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Symbolic urban spaces and the political economy of local collective memory: Comparing Hiroshima and Nagoya



Drawing from theoretical and empirically based literature, as well as the author's own field research, this article compares the relationship between symbolic urban spaces and collective memory in the cities of Nagoya and Hiroshima. Focusing on each city's historic castle, as well as Hiroshima Peace Park, this study argues that the relationship between symbolic spaces and collective memory in Nagoya has created a Foucaultian counter-memory in the city. This counter-memory has been cultivated by what Foucault called a new 'economy' of power and what Giddens termed internal pacification. On the other hand, remembrance in Hiroshima has been socially constructed primarily by a combination of selective amnesia (Simmel), Japanese-style relativism (Reischauer), and Japanese pragmatism derived from its traditionally close-knit communities (Dore). These findings also reconfirm the theories of Maurice Halbwachs, who claimed that collective memory was a localized phenomenon, socially constructed within a particular political-economic context. These conclusions also run contrary to the accepted theories in the Western scholarship that Japanese society is devoid of regional differentiation.

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