THE ART OF MOURNING: HIROKO TAKENISHI'S THREE ATOMIC BOMB LITERATURE

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Abstract: This article aims to investigate Hiroko Takenishi's three atomic bomb literary works to explore how the protagonists' identity as hibakusha (survivors of either of the atomic explosion at Hiroshima or Nagasaki in 1945) can be developed with the concept of culture. Each work shows how the protagonists relate to the dead. The art of mourning is strongly related to the protagonists' sense of reconstructing their own identity. As a funeral is one form of culture, the linkage between mourning and culture is reasonable. Furthermore, Takenishi's novel discussed in the final chapter shows how art can mediate between the protagonist and the dead. Although we should not easily conclude that art can be a panacea that gives spiritual healing to hibakusha, we should still recognize the uniqueness of Takenishi's works for its emphasis on culture and art.

I. Introduction

Even a single photograph of the atomic bomb victims or *hibakusha* can eloquently tell us the agony of people who died in infernal situations or who have survived with heavy injury or serious aftereffects from radiation exposure. Such photographs are the record of our unerasable history of violence. Literary works by the writers who experienced the catastrophe also serve as a record. However, they can show the detrimental impact of the atomic bomb and hibakusha's lives on a more dynamic and larger scale with the power of storytelling. Gregory Mason points out that some short stories by *hibakusha* like Tamiki Hara and Yoko Ōta can be analyzed with the concept of "both witness and appropriation." Witness means seeing the catastrophic events, whereas appropriation refers to the process of how *hibakusha* have internalized the meaning of their traumatic experiences (Mason, 2005, 411). Atomic bomb literature by Hiroko Takenishi (1929-), who was exposed to the explosion in Hiroshima when she was fifteen years old. Obviously, it serves more like appropriation than as witness because her three works, "The Rite" (*"Gishiki,"* 1969), "The Crane" ("*Tsuru*," 1975), and *The Festival of Wind and String Instruments* (*Kangensai*, 1978) all focus on how women protagonists survive in the postwar world as *hibakusha* with their unsolved questions about their being.

Notably, "The Rite" and *The Festival of Wind and String Instruments* (after this referred to as *The Festival*) can be logically connected regarding the mourning of the atomic bomb victims. In "The Rite," a young woman protagonist named Aki is always obsessed with the sad fact that many of her friends were anonymously buried in Hiroshima without a funeral. With its fluent stream of consciousness, the narrative leads the reader to the depth of Aki's complex psyche as a *hibakusha* who is always inflicted with an unexplainable empty feeling. In *The Festival*, a middle-aged protagonist Yukiko survived the atomic bomb. She

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experiences some revelation in the last scene and attends the religious festival back in Hiroshima. She also sees her dead parents and friends playing instruments during the ceremony.

Interestingly, "The Crane," a monologue of a protagonist Naoko, connects the two works because the story has a crucial element that Yuki lacks and Yukiko develops; the concept of culture. As a *hibakusha*, Naoko begins to reinterpret her traumatic experience in Hiroshima by recollecting her childhood episodes concerning cranes and a blind master of *koto* (a long Japanese zither with thirteen strings), whom all represent various aspects of culture. Thus, by reading the story about the other two works, we can understand why culture is essential for the protagonists to mourn the dead appropriately.

In this article, the author will delve into the protagonists' spiritual development by relating it with the ceremony of mourning as one form of culture.

II. The Sense of Destruction: "The Rite"

The short story "The Rite" is Takenishi's first literary work. Speaking of what motivated her to write the story, Takenishi reveals that after her exposure to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, she realized that her mind and body were disconnected and began to write to recover a peaceful life. By writing the story, she wanted to reveal the inequality that each person's death had to be accepted without any appropriate mourning (Takenishi, 2008, 196). The story shows the complex psyche of the protagonist Aki, who is inflicted with the traumatic experience but cannot figure out where her strong anger comes from. She wants ceremonies for people who died in the bombing and were anonymously buried without funeral rites. The story describes her disordered thought and recollection when she awakens from the nightmare. It is plotless and has no development and conclusion. However, the story's primary focus is Aki's constant craving for the rites.

In discussing why Aki is thirsty for the rites, it is essential to clarify her problem after the war. It is appropriate that Aki works in a construction company in Tokyo because creation and destruction are essential concepts in defining her problem after the war. When she visits her old friend Tomiko, who repeatedly experiences a miscarriage, Aki notices two little urns on the altar; the urns contain the miscarried babies' ashes. Tomiko's repeated miscarriage is one of the symptoms of the aftereffects of radiation exposure. After leaving Tomiko's house, Aki vomits, inflicted with the persistent image of "the clusters of premature babies descending on her one after another" (Takenishi, 1981, 9). Furthermore, her nightmare is filled with the image of blood-like water and wavy fluid, which endlessly changes its shape, all of which reminds the reader of the process of reproduction and pregnancy. When she wakes up from the nightmare, the narrative poetically shows the dynamic images of living things like growing cactuses, wild animals, and other powerful images. The narrative also shows how Aki is overwhelmed by the concept of reproduction and pregnancy: "No matter how [the creation] is covert and humble, once the life grows up, it must continue to live in the night of the womb and the sea of amniotic fluid until the last month of pregnancy" (Takenishi, 1981, 10). No matter how she has the vivid image of growing lives in her mind, she cannot celebrate them because of the premonition of demolition. Like Tomiko, she might experience a miscarriage in the future.

Although the story does not refer to the word "atomic bomb" and does not describe the detail of the bombing that Aki experienced in Hiroshima, her fear for destruction is related to the bombing that ruined and damaged every living thing. In other words, even after the war, Aki is continually exposed to atrocity, which turns the natural cycle of life and death into the unfruitful repetition of creation and destruction.

As the story's title, "The Rite," shows, Aki's mind is always occupied with the necessity of the ceremonies for her friends who died in the bombing and whose bodies have not been found. Her strong belief that "appropriate rites should follow any death" (Takenishi, 1981, 11) comes from her sorrow and anger for the fact that the friends' life and death could not be dignified. Mentally enumerating the name of her friends who died in the bombing, Aki realizes that she did not see anyone's corpses and that she does not know anyone who can tell her whether they live or not. Although she remembers that many people's ashes were collectively buried in a schoolyard with a simple *sotoba* (a wooden rectangle stick with Sanskrit letters on it to be set up behind one's tombstone to pacify the spirit), Aki still cannot accept her friends' death, as she says "If each person's death should be followed by appropriate funeral, [my friends] might have not yet accomplished their own death" (Takenishi, 1981,13). Her dead friends represent all the dead people who "have not accomplished their own death" because of the atomic bomb. In other words, Aki still cannot find the appropriate way of mourning the dead.

Mourning is an essential part of a funeral, for it dignifies the dead. In his book *Tomurai ron* (*The Theory of Mourning*), Kunimitsu Kawamura delves into why humans need mourning. Presenting the episode of one Japanese prisoner who survived the detention in Siberia, Kawamura reveals how the prisoner resented the fact that other prisoners who died in the detention were anonymously buried and the fact that their grave posts have only numbers that mark them like objects (Kawamura, 2013, 10-12). Asserting that the namelessness of the dead prisoners means that they are cut off from their roots and life history, Kawamura points out that calling the name of the dead is the essence of mourning. Indeed, one's name represents one identity. Because Aki mentally calls the names of her dead friends and remembers how she played with them before the bombing, she mourns the dead. In her mind, they are dignified as persons who have their roots and life history. Even if no funeral was allowed for them, that does not mean that they cannot have their own identity if they are dignified by mourning from someone. Kawamura also suggests that mourning can be perfected even if only one person mourns the dead (Kawamura, 2013, 19). Why, then, is Aki obsessed by the necessity of the ceremonies for them?

Aki's thirst for the rites is deeply rooted in her sense of homelessness. Kawamura clarifies the triangular relationship between the dead, the guest of the funeral, and the host who intermediates between the dead and the guest. According to Kawamura, one of the origins of *tomurai*, a Japanese word for mourning, is "visiting someone." Kawamura says that as *tomurai* also means offerings for the spirit of the dead, the word refers to the process of a funeral. Kawamura further points out that the guests of a funeral can include the friends of the dead and unexpected visitors. The host welcomes such uninvited guests (Kawamura, 2013, 14-7). The place for mourning requires a hospitable relationship between the guest and the host (Kawamura, 2013, 18). In light of

Kawamura's discussion, it should be noted that the sense of being at home is essential in mourning. Although the place of the funeral does not necessarily have to be the dead person's house, if the relationship between guest and host should be hospitable, they need to "feel at home" to mourn and pray for the dead.

Going back to the discussion of the story, Aki's homelessness is evident. When she thinks of the fact that she has not found the bodies of her dead friend, and also realizes that she does not know anyone who tells her how they died: "After that summer, many people began to be silent and disappeared" (Takenishi, 1981, 12). People's silence shows how they were shocked by the catastrophic death of their family and friends. Takenishi also reveals in another essay that from the summer to autumn in 1945, she could not ask anyone whether the family was fine because she was afraid of hearing the answer (Takenishi, 2002, 116-7). Let us consider hospitality deeply related to a home that welcomes any guests. Aki realizes how she is "uninvited" to the home of the dead and its family. Again, we should recognize the atrocity of the atomic bomb, for it also disconnected the hospitable communication and the relationship between people, even their relationship with the dead.

Moreover, Aki cannot see Hiroshima as her place. Asked by Tomiko as to when she went back to her *Kuni*, her homeland, Aki thinks to herself that "I don't know whether the land where friends and I were brought up and attacked by the fire is the place I should go back to" (Takenishi, 1981, 17). Aki does not forget her homeland, but she cannot see the land as her home, for it does not accept her, which is her tragedy. Aki, therefore, does not have an appropriate place and a host, which are essential in mourning. In other words, Aki needs someone who mediates between her and the dead, and she also needs somewhere appropriate for the rites.

In light of the author's discussion above, Aki's craving for the rites shows how she needs a "home" to mourn the dead. Moreover, as a rite is one form of culture, it is possible to interpret Aki's craving for the rite as the craving for culture. This idea makes sense because, as already discussed, Aki's problem is related to the sense of creation and destruction. Every culture has been constructed through people's lives and communication, and once destroyed, it is not easy to retrieve it; the atrocity of the atomic bomb proved that. Although Aki is afraid of the concept of creation for its strong linkage with destruction, she may need something to construct a link at a metaphysical level.

Interestingly, the narrative shows Aki's repeated question on the construction and destruction, which leads her to a more profound question on her being. For example, recollecting the following day after the bombing, she remembers how she was shocked to see a cluster of dead people's bodies and the destroyed city. She further remembers trying to appease her troubled mind by thinking that "this is a temporary state." However, now she wonders, "What did I ever think as an original state at that time? . . . When I concluded that something ended, I might have merely witnessed the end of something temporary" (Takenishi, 1981, 18). That is, the ruined city of Hiroshima has led her to the philosophical question on the confusion between ephemeralness and permanence.

Furthermore, it is notable that even she knows how the city of Hiroshima has been drastically reconstructed, Aki is afraid that "the skyscrapers will collapse at once." Even in Tokyo, she has a premonition that her office, apartment, furniture, road, and even herself will collapse (Takenishi, 1981, 18). Her thought further

leads her to the hypothesis that "As well as life, death is another state of being" (Takenishi, 1981, 19). Notably, she also thinks that "I admit that my thirst for the rites which should have been completed but were omitted has led me to the question of 'what it is to be'" (Takenishi, 1981, 19). Accordingly, although the story describes how Aki needs ceremonies for the dead, she does not need them only for the dead. She needs them for herself to reconstruct the meaning of her being. As culture shapes one's identity, Aki's thirst for rites indicates how she yearns to reconstruct her being destroyed by the catastrophe and her sense of homelessness. Interestingly, the concept of culture is further explored in Takenishi's next story, "The Crane," which will be discussed in the next section.

III. Repossessing Culture: "The Crane"

The previous discussion on "The Rite" has centered on how the atomic bomb has damaged people's lives and their culture alike by analyzing the protagonist's thirst for ceremonies for the dead. In Takenishi's other atomic bomb story, "The Crane," the bombing is still not literally mentioned. Nonetheless, the story discernably places the atomic bomb and culture at opposite extremes, which should be carefully observed. Furthermore, what is impressive about the story is how the narrator, Naoko remembers and admires the blind master of *koto*. The latter has internalized culture and functions as her reference point accepting culture inappropriately.

Although the story does not focus on the problem of mourning, Naoko is no doubt an "uninvited guest" in Hiroshima because she reveals her sense of homelessness. As an employee of a construction company in Tokyo, she sometimes visits Hiroshima, which she left four years after the war. She reveals that although she knows the city much better than any other place, and somehow feels ashamed every time she visits there (Takenishi, 2005, 182). Like Aki, she is a *hibakusha* who was negatively forced to relate with Hiroshima. However, Naoko also honestly shows her affection to the land, which is mixed with her sorrow: "I loved the river and the sea of the land . . . [but] I'm still obsessed with the fact that since the river in Hiroshima washed an enormous number of dead bodies one summer, it has been running thick" (Takenishi, 2005, 182-4). The river she loved reminds her of the catastrophe. Although the tragic memory never eludes her mind, her affinity to the place is one of the impressive elements of the story.

Notably, the story develops culture through Naoko's dream and recollection concerning three types of cranes and the blind master of *koto*. Culture is generally defined as the collective properties of a particular people or society. As many expressions of thought, art, or tradition have been "cultivated" over time, culture cannot be separated from the history of a particular society or nation. Interestingly, the story examines how Naoko begins to internalize the concept of culture as her property.

The episodes of the three types of cranes in the story uniquely show various aspects of a culture. First, in her narration, Naoko recounts the episode of how she was disappointed with the short-necked gray cranes she saw from the train window when she was a girl. Her father told her that the name of the cranes is *nabezuru* (hooded crane). She reveals that the ugly wild birds were "quite different from the crane that I had loved at least until then" (Takenishi, 2005, 179-80). Naoko remembers the episode after seeing a strange dream. She

becomes a flying crane, which she has seen at Sentei, a beautiful Japanese garden in Hiroshima city. Sentei, another name for Shukkeien, had been originally constructed in the Edo era for a *daimyo*, a lord prince. However, it was destroyed by the atomic bomb and was reconstructed after the war. The grand artistic garden is designed to have various landscapes so that people can stroll around seeing a pond, small hills, flower gardens, and other features. Indeed, Sentei represents Japanese culture and art that people have improved, cherished, and maintained through history, which was destroyed by the bombing. As the crane, Naoko saw at Sentei in her childhood was sick, Naoko as the crane in her dream is sick and ugly as well; as she lived in the garden, she had "an unnamed human disease," and her body swelled like an owl with ragged, faded feathers. However, she was initially a *tanchōzuru* (Japanese red-crowned crane).

Generally speaking, *tanchōzuru* is a typical crane image for most Japanese. The crane has a red crown-like pattern at the top of the head, a long white neck with black lines, and an elegant white body with black flight feathers. Pointing out the vivid contrast of red, white, and black, Naoko as the crane now laments that she has lost the beauty of *tanchōzuru*. She confesses how people visiting Sentei saw her coldly and left her in the cage. Naoko, as the crane bitterly says, "I didn't hope to be sick. Are there any cranes ever who want to be said ugly?" (Takenishi, 2005, 188-9). After leaving Sentei, Naoko as the crane flies in the sky, seeing a cluster of bones of dead people below, among which she found the bones of herself. However, she keeps flying, not knowing her destination. These two types of cranes are far different from the elegant crane's common image that most Japanese have in their mind. With its exquisite, mystic appearance, *tanchōzuru* symbolizes long life, so it often appears as an ornamental design in *kimono*, paintings, craftworks, and other artworks. In other words, *tanchōzuru* in Japanese culture is deeply rooted in Japanese aesthetics, which has been constructed over time. The ugly cranes, therefore, seem to be "uncivilized" creatures. Interestingly, however, the story treats her memory of the ugly cranes as essential parts of her personal history. Saying that, as a little girl, she could not see these ugly cranes as cranes at all. Naoko further considers "keeping and changing the things in one's memory has shaped one's present; history" (Takenishi, 2005, 190-1). Since Naoko embraces her ever-changing memory as an essential part that has shaped her identity, the two types of ugly cranes must have an important role in constructing or "cultivating" her history.

Moreover, we should note that Naoko begins to internalize her atomic bomb experience as her history. In her childhood, Naoko treated short-necked gray cranes (*nabezuru*) and diseased *tanchōzuru* in Sentei equally as ugly cranes, which did not appeal to her childish sense. However, when it comes to the sick crane in her dream, it obviously represents another aspect of her history because now the diseased crane is herself and leaves Sentei to see the catastrophic scene after the bombing. More importantly, Naoko, as the sick crane, finds her bones. By seeing the catastrophe and her possible death from the viewpoint of the diseased crane, Naoko finds that the sick crane she saw in Sentei and herself as a *hibakusha* share the same pain both physically and spiritually. Naoko begins to embrace her traumatic experience as an essential part of her history. Furthermore, as her memory of the ugly cranes never eludes her mind, the episodes can be treated as her history, which shaped her identity. More importantly, with her

history, Naoko can develop or refine the concept of culture as her property, which becomes evident in the episode of the third type of crane.

Naoko's internalized concept of culture is further explored through the episode of the third type of crane and the blind master of *koto* that appear in her recollection. These cranes are pretty different from the previous two types because they appear as artistic work. As she continues to fly as the sick crane, Naoko thinks that she will meet someone. Then her viewpoint blurs, and she hears the sound of a *koto*. After seeing this strange dream, Naoko remembers the beautiful *tanchōzuru* painted on a pair of *byōbu* that her blind master of *koto* had in his residence. Painted in Indian ink, the three standing cranes and two flying cranes were placed among an old pine tree. In her narration, Naoko underlines how the sorrow and solitude of these cranes make her detest the ugly cranes she saw in reality. In Japanese culture, a pine tree represents something of the highest quality. Thus, the combination of pine and crane represents supremacy. In this regard, the painted cranes are idealized. It also represents a high culture that Naoko admired as something superior and invaluable as a child.

However, we should pay more attention to the fact that Naoko also remembers the blind master of *koto* who possessed the *byōbu*. In the story, Naoko calls the master *kengyō* and confesses that he taught her and her mother koto a lesson. Until recently, Japan has had an organization called *tōdō*, which protects blind men who excel in art, study, or craft. Tōdō had a caste, among which *kengyō* was placed in the highest rank. Furthermore, status promotion required a large amount of money; becoming *kengyō* was no exception. Thus, by calling the blind master *kengyō*, Naoko implies his talent and his affluence. Moreover, in Japan, *koto* has been traditionally treated as a highly intelligent instrument that should be played by a noble person (Tsuriya, 2018, 14-5). Indeed, the blind master possessed the *byōbu* and had the talent of playing *koto* eloquently tells that he possessed high culture and nobility. In other words, he shared his property with his students by giving them *koto* lessons.

The episode of the blind master and the beautiful cranes painted on his *byōbu* is essential in defining the culture that unites the whole story. In a sense, by recollecting his lesson, Naoko understands *how* the master possessed culture, not *what* he possessed. Naoko reveals that while her mother could play the clear sound out of the instrument and was praised by the master and his wife, she was not good at playing it. She also reveals that she saw the cranes painted on the *byōbu* in the lesson room. Naoko's heavy-handedness and her admiration for the painted cranes mean that she could not possess culture; she was too young to internalize culture and elegance as her property. However, Naoko now understands what the master possessed:

> The master was born blind; he could not see shapes nor colors. However, he had an imperturbable dignity in his full dress of *haori* and *hakama* . . . He once said that as a blind person he could see well. But I was too young to know that he could mean how he pitied people's unhappiness caused by their seeing. (Takenishi, 2005, 192)

The blind master could "see" what other people could not see with his insight. If Naoko as a child, keenly sensed the beauty and solitude of the cranes in the painting, then the master was the person who internalized them. Thus, although

the affluent and talented master deserved the instrument and artwork, he possessed more than that. The master possessed a culture that even the atomic bomb could not destroy. Hence Naoko can repossess it even after "his residence burned down in the summer many years ago" (Takenishi, 2005, 194). In other words, the dead master now begins to function as the source of understanding.

The story implies how traumatic experiences can be internalized as one's history. After recollecting the episodes, Naoko finally says that her admiration for the idealized crane and her intimacy with the ugly cranes will not contradict each other after that (Takenishi, 2005, 194). Akiko Yamada stresses the importance of the reconciliation between physical sense and spirituality in discussing Naoko's spiritual development. Naoko remembers that when she had difficulty wearing *koto* picks in her fingers because of the coldness of the winter, the blind master promptly noticed it and held her fingers one by one in his mouth and put the picks on her fingers. Pointing out that Naoko's long-lasting obsession with the idealized crane and rejection of ugly cranes, in reality, shows how her disastrous experience in Hiroshima had made her reject the integration of her own body and mind. Yamada suggests that the sensual memory helps her accept both physical sense and spirituality. Yamada further discusses that Naoko can "see" the idealized crane.

By narrating her experience of seeing the crane, she can overcome her contradictory feelings about the idealized crane and ugly cranes (Yamada, 2020, 41). Indeed, as a *hibakusha* who experienced the catastrophe and "saw" the extreme agony of other people, Naoko could not accept them as her history. However, with her repossessed insight, she can now feel the sick crane's pain as her pain and can "see" what she was blind to before. In other words, she can internalize her traumatic experience as one of the essential parts of her identity. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that Naoko reconstructs her concept of culture by reinterpreting the episodes of three types of cranes and the blind master. Compared to Aki's obsessive sense of destruction emphasized in "The Rite," "The Crane" obviously focuses on the possibility of reconstructing and repossessing one's own culture through Naoko's recollection and dream. The repossession of culture discussed here is essential in thinking of the culture of mourning described in *The Festival*, which will be further discussed in the final section.

IV. The Festival as Culture: *The Festival of Wind and String Instruments*

Connected with the discussion on the atrocity of the atomic bomb and the idea of reconstructing culture in the previous two chapters, the author's discussion here on the novel *The Festival of Wind and String Instruments* will focus on how the protagonist Yukiko accepts a religious ceremony as one form of mourning. As discussed in the first chapter, the hospitable relationship between guest and host is essential in a ceremony of mourning. Aki longs for rites shows how she wants to possess culture as her property. Furthermore, the author's discussion in the previous section has clarified that culture is manifested in the various kinds of cranes and the blind master. The story suggests how Naoko reconstructs her own culture by reinterpreting the episodes and reencountering the master as her reference point. As *hibakusha*, these protagonists need their own culture never to

be destroyed. Interestingly, the novel further develops culture by describing Yukiko's attitude toward a funeral and a festival.

Putting the middle-aged woman Yukiko at the center of the story, the novel describes how her family, friends, and people in Hiroshima experienced the atomic bomb and how they have survived after the war. Praising the variety of voices and the elastic narrative, free from a limited time span, Akimasa Kanno evaluates the novel as the composition of different elements that finally integrate into one that crystalizes the long, heavy period after the bombing in Hiroshima (Kanno, 1978, 246). The final point that Kanno refers to here is the last scene where Yukiko completes her mourning for the dead, which will be further discussed later in this chapter. Regarding the role of Yukiko in the novel, Kanno argues that despite the fact that she does not appear in some chapters, she is omnipresent because every episode or scene reflects Yukiko's reminiscence of the past or her nostalgia for the lost city of Hiroshima (Kanno, 1978, 246-7). Indeed, as many characters experienced the atomic bomb and lost their family, they share the same past with Yukiko. Thus, Takenishi obviously tries to underline the connection between people rather than disconnection in a unique way by pointing out how they are prepared for appropriate mourning for the dead.

Interestingly, the novel shows how the ceremony can effectively appease the troubled mind of host and guest alike and how it can help them to reconstruct their history. The novel begins with the funeral of Yukiko's mother, Seki. She died of long-lasting cancer caused by atomic bomb exposure. Yukiko and her brothers are the hosts of the ceremony. Although they wanted to conduct the funeral only with their family, they had to "welcome" Satoko, an uninvited guest. Seki's funeral is conducted in a formal Buddhist style in a temple in Tokyo. While a monk chants sutras, people go to the altar one by one to burn incense. Although the funeral is drab and mundane, it is a perfect ceremony. In "The Rite," Aki is sure of her friend Setsuko's coming death and expects that "soon a solemn rite will surround Setsuko" and imagines how her death will be seriously treated in the Buddhist style funeral with a coffin, flower, music, and other ritual objects (Takenishi, 1981, 11). Thus, Seki's funeral is exactly what Aki has in her mind as an ideal ceremony. However, the novel further shows why a formal ceremony is necessary. The monk's monotonous chant makes them recollect their dark memory: how they witnessed the catastrophe of Hiroshima, how Seki had suffered from the pain of cancer, how the Japanese government has been irresponsible to *hibakusha*, and other sufferings and injustices. However, they never say what they think to others; they need to fit themselves into the form for being in the ceremony. Although people do not experience spiritual revelation, Yukiko keenly senses how the ceremony helps living people spiritually. During the funeral, Yukiko suddenly feels vast emptiness. She notices that a ceremony neither resurrects the dead nor perfectly appease living people. However, she also finds that a funeral gives at least temporary repose to living people. The funeral does not seem to be a hospitable ceremony with an uninvited guest and people's bitter memory.

In general, however, a Buddhist-style funeral in Japan is conducted in such an "inhospitable" atmosphere. Nonetheless, when the host and guest follow the order, they *share* the same idea that the dead should be dignified. Furthermore, it is true that by following the form, they can separate themselves from vexing emotions like regret, sorrow, anger, and so on. Indeed, two years after the funeral,

Yukiko thinks that a Buddhist-style funeral that requires periodic complimentary ceremonies after the main ceremony helps people to throw away their negative emotions (Takenishi, 1978, 181). The first chapter of the novel clearly shows how a rite for mourning effectively appeases people's minds by describing the typical Japanese funeral. By attending the ceremony, people share the same culture, which can be interpreted as reconstruction. This constructive action is what Aki needed in the story "The Rite."

In light of the author's discussion so far, Takenishi's works show how the concept of culture is strongly related to one's sense of reconstruction by describing the protagonists' approaches to the dead. For Yukiko, her mother's funeral is perfect, which means she can eventually reconstruct her history as Seki's daughter. In a sense, as a host of the funeral, Yukiko has perfected the culture of mourning. However, we should also note that as a *hibakusha*, Yukiko cannot so easily heal herself with the ceremony. She might have an after effect of the exposure like her mother in the future. As many characters share the atomic bomb experience, they also share the same threat until the end of their lives. Thus, we should not simply conclude that Seki's funeral has given them spiritual transcendence. They continue to face their harsh reality as *hibakusha* even after the ceremony. However, what is unique about the novel is that it further develops the concept of ceremony into a "festival" when Yukiko revisits Itsukushima two years after Seki's funeral.

As the title shows, the novel's climax comes in the last chapter when Yukiko enjoys the Shintō ritual called *Kangensai* (The Festival of Wind and String Instruments) at Itsukushima. The novel describes how Itsukushima has functioned as Yukiko's reference point. Interestingly, while many characters think of Hiroshima as their hometown, Yukiko realizes how Itsukushima represents Hiroshima. Yukiko recollects how she and her family usually spent summer in Itsukushima before the war. Itsukushima, also known as Miyajima, is an island standing at the southwest end of the bay of Hiroshima. It is close to the city of Hiroshima. With its beautiful ocean landscape and nature, Itsukushima has been a sacred place. The entire island was once the object of worship, and no one was allowed to live on it (Takenishi, 2001, 41). Furthermore, the history of the Itsukushima shrine shows how religion can be strongly connected with authority. Constructed in 593 AD, the main sanctuary underwent renovation under the influence of the famous *shōgun* (military leader) Taira no Kiyomori (1118-1181), who sought protection from the goddesses to give his clan lasting prosperity and peace. The shrine became known to the Imperial Court. The islands' sacredness and history can be related to superiority and nobility. However, instead of giving such a brilliant background, the novel describes how Yukiko has cherished the island as a place of special meaning. Interestingly, Yukiko shows disinterest in the island's origin and history.

In the final chapter, when she decides to revisit Itsukushima, the narrative reveals that although the island was once the place of her living like other places of Hiroshima, she has never been eager to study the origin of *Kangensai* (Takenishi, 1978, 193). Furthermore, instead of admiring the island as a sanctuary, she wonders why the place is so important to her: "It has been a long time since she enjoyed the festival for the last time. Yukiko cannot understand that despite her parents have already died; why the sea of Itsukushima represents 'Hiroshima', she wants to see and hears more than any other places"

(Takenishi, 1978, 193). Yukiko has an unexplainable affinity with the island and the sea, indicating how special the place is. In "The Crane," Naoko begins to see the blind master as the cultural high point, which helps her reconstruct her own culture. In the novel, Itsukushima functions as a "home" for Yukiko. The island does not require any knowledge or worship to "feel at home." Thus, as a *hibakusha* who once lost her land, Yukiko needs to revisit Itsukushima to reconstruct her identity.

Finally, the author will clarify how the novel develops a ceremony into a festival. The novel impressively shows how Seki's funeral can be connected to the sacred ritual of Itsukushima. At the end of Seki's funeral, the sound of the monk's beating a drum reminds Yukiko of the religious music played in *Kangensai*. She is astounded by the swelling candlelight, for it makes the coffin seem a houseboat is watching the festival. *Kangensai*, which takes place at sea on the 17th day of the lunar calendar's sixth month, is a holy ceremony to appease gods and is one of the island's most popular festivals. The festival is conducted following the moon's rise and the timing of the tides, and it runs late into the night. Carrying the shrine's holiest object, a decorated boat called *gozabune* departs from the main shrine to visit all the nearby shrines. The priests on *gozabune* play *gagaku* pieces, ancient music of the Imperial court, with various kinds of flute, drum, and *koto*, to appease Gods. In the novel, Yukiko recollects how *gozabune*, on which a watchfire was burning, was followed by numerous houseboats and how the festival "was elegant and energetic, integrating courtly and militarist culture in one form" (Takenishi, 1978, 16). The festival cannot be imaginably connected with the funeral with its brilliance and elegance. However, by showing how the funeral's candle reminds Yukiko of the festival, the novel implies how the ceremony could develop into the festival.

In clarifying how Yukiko experiences the festival as one form of culture, it is essential to know how various Japanese ceremonies have treated guests. Makoto Ueno discusses that *geidō,* performing arts specific to Japan such as *sadō* (tea ceremony), *kadō* (flower arrangement), *kōdō* (incense ceremony), and dance all require hospitality, hence the presence of a guest is the essential part in *geidō* (Ueno, 2021, 206-9). Ueno says that the guest should not always be human; it can be gods. Japanese have traditionally welcomed gods as guests coming from afar. They have treated gods with the best liquor, foods, and performance, such as singing and dancing in the festival (Ueno, 2021, 208-9). *Kangensai* is one of the holy festivals which offers elegant music to gods as guests. The novel's final chapter shows how Yukiko experiences the festival as her mourning ceremony. Revisiting Itsukushima, Yukiko watches *Kangensai* from a houseboat. Fascinated with *gagaku* pieces played on the sea, she notices that one of the players in *gozabune* is her mother Seki. She further finds that other players are all her dead friends in Hiroshima.

> They [her dead mother and friends] were all in white clothes for burial, closing their eyes, subtly smiling. In the dreamy flagrance and elegant music, they seemed to smile, but at the same time, they seemed to cry.Coming to her sense when the music ends, Yukiko turned to the sea and cried to herself, "Mother!" then murmured, "Father." As living persons, her mother, father, and her friends dead in the fire, were never able to elude death. In the brilliance of the festival, Yukiko acutely realized that death would come to her someday. (Takenishi, 1978, 197)

The festival, the place for celebration and appreciation, is open to everyone, even gods. However, for Yukiko, it also functions as the ceremony of mourning, in which she is treated as a guest. Ueno suggests that although performance at a festival is originally offered to gods, it should also be polished as art with the presence of a live audience (Ueno, 2021, 209). Regarding the Japanese attitude toward art, Ueno emphasizes that if people share the joy of art, it will connect them (Ueno, 2021, 222). The authentic music connects Yukiko with the dead. Thus, it would be shortsighted to say that Yukiko sees illusion in the fascinating air of the festival. We should recognize that art *intermediates* between the dead and Yukiko in that an ordinary funeral does not. The triangular relationship of the dead, host, and guest takes a different shape in the festival because of the art. Experiencing the supreme form of culture in the festival, she can mourn the dead deeper. In other words, art helps her have silent communication with the dead.

V. Conclusion

The author has explored the protagonists' attitude toward mourning in Takenishi's three atomic bomb works of literature to clarify how the concept of culture can develop one's sense of reconstruction. By describing Aki's obsession with mourning for the dead, "The Rite" implies how the appropriate ceremonies of funerals are indispensable for her to have a sense of being at home, which would help her reconstruct her own identity. As a funeral is one form of culture, Aki's longing for rites indicates how she needs to repossess her own culture. The following story, "The Crane," in a sense answers the question of how one can repossess culture by showing Naoko's episode concerning cranes and the blind master as the catalyst for her understanding, all of which have transformed her traumatic experience in Hiroshima into her property. By describing how a funeral can be developed into a festival, the Festival's final work shows how Yukiko experiences the religious ceremony as her mourning for the dead and how art can connect her with the dead. The concept of culture has been developed and deepened through the three works.

Takenishi herself says that although many cities in Japan were damaged in the war, Hiroshima's catastrophe was still specific (Takenishi, 2008, 197). Indeed, because *hibakusha* has experienced unexplainable agony for the atomic bomb and many of them still cannot easily express their complex feeling concerning the catastrophe, we should not easily conclude that art can be a panacea. However, we should recognize the uniqueness of Takenishi's three works. They display how protagonists need to reconstruct their hibakusha identity and repossess their own culture. Significantly, the novel is essential in defining Takenishi's unique approach to describing mourning. It shows that art can intermediate between living people and the dead. We should more greatly evaluate Takenishi's works for their uniqueness.

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