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## Research Paper

## Does tourism illuminate the darkness of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

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## ABSTRACT

Using Hiroshima and Nagasaki as case studies, this paper explores the extent to which sites of atomic bomb explosions have been memorialized and embedded in tourism promotion for educational purposes. Findings from interviews with government officers and discourse analysis of tourism brochures highlight the complexity of using former atomic bomb sites in the context of contemporary Japan. These findings reveal four themes aligned in two pairs: tourism–education and war–peace. These themes are intertwined with the historical context of the two cities. As a tourist destination, conservative Hiroshima centers on the remembrance of the atomic tragedy and the traditional or nostalgic aspects of Japanese culture, whereas relatively liberal Nagasaki presents itself as a melting pot of cultures. Both cities retain their central role of publicly commemorating the victims of the atomic bomb for the Japanese.

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## 1. Introduction

Memorials to honor heroes and victims of wars and conflicts dot the cultural landscape (Hartmann, 2014) and have become a highly valued tourism commodity (Butler & Suntikul, 2012). In tourism research, death-related tourism is conceptualized as ‘dark tourism’ (Lennon & Foley, 2000), or ‘thanatourism’ (Seaton, 1996), and has been discussed as a subset of heritage tourism related to horror and tragedy (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005). Previous research has shown that the darkness of war heritage sites is influenced by spatial, temporal and ideological factors (Ryan & Kohli, 2006), and that dark sites serve political, educational, entertainment or economic purposes (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005). Tourist interest in death, disaster and atrocity is a growing phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, lifting dark tourism from a special-interest area to mainstream tourism (Lennon & Foley, 2000). Consequently, the commodification of death for popular tourist consumption has become a focus for mainstream tourism providers (Stone, 2013).

From a political or ideological perspective, Kang, Scott, Lee, and Ballantyne (2012) locate dark tourism within a peace paradigm between North and South Korea, and suggest that Eurocentric perspectives of dark tourism are not necessarily applicable to other indigenous Asian perspectives. This argument calls for a paradigm shift in dark tourism research, away from an intensive

focus on European wars, the Holocaust or the American Civil War, to a wider geographical fringe of the Asia Pacific Region. Having transformed from war-torn cities into prosperous urban centers and dark tourism destinations, Hiroshima and Nagasaki offer interesting cases to demonstrate how conflicts of war and peace, tourism and education have been reconciled. Although a number of studies have explored tourism in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Braithwaite & Lee, 2006; Brown, 1996; Cooper, 2006; Lifton, 1967; Siegenthaler, 2002; Wight, 2006; Wilson, 2008), no study has adequately explicated the dualism of education and tourism and the interrelationship between these two purposes, which both serve for memory-making. Another shortcoming of previous studies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki relates to the discussion of tourism development in the two cities, which has often been set apart from historical and political contexts shaping their modern identities (Cooper, 2006, 2007; Siegenthaler, 2002; Wu, Funck, & Hayashi, 2014). This paper therefore examines not only narratives presented in tourist brochures and booklets but also governmental policies, with reference to the historical context dating back to the pre-war period and the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945.

Educational dark tourism stresses the authenticity of the dark tourism experience by emphasizing the story of the people who experienced the tragedy (Cohen, 2011). Despite the significant impact educational tourism may have on social discourse, this field in academia has been underdeveloped. The concept of travel for learning is not only rather complex (Smith & Jenner, 1997) but also potentially entwined with the political arena, which may be of concern to the local and national governments. This connection is particularly apparent in narratives of the constructed public memory of war. In this regard, Japanese historical actions and their

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consequences in the Asia-Pacific Region have kindled debates on how memory of the War in the Pacific has been reconstructed. Externally, Japan's image is that of a country coming to terms with its recent past. Internally, the rewriting of the constitution to allow a 'self-defense' force into a mainstream military force raises concerns among the public about unresolved attitudes and actions of the past (Cooper, 2007). At the same time, Japan has implemented a policy to boost international tourism that raises questions about how the Japanese war experience is presented to tourists. Within the context of contemporary Japan, this research aims to investigate how conflicts between war and peace, education and tourism have been presented in the narratives of the two destinations.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. War-related heritage and dark tourism

Defined as 'the act of travel to sites of death, disaster or the seemingly macabre' (Stone, 2013, p. 307), dark tourism is concerned with tourists' encounters with spaces of death or calamity, horror, atrocity or depravity. While the term denotes the 'touristification' of death and disaster (Foley & Lennon, 1996), a more conceptually robust term — 'thanatourism' — acknowledges that travel to the site of deaths has long been a part of Western religious and philosophical thought, especially in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Seaton, 1996). Since the introduction of the terms 'dark tourism' and 'thanatourism', research into dark tourism practices, processes and principles has expanded.

Research in the field addresses both the supply and demand sides of dark tourism consumption. In examining the supply side of dark tourism, Stone (2006) developed a dark tourism spectrum ranging from the darkest to the lightest aspects. The spectrum integrates elements such as political influence and ideology (Sharpley & Stone, 2009), spatial affinity and chronological distance to the event of death and suffering (Lennon & Foley, 2000), and the purposefulness or non-purposefulness of the supply (Sharpley, 2005). The spectrum contrasts tourism products in terms of education orientation, history centrism, authentic location and lower tourism infrastructure as opposed to entertainment orientation, heritage centrism, inauthentic location and higher tourism infrastructure. However, the relationship between the educational and tourism purposes of the dark place may overlap, as 'the educative elements of sites are accompanied by elements of commodification and a commercial ethic' (Lennon & Foley, 2000, p. 11). Similarly, the boundaries between the primarily educational messages spread by dark site proprietors and the commodification of sites for tourism have become increasingly blurred (Stone & Sharpley, 2008).

The demand side of dark tourism is essentially a behavioral phenomenon, as tourists are motivated to: (1) witness public enactment of death; (2) see the sites of individual or mass deaths; (3) travel to memorials or interment sites, including graveyards, cenotaphs, crypts, and war memorials; (4) see evidence or symbolic representations of death at unconnected sites; and (5) travel for re-enactment or simulation of death (Seaton, 1996). Consuming dark tourism is thus a means of confronting death in modern societies (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Ashworth and Isaac (2015) have noted the shifting perspective of dark tourism from identifying and cataloguing dark sites toward the motivation, experience, and behavior of the tourists in relation to the sites. Importantly, the media have been central to this growth in tourism to dark sites, attractions and exhibitions (Seaton & Lennon, 2004).

When dark sites become branded, death, tragedy, trauma and pain become part of the brand image, as reflected in tourism to

Auschwitz in Poland (Cole, 2000) and war tourism in Vietnam (Schwenkel, 2006). Tragic narratives of death and suffering become a discourse embedded in the tourism framework of the place (Miles, 2002). However, Lennon and Foley (2000) make an important distinction between established memorial sites (e.g. cemeteries and government war memorials) and the physical sites of regimented mass killings such as Auschwitz, in that the former are part of a long human tradition of ritualistic pilgrimage to honor the dead, whereas the latter constitute a modern 'phenomenon' that warrants further scrutiny. This view may trigger discussion on contested narrativization manifested at death-related places such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### 2.2. Pre-war Hiroshima and Nagasaki

In the 19th century, Hiroshima began its development into one of the major cities founded on heavy manufacturing, contributing to the modernization of imperial Japan. Over the course of modern wars, especially the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, a major railway was built between Hiroshima and the port of Ujina, from which soldiers, armaments and food were transported to the continent. By 1945, the Hiroshima Bay area, combined with the naval facilities in Kure, had taken on a strong military character. Subsequently, Hiroshima, filled with educational facilities, grew into a political, economic, intellectual, and traffic hub of the 20th century, leading to the perception of Hiroshima as 'the projection of very Japanese nexus of nostalgia and nationalism' (Jimura, 2012, p. 2). That is, the city's postwar identity rebuilding has significantly reflected strong wartime imperial power, and has manifested a nation-centered perspective.

In contrast, owing to its geographical position, Nagasaki developed with a flavor of foreignness and cultural richness. From the 9th to the 12th centuries, Japan dispatched Japanese envoys who traveled via islands in Nagasaki to Tang Dynasty China. Later, a long-lasting European influence was exerted, beginning with the arrival of a Portuguese trading ship and Christian missionaries. During the national isolation in the 17th to 19th centuries, Nagasaki was the only port open for trade with the Dutch. The European influence was revived in the 19th century with the opening of Japan to the Western world in the Meiji period. Their pre-war history thus created significant differences between Nagasaki and Hiroshima in terms of how the two cities shaped their identity and its collective narrative in relation to tourism movements after the war.

### 2.3. Post-war: Hiroshima and Nagasaki coping and remembering the A-bomb experience

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been domestically and internationally marked as the symbol of the horrendous capability of modern human technology or nuclear power. With the end of the Occupation in 1952, Japanese citizens were exposed to a vast number of 'images and stories about the A-bombings' (Fenrich, 1997, p. 126), which designated Hiroshima and Nagasaki as 'must go to' tourist destinations (Siegenthaler, 2002). Their differing post-war outlooks manifest the ways in which these cities have come to terms with the atomic bomb and its aftermath to articulate their renewed identities.

On August 6th in 1945, Hiroshima was populated by about 280,000 civilians with an additional 48,000 soldiers. Approximately 70,000 died instantly and by the end of 1945 the number of deaths reached 140,000: over half of the entire population of the city (Rhodes, 1995, p. 711). By 1950, recorded bomb-related deaths were 282,000 out of a wartime population of about 440,000, while in the same year Nagasaki had 140,000 deaths out of a wartime population of 270,000 (Selden & Selden, 1989, p. xxi). These figures

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