] and the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Japan recognize [our status]" (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1982, 5).

Some members of the Korean Victims Association directly negotiated with Japanese authorities. When the ruling parties of Japan and South Korea had negotiations in Seoul in June 1979, the then chairperson and vice-chairperson of the association, Sō Sōk-u and Kang Su-wŏn, met Japanese government official Fujio Tateyama and demanded state compensation for Korean *hibakusha* (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1979a, 2). In another case, the

<sup>11</sup> The total number of Korean *hibakusha* who received medical treatments under this governmental "medical visit" program between 1980 and 1986 was 349 (Ichiba 2005, 76; Kim 2010, 5).

then vice-chairperson of the association Kwak Kwi-hun went to Tokyo in August 1979, and also January and August of 1980. On these occasions, Kwak met with authorities of the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to demand governmental help for Korean *hibakusha* through, among other things, establishment of a specialized hospital. Kwak also asked specifically about the ongoing negotiations between the Japanese and South Korean governments for the "medical visit" program (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1979a, 2; 1979b, 5; 1980, 2).

It is notable that, when they negotiated directly with Japanese government officials, they had in mind that the Japanese government should bear its state responsibility for the sufferings of Korean *hibakusha*, a position that is arguably an expression of their A-bombed nationalism. When Kwak visited the Ministry of Health and Welfare in August 1980, for example, he submitted a petition issued by the association that specifically demanded the Japanese government for relief for Korean *hibakusha* based on the philosophy of state compensation (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1980, 2).

As discussed in the preceding subsection, in its embryonic stage, the Korean *hibakusha* movement was significantly vulnerable, being forced to focus only on calling for financial support to rebuild their basic daily lives. Following Son Chin-du's "certificate lawsuit," they began negotiating directly, however, with the Japanese government. In order to make the negotiations successful, they stressed their unique position as Korean *hibakusha* in relation to the Japanese nation, thus, clearly distinguishing themselves from Japanese *hibakusha*, and emphasized that the Japanese government should bear its state responsibility to help Korean *hibakusha*. It can be argued that, throughout this process, they strengthened their own A-bombed nationalism and brought it to the fore. In this respect, the "medical visit" program was perhaps one of the fruits of Korean *hibakusha*'s own A-bombed nationalism, and it gave them hope for further expansion of support by the Japanese government.

### **4.3 The strengthening of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism and the demand for state compensation**

After the possibility of discontinuation of the "medical visit" program arose, and despite the desperate plea from Korean *hibakusha* for continuation, the "medical visit" program ended in 1986. Following this, the Korean *hibakusha* movement entered a new stage, shifting their demands from medical support to a more ambitious issue—state compensation of a specific amount.

In November 1987, one year after the termination of the "medical visit" program, the Korean Victims Association petitioned the Japanese government for state compensation of 2.3 billion dollars (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o



Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1988, 1–6). The amount of compensation was based on the budget that was allotted to Japanese *hibakusha* at that time, which in 1984 stood at 268,297 Japanese yen for each *hibakusha*. If the same amount were be provided to each of the 23,000 Korean *hibakusha* for a period of 42 years (counting from 1945) and for the next 10 years, the total amount would be 2.3 billion dollars, which shows how the claimed amount was decided upon (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1988, 3).

In 1990, the Korean Victims Association took further direct action against the Japanese government. In March of that year, the association submitted a petition addressed to then Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, demanding an apology and state compensation for Korean *hibakusha* (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990c, 7–8). In the following month, 14 members of the association traveled to Japan and visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to demand state compensation (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990b, 11–13). It was expected that this would lead to negotiations between the Japanese and South Korean governments regarding the issue of Korean *hibakusha* because, in May of the same year, then South Korean President Roh Tae-woo was scheduled to visit Japan.

As discussed earlier, the direct catalyst for Korean *hibakusha* shifting their demand to state compensation was the termination of the “medical visit” program. From their standpoint, considering Japan’s responsibility for their suffering, the Japanese government’s indifference towards Korean *hibakusha* and failure to provide any medical or financial support was unacceptable. As a consequence, the termination of the “medical visit” program led Korean *hibakusha* to strengthen their invocation of Japan’s responsibility, not only for the suffering of Korean *hibakusha*, but also for colonization and the war as a whole. The demand for state compensation was, therefore, indicative of this expanded and strengthened invocation of Japan’s broader responsibility. It can further be argued that their focus on Japan’s responsibility is an expression of their A-bombed nationalism.

In response to their demand for state compensation, however, the Japanese government decided to provide “humanitarian” assistance in the form of 4 billion Japanese yen (Ichiba 2005, 84). The use of this fund was limited to certain areas such as partial assistance with medical expenses, medical checks, and the establishment of a welfare center for Korean *hibakusha*.<sup>12</sup>

The denial of state compensation caused serious disappointment among Korean *hibakusha*. As a sign of protest, one *hibakusha* even attempted to commit suicide by poison in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul (Kankoku no

<sup>12</sup> Based on this plan, the Atomic Bomb Sufferers Welfare Center (합천원폭피해자복지회관; *Hapch’ŏn Wŏnpok P’ihaeja Pokchi Hoegwan*) was opened in Hapch’ŏn-gun, South Kyŏngsang Province, in 1996, which has since been operated by the Korean Red Cross.



Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990c, 4–5). Korean citizens who were not *hibakusha* also raised their voices. Citizen organizations such as the Korea Church Women United (한국교회여성연합회 *Hanguk Kyohoe Yōsōng Yōnhaphoe*), the Korean Anti-Pollution Movement Association (공해추방운동연합 *Konghae Ch'ubang Undong Yōnhap*), and the Korea Anti-Nuclear, Anti-Pollution, and Peace Research Institute (한국반핵반공해평화연구소 *Hanguk Panhaek Pangonghae P'yōnghwa Yōnguso*), severely criticized the Japanese government and submitted a petition demanding compensation for Korean *hibakusha* (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990c, 6–7).

At this stage, as Korean *hibakusha* further propelled the movement, their A-bombed nationalism was strengthened. This was represented by the fact that their demands of the Japanese government shifted from medical support to state compensation of a specific amount of 2.3 billion dollars. At the same time, the influence of their A-bombed nationalism expanded as evidenced in the fact that the demands and protests of Korean *hibakusha* involved other Korean citizens who were not *hibakusha* themselves. While there could be various motivations for their joining, one might be that they, as Korean citizens, were motivated by a general wish to establish the responsibility of Japan, a former colonizer, and seek reparations.

#### 4.4 The subordination to the Japanese bureaucratic system and the restraint of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism

Following the termination of the "medical visit" program, Korean *hibakusha* shifted their primary demand to state compensation of 2.3 billion dollars. The Japanese government did not, however, offer state compensation, but instead, 4 billion yen of "humanitarian" assistance. It caused significant disappointment among Korean *hibakusha*. At the same time, they were concerned that the Japanese government would assume that the 4 billion yen of "humanitarian" assistance would bring the issue of Korean *hibakusha* to an end. They were also concerned with the aging of Korean *hibakusha* who were passing away one by one every year while still being excluded from the Japanese *hibakusha* support system. Consequently, although their ultimate demand had still been state compensation, they shifted their primary demand to a more realistic, feasible one—the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas (including Korean) *hibakusha*. This change in their strategy was their agonizing compromise.

The change in their strategy was expressed in Korean *hibakusha*'s own words. In May 1995, the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings, the Korean Victims Association submitted a petition to the Japanese government with two demands: first, the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to Korean and other overseas *hibakusha*; and second, the complete resolution of the *hibakusha*

issue through state compensation (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1995a, 12–14). Yet, as expressed in the words of *hibakusha* themselves, it is the former, more pragmatic claim that had become primary: "Now that we are getting old and approaching the final days of our lives, we cannot help feeling a sense of impatience and bitter grief and, even putting the issue of compensation aside for the time being, we demand the same degree of assistance be provided to overseas *hibakusha* as to Japanese *hibakusha*" (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1995a, 14).

In October of the same year, the then chairperson of the Korean Victims Association Chōng Sang-sōk traveled to Japan and visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. In meetings, Chōng stressed their difficult decision: "Although we hope for, more than anything, a full resolution of the issue [of Korean *hibakusha*] through postwar compensation, it needs to be considered in relation with other issues that also concern postwar compensation. Therefore, today we ask [the Japanese government] to provide, as soon as possible, Korean *hibakusha* with [financial] support of the same degree as that provided to Japanese *hibakusha*" (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1995b, 2).

The fact that Korean *hibakusha* prioritized the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha* over state compensation was a result of their agonizing compromise. It could also be seen as subordination to the Japanese bureaucratic system because the application of the Japanese law would mean subordinating themselves to the way the Japanese government defines and treats *hibakusha*, whereas state compensation would mean having the Japanese government admit its full state responsibility for their sufferings. This can further be regarded as the restraint of their A-bombed nationalism. In fact, there were some voices from among Korean *hibakusha* criticizing the shift in demands as a "shame" and "disgrace." A leading figure of the Korean Victims Association lamented the dilemma that the members of the association had:

Korean *hibakusha* immigrated to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, against their own will, because of Japan's colonial rule and wartime policies such as forced mobilization, and consequently experienced the atomic bombings. Therefore, we need to hold on to our demand for state compensation. As we demand [the Japanese government for] the same allowances as that for Japanese *hibakusha*, [however,] some criticize it as if we are beggars. This claim is understandable. However, witnessing 60 to 70 *hibakusha* passing away every year, it is great grief that we, *hibakusha* in Korea, receive nothing but suffering from discrimination and would end our lives, while *hibakusha* in Japan are provided with some relief while they are still alive. Our desperate hope is to alleviate this grief,

however slight. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1997, 11–12)

From the mid-1990s, Korean *hibakusha* embarked on a series of lawsuits to realize their aim of the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha*. These *hibakusha* included Kwak Kwi-hun, Yi Kang-nyōng, and Ch'oe Kye-ch'ōl. Their actions were soon joined by those of other overseas *hibakusha*, particularly from the US and Brazil. Supported by Japanese lawyers and citizens, through years of legal battles, these Korean and other overseas *hibakusha* succeeded in removing administrative barriers one by one that had excluded them from benefiting from the Japanese *hibakusha* support system: in 2003, the Hibakusha Certificate became valid outside Japan;<sup>13</sup> in 2004, financial assistance for overseas *hibakusha* was introduced; in 2005, application for and receipt of allowances became possible outside Japan (i.e., traveling to Japan for the procedure became no longer necessary); and in 2008, application for the Hibakusha Certificate became possible outside Japan. Then, in September 2015, the Japanese Supreme Court decreed that the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law be applied to all *hibakusha* regardless of their place of residence.<sup>14</sup>

This section examined the Korean *hibakusha* movement in four stages. In the early stage, the Korean Victims Association was officially established in 1967, but the organization was too vulnerable financially. Consequently, they could at best plead to the South Korean and Japanese governments for help with rebuilding their basic daily lives, pleading that nevertheless turned out to be ineffective and unsuccessful due to the financial and organizational vulnerability of the association. Their movement was far from a stage where they would achieve unity under collective identity as Korean *hibakusha*. They had developed A-bombed nationalism since they were aware of their historical background as Korean *hibakusha*, distinguished from that of Japanese *hibakusha*. Nevertheless, it was not effective as a driving force in their movement at that time.

Their A-bombed nationalism developed notably during the second stage when, in the 1970s, Son Chin-du's "certificate lawsuit" brought changes in the awareness of Korean *hibakusha*. Son brought his lawsuit against Japanese authorities,

<sup>13</sup> In 1974, only a few months after Son's victory in his first trial, the then Ministry of Health and Welfare issued what would later become known as "Circular Notice No. 402" that denied the legal validity of the Hibakusha Certificate once its holder leaves Japan, thus he/she would not be eligible for any support under the *hibakusha* support system.

<sup>14</sup> The 2015 decree is, in theory, applied to all overseas *hibakusha*. However, in reality, those *hibakusha* living in the DPRK (North Korea) are still excluded from the Japanese *hibakusha* support system due to the absence of diplomatic relations between Japan and the DPRK. If North Korean *hibakusha* wish to apply for a Hibakusha Certificate and allowances, they would need to make applications through Japan's overseas diplomatic establishments such as embassies and consulates in their home country which, at present, do not exist in the DPRK.

and earned an unprecedented win at the Japanese Supreme Court in 1978. This development led other Korean *hibakusha* to become more aware of their position as Korean *hibakusha* vis-à-vis the Japanese government, whom they began to approach and negotiate with directly. They had been stressing from the early stage of their movement that their experience of the atomic bombings should be seen against a different historical background from that of Japanese *hibakusha*—a position that is an expression of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism. Nevertheless, Son's "certificate lawsuit" significantly contributed to the development and strengthening of their A-bombed nationalism.

When their movement entered into the next stage, their A-bombed nationalism was further strengthened. After the governmental "medical visit" program, one of the consequences of Son's legal win, terminated in 1986, the Korean Victims Association shifted their demands from those for medical assistance to ones of state compensation of 2.3 billion dollars. The response of the Japanese government was to offer "humanitarian" financial assistance instead of state compensation.

Disappointed and impatient, in the following stage of their movement, Korean *hibakusha* were compelled to make a compromise and unwillingly prioritized a more realistic, feasible demand over state compensation—the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha*. This compromise can be seen as entailing subordination to the Japanese bureaucratic system, conforming themselves to the Japanese government's rules for who does and does not constitute *hibakusha*. This may also represent the restraint of their A-bombed nationalism.

At the same time, however, Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism exerted a significant influence on Japanese citizens. Living in a country where Japanese A-bombed nationalism had been influential, these citizens encountered a different variant of A-bombed nationalism, went through drastic changes in their awareness, and began committing themselves to support activities for Korean *hibakusha*. The effects of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism on Japanese citizens can be observed in the activities of the Japanese Citizens Association, one of the most vigorous and long-lived organizations committed to legal, financial, and social support for Korean *hibakusha*.

## 5. The influence of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism on Japanese citizens

In August 1971, the then chairperson of the Korean Victims Association, Sin Yŏng-su, visited Japan and delivered a public talk in Ōsaka. Sin talked about the severe circumstances of Korean *hibakusha* and their dire need for help. His talk stimulated Japanese citizens and led to the establishment of the Japanese Citizens

Association in December of the same year. Since then, the group has been supporting Korean *hibakusha* through legal actions, negotiations with the Japanese national and local governments, financial assistance, and activities to investigate and record Korean *hibakusha*'s history and disseminate it widely. As of March 2023, it has its headquarters in Toyonaka, and three chapters in Ōsaka, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. (There was a chapter in Tokyo between 1975 and 1980).

The direct catalyst for the establishment of the Japanese Citizens Association was the public talk delivered by Sin, but a more fundamental catalyst was Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism that Japanese citizens perceived in Sin's talk. It brought a drastic change to these Japanese citizens' understanding and perspectives on the issue of Korean *hibakusha* and the history between Korea and Japan, for which they assumed they ought to bear responsibility as former colonizers. Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism has sustained its influence on the members of the Japanese Citizens Association for decades since, even after the restraint of A-bombed nationalism in the mid-1990s when the Korean Victims Association shifted their primary demand from state compensation to the application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha*. On the contrary, Japanese citizens' sense of atonement and responsibility strengthened in response to the restraint: Korean *hibakusha* were compelled to restrain their A-bombed nationalism and subordinate themselves to the Japanese bureaucratic system, making it less likely that the Japanese government would admit its state responsibility, a situation that only fueled criticism from Japanese citizens. In the following, the influence of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism on the Japanese Citizens Association will be analyzed through the group's statements and other texts that appeared in their bulletins.

When the Japanese Citizens Association was established in 1971, its Prospectus of Establishment explicitly indicated that behind this development was the influence of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism which stressed the unique historical background of the former colonized who were victimized in the atomic bombings:

[Korean *hibakusha*] never wished to immigrate to Japan and experience the atomic bombings themselves. Since the colonization [of Korea by Japan] in 1910, they had been deprived of their lands and money by the Office of Governor-General, which was a branch office of Japan, as well as Japanese capitals. [Consequently,] many Koreans were compelled to immigrate to Japan. Towards the end of the Asia-Pacific War in particular, more Koreans were forced to immigrate to Japan as forced laborers, and many of them experienced the atomic bombings. Behind their experience of the bombings was Japan's harsh colonial rule in Korea before the war. We must remember this historical fact before anything else. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1971)

It seems that the South Korean government cannot afford to extend their hands to help Korean *hibakusha* due to their support for victims of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and their families. As a result, although Korean *hibakusha* are suffering with radiation-induced illnesses and cannot work to make a living, they cannot receive any medical or social relief, and are left in such a miserable circumstance. Therefore, the Korean Victims Association led by its chairperson Sin Yŏng-su, who is *hibakusha* himself, began its own activities, investing its money, to conduct investigations, make appeals, and rebuild *hibakusha*'s lives. However, with the lack of interest in and understanding of the atomic bombings and *hibakusha* [in Korean society, they are] left with no support. It is truly embarrassing that it is only a few years ago that we Japanese learned the fact that there are *hibakusha* in Korea, and that they have been living through such hardship. Since then, although [we are] only a small group, we are personally communicating with Korean *hibakusha* and continuing our support for them. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1971)

As stated in this Prospectus, from the very beginning, the members of the Japanese Citizens Association had a clear understanding of the historical background of Korean *hibakusha*'s situation. Their determination to support Korean *hibakusha* was not out of sympathy but out of a sense of atonement that they felt as Japanese citizens. As former colonizers, they felt that they should bear responsibility for Japan's past colonial rule and war aggression which led to Korean people experiencing the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Their understanding and perspective may reflect the fact that at this early stage of the Japanese Citizens Association's activities, the influence of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism can already be observed.

Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism strengthened in the 1970s when Korean *hibakusha* Son Chin-du filed the "certificate lawsuit" and the Korean Victims Association began making direct appeals to the Japanese government. The Japanese Citizens Association recognized this change, stating in 1974 that the movement of Korean *hibakusha* had certainly developed and expanded because the Korean Victims Association "has consolidated its foundation after seven years since its establishment, and they are now ready and firmly determined to achieve relief through their own movement" (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1974, 5).

This strengthening of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism also influenced the actions of the Japanese Citizens Association. Although they had been making appeals to the Japanese government since the early period of their activities, their lobbying became more vigorous. For example, in June 1979 the Japanese Citizens Association was joined by some Christian organizations such as the

YWCA, the women's societies of the United Church of Christ in Japan (日本基督教団), and the Japan Christian Women's Organization (矯風会 *Kyofukai*), in making a joint petition to demand the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pay state compensation to Korean *hibakusha* (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1979a, 2–3). The Japanese Citizens Association also initiated a signature campaign, collecting over 4,000 signatures from across the country to submit to the two ministries, to demand relief for Korean *hibakusha* based on the philosophy of state compensation (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1979b, 5). In September 1980, the Japanese Citizens Association again demanded state compensation for Korean *hibakusha*, this time by sending a petition to seven members of the Committee to Discuss the Basic Issues of the Policy Regarding the Atomic Bomb Survivors that was established in 1979 following Son's legal win to study the Japanese government's policy regarding *hibakusha* (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1981, 8).

The Japanese and South Korean governments initiated the "medical visit" program in 1980, however, they announced its termination in 1986. Following this announcement, the Japanese Citizens Association, together with three other Japanese citizens' groups, demanded the Japanese government continue medical assistance for Korean *hibakusha*:

Despite different backgrounds among us [e.g. activists, physicians, Christians, Buddhists], we share the determination to demand the Japanese government to continue medical assistance for Korean *hibakusha* as they wish. Moreover, we also share the understanding that behind this issue lies Japan's responsibility for its colonial rule in Korea, forced mobilization [of Korean people] of various forms, the atomic bombings, and indifference and abandonment [of them] in the postwar period. Therefore, we are working for Korean *hibakusha* only as an intermediary action until the Japanese government helps Korean *hibakusha* to whom it should commit itself as a means of state compensation based on its war responsibility. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1986, 3–4)

When the Japanese government decided in 1990 to provide Korean *hibakusha* with 4 billion yen of "humanitarian" assistance instead of state compensation, the Japanese Citizens Association expressed their disappointment and offered criticism:

The question is "what this lump-sum financial assistance means." [...] We would welcome the Japanese government's offer if it is meant to be their apology for the previous inability to help them and determination for future support with responsibility. However, if it is meant to be a kind of "payoff" money by which the Japanese government will no longer



listen to Korean *hibakusha*'s voices and take any responsibility for its past colonial rule, then we are strongly opposed to the lump-sum financial assistance because what we demand is, more than anything, state compensation based on Japan's responsibility for its colonial rule and war aggression. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990c, 2–3)

In the above excerpts, it can be observed that the Japanese Citizens Association not only condemned the termination of the "medical visit" program and the offer of "humanitarian" financial assistance, but continued to inquire into the responsibility of the Japanese government for colonization and war aggression.

Their emphasis on Japan's state responsibility became more explicit as the year 1990 approached. Moreover, the bulletins of the Japanese Citizens Association issued around this time often discuss the issue of Korean *hibakusha* together with the issue of wartime Korean workers left in Sakhalin, both of which invoke the issue of Japan's colonial responsibility (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990a, 1–2; 1990d, 1–3). This is partly because the then South Korean President Roh Tae-woo's visit to Japan was scheduled for May 1990: the Japanese citizens as well as Korean *hibakusha* assumed these issues to be thoroughly discussed and duly settled between the Japanese and South Korean governments, and that President Roh's visit was expected to be a catalyst for progress. The strengthening of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism, the contrasting reluctant attitude of the Japanese government, and also the Japanese citizens' eager hope for some progress at the diplomatic level together sustained the influence of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism on these Japanese citizens.

It should also be added that the members of the Japanese Citizens Association strongly considered the issue of their own responsibilities as former colonizers. Indeed, some of their statements made around this time indicate self-criticism:

[Following the financial assistance of 4 billion yen,] we must achieve state compensation, without making this 4 billion yen another 1965 Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Korea [South Korea].<sup>15</sup> We must not forget that the anger of Korean *hibakusha* is directed towards every

<sup>15</sup> When Japan and South Korea normalized their diplomatic relations in 1965, Japan paid a total of 500 million dollars (300 million USD in grants and 200 million USD in loans) to South Korea as economic assistance in place of reparation. This agreement was severely criticized in both countries since it was understood that through this economic assistance, Japan was to be exempted from its responsibility for its colonial rule in Korea, while Korea, which was under military dictatorship led by Park Chung-hee, prioritized the country's economic development over the issue of Japan's colonial responsibility for the suffering of its own people. It should be added that the agreement was concluded amid the tightening tension of the Cold War in the region with South Korea competing with North Korea and the US attempting to consolidate the security alliances with Japan and South Korea.



one of us. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1990d, 13)

[Hearing voices that the issue of Korean *hibakusha* has been settled with the financial assistance of 4 billion yen,] we cannot help feeling our significant responsibility that we must achieve full compensation from the Japanese government. This is because neither the Japanese government nor we ourselves have taken any responsibility yet. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 1991, 1)

From the mid-1990s, the Korean Victims Association shifted their primary demand from state compensation to the full application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha*, and they as well as other overseas *hibakusha*, mostly from the US and Brazil, began bringing lawsuits in Japan. In these legal actions, the Japanese Citizens Association were committed to help with the complicated processes.

The change of strategy around this time on the part of Korean *hibakusha* was due to the meager prospects for the realization of state compensation and a sense of urgency, as more and more Korean *hibakusha* were passing away. This change may be seen as reflecting the restraint of Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism. Nevertheless, the influence of their A-bombed nationalism on Japanese citizens endured, and they continuously questioned both Japan's state responsibility for Korean *hibakusha*'s suffering, and their own responsibility as former colonizers, as expressed in the following statement issued in the final year of the 20th century:

The last atomic bombing anniversaries of this [20th] century have passed. We could not settle the history issue before the new millennium starts. [...] For Korean *hibakusha* who were victimized in the atomic bombings as a result of colonial rule, Japan did not take its state responsibility for the past half century. [...] Actions need to be taken for the Korean *hibakusha* issue to be settled soon and not fade away in the 21st century. We the Japanese Citizens Association, therefore, plan some actions for the issue to be brought to the Japanese Diet this fall. We are also strengthening cooperation and solidarity with Korean *hibakusha* and their children. (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 2000, 1)

In 2015, the Japanese Supreme Court decreed the full application of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law to overseas *hibakusha*. Nevertheless, Korean *hibakusha* and Japanese citizens who have been supporting the Korean victims are still committed to their movement for, among other things, improvement of the details of the specific procedure, and lawsuits for Korean *hibakusha* to obtain the Hibakusha Certificate and receive appropriate allowances. More importantly, they still have not abandoned their ultimate demand for official apologies and

compensation from the Japanese, as well as the US and South Korean, governments (Kankoku no Genbaku Higaisha o Kyūensuru Shimin no Kai 2018, 1; 2019, 1–3; 2021, 6–9). This indicates that Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism has not completely waned, and that the influence that it exerted on Japanese citizens a half century ago still persists firmly.

Work by Lee Misook (2018) may help to explain the reason for this persistency. Lee examines the transnational solidarity and collaboration between Korean and Japanese citizens during the democratization movement in South Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, discussing that it developed through communication and interaction between the citizens of the two countries, particularly through Christian networks and correspondence in journals. She then argues that transnational solidarity is a "recursive process of self-transformation through actual actions during which one interacts with others, develops compassion towards their sufferings [...], and reflects, interprets, and recognizes one's relationship with them (such as mutual dependence and mutual responsibility)" (Lee 2018, 292). According to Lee, the support that Japanese citizens provided to Korean citizens during the democratization movement was given not simply out of compassion, but also out of their sense of responsibility, as Japanese citizens, for the dictatorial administration in South Korea today which they understood as a consequence of Japan's past colonial rule over, and contemporary unequal and exploitative relations with, Korea (Lee 2018, 220–222, 236, 253–259, 263–272).

The self-change on the part of Japanese citizens that Lee discusses is what occurred among the Japanese citizens who support Korean *hibakusha*, and this change was brought about through Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism. Their A-bombed nationalism did not expand or become inclusive itself. Rather, it has always stressed their unique historical background which is in stark contrast to that of Japanese *hibakusha*. Nevertheless, this very emphasis on their uniqueness had brought about changes in the views of the Japanese citizens who have come to realize what the Korean victims' history meant to them, and how they should react to these Koreans' demand for redress—a sense of atonement and responsibility that they came to hold as former colonizers—which then led to their support activities for the former colonized, atomic-bombed victims for over a half century.

The A-bombed nationalism of Japanese *hibakusha* is often criticized for its exclusive nature, particularly in relation to non-Japanese *hibakusha*, although this was not their original intention. However, (A-bombed) nationalism is not necessarily exclusive, and solidarity among the members of a nation (i.e., the in-group) does not always lead to exclusion of non-members (i.e., the out-group). This is exactly what Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism has proved.

## 6. Conclusion

The 1945 atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are often understood in contrasting ways in South Korea and Japan. In Korea, the atomic bombings were the price that Japan paid for its colonial rule over Korea and war aggression; in Japan, the atomic bombings were the unprecedented nuclear tragedy that victimized the Japanese nation. In these narratives, the Japanese were aggressors for Koreans, and victims for the Japanese. It is understandable that their perspectives are conflicting given their historical colonizer-colonized relations.

What is often missing in this debate regarding the atomic bombings, however, is the fact that there were Korean victims in the nuclear attacks who had immigrated, or been mobilized as forced laborers and military personnel, to Japan during the colonial period and consequently experienced the bombings. Korean *hibakusha* have raised the issue of the Japanese government's responsibility for their sufferings and hardship of all kinds caused by the bombings. It is questionable, however, whether they simply accept the understanding, which is widely shared in South Korean society, that the bombings were the price that Japan paid for its war aggression, and that the bombings liberated the Korean nation from Japanese colonial rule. Considering their physical, social, financial, and psychological suffering which lasted for decades into the post-liberation period, it is doubtful that Korean *hibakusha* would agree with these perspectives without, at the very least, serious reservations.

Korean *hibakusha* developed their own A-bombed nationalism which is different from that of Japanese *hibakusha*, and stresses their unique historical background. Based on this A-bombed nationalism, they established their collective identity as Korean *hibakusha* and pushed forward their redress movement. Although it is labeled "nationalism," they do not share the nationalistic view with their compatriots that the bombings liberated the Korean nation from Japanese colonial rule. Moreover, their unique nationalism influenced Japanese citizens who then went through changes of their understanding and awareness, and developed a sense of atonement and responsibility. These changes in the Japanese citizens consequently led to their decades-long commitment to support Korean *hibakusha*. If Korean *hibakusha*'s A-bombed nationalism were as exclusionist as it is often pointed out regarding the Japanese *hibakusha* movement, the collaborative and reconciliatory relationship between Korean *hibakusha* and Japanese citizens would not have developed.

This chapter has analyzed the unique A-bombed nationalism of Korean *hibakusha*, in order to re-examine and deconstruct the exclusionist nature of A-bombed nationalism for which the Japanese *hibakusha* movement is often criticized. The analysis has also examined the influence that their A-bombed nationalism has exerted on Japanese citizens who have consequently been committed to

support Korean *hibakusha* for over a half century. Nationalism, essentially, brings a nation to the fore. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily exclusionist. Rather, as discussed in this chapter, it can provide a lens through which people can examine history and contemporary society from a different, critical perspective. It may further bring about significant inner changes to the members of society who then take actions to build new relationships beyond nations.

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