

5. ~ A Wish for Everlasting World Peace ~

The Creation of a Children's Peace Memorial Monument in Tokushima, Japan

David Moreton

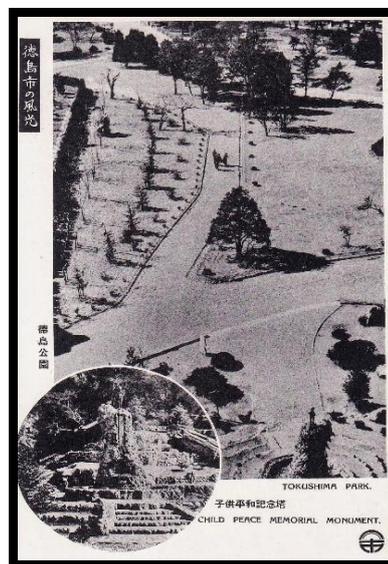
Introduction

Adjacent to the train station in Tokushima city on the island of Shikoku is Tokushima Central Park, which opened in January 1906 in commemoration of Japan winning the Russo-Japanese war (1904~1905). For centuries, the land belonged to the Hachisuka clan who ruled Tokushima from 1585 and was used for the Tokushima castle and surrounding buildings. In September 1905 the land was sold to Tokushima city and plans were made to create a park with five specific areas (Sato, 2012). Since that time the buildings and monuments on the park grounds have changed or disappeared, however, the park is still quite popular as a place to walk or jog, for school excursions, for groups of people to view the cherry blossoms, etc. However, nowadays few seem to show an interest in the various historical artifacts located in the park.

One of these objects is a 4.6-meter rock tower located behind the Tokushima Castle Museum with a one-meter statue of a peeing boy and two pigeons on top. Some signs on or in front of the tower offer clues as to its history and meaning. Near the top a plaque states “Children's Peace Memorial Monument” (子供平和記念塔) and a plaque beneath written in Japanese and English states: “Children love peace. We, the children of Tokushima – hoping for ever-lasting world peace – collected stones and pebbles from all parts of our country and the world – through the hands of our peace-loving little friends – and erected this peace memorial monument. November 3, 1948. Tokushima-ken, Kodomo Minsei-iin.”¹ A white large sign in front of the monument states in Japanese that unique stones and fossils had been sent by elementary and junior high students throughout Japan and America and that two stones had been sent by Emperor Hirohito. However, due to many years of being exposed to rain and wind, the statue was in bad condition until fifty years after it was first constructed it was repaired in 1995 and the two pigeon statues that had been previously stolen were replaced. Also in front of

¹ Inscription in Japanese: 子供はいつも平和を愛しますます平和国家として新しい出発をした私達日本の子供は世界の平和がいつまでも続くようにと願って平和を愛する子供達によびかけ、世界の各地から小石を集めて、この子供の平和記念塔をつくりました。昭和二十三年十一月三日 徳島子供民生委員

the memorial is a stone pillar with the inscription of “Commemoration of a visit by the Emperor” (行幸記念) on the front and “Imperial Visit – March 26, 1950. Children's Society of Tokushima city”(行幸・昭和二十五年三月二十六日・徳島市子供民生委員会) on the back.



(Left: photo taken by the author 2019)

(Right: undated postcard produced by Tokushima city.

Caption: Tokushima park– Child Peace Memorial Monument)

Peace monuments in Japan

After World War II Japan erected numerous monuments for peace around the country and the world. For example, a peace tower built in Osaka in 1948 was “dedicated to peace and the victims of World War II” (“Peace Tower” p9). In 1955, “an impressive statue symbolic of the earnest desire for everlasting world peace” was unveiled in Nagasaki (“Symbol of Peace”), and “a large plastic monument symbolizing international friendship and peace” was completed in Kobe (“Symbol of Friendship, Peace” p5). Some of these monuments were built overseas. For example, in 1957 a peace monument was unveiled on Wake Island and it had two small metal plates with messages of “May Peace Prevail on the Waters of the Pacific Forever” and “May the Souls of the War Dead Rest in Peace” (“Japan Peace Monuments Planned for Wake Island” p3). Then a 100-foot-high peace memorial “similar to Ryozen Kannon in Kyoto”² was planned for Guam in 1966. Guam’s governor Manuel Guerrero said, “he hoped the project was only the beginning of a lasting peace in this part of this world” (“Guam Memorial Project Launched” p60; “High on Monuments” p17). However, the planned project was rejected by the

² A 24m-high state of Kannon built by businessman Hirosuke Ishikawa in 1955 in Higashiyama, Kyoto in memory of Japanese soldiers and Allied military personnel who died during World War II.

United States government and never built.

One problem in creating such monuments was how to raise money to build them. It is said that one prefecture in Japan vied with another as to how much money it could afford to spend on a memorial and how large and imposing it could make it (“High on Monuments”). Thus fund-collecting was conducted at the local, prefectural, and/or national level. Some monuments like Ryozen Kannon were financed entirely by a single Japanese businessperson. However, one unique example of fund-raising is of local children who collected money for the creation of a peace monument, the “Children's Peace Tower” in Shiba Park, Minato-ku, Tokyo.

From 1947 many elementary and junior high school children around Japan saved their allowances and collected old magazines and newspapers for recycling money gathering a total to get a total of about 120,000 yen. This was added to 280,000 yen donated from various people to reach the budget of 400,000 yen to create the monument (Oomori, p44-45). On this monument is a plaque with a message in Japanese describing the wish of the children in building this tower: “We, the boys and girls of Japan, who suffered so severely from the war, took a long time to build this tower as a sign of our unavoidable desire for eternal peace among mankind. August 15, 1954” - (English translation). Unfortunately, the inscription in English on the monument is not a translation of the Japanese. The Japanese reads, “Children's Peace Tower For Lasting Peace In The World – Presented by primary and middle school children (1947~1954) with the assistance of the Peace Association (Jido Heiwa Kyokai) in the city of Tokyo on the occasion of the Children's Peace Monument (August 15, 1954)” (“Ippan Zaidan Hojin”).

The Children's Peace Memorial Monument in Tokushima is an extremely rare example of a postwar monument in Japan. While similar to the Peace Tower in Tokyo in which children gathered money from other children in Japan for its creation, it differs in that certain individuals in the occupation forces stationed in Tokushima after the war, offered their support and cooperation and reached out to the children not only in the United States, but also around the world to contribute rocks to make this important monument. This international cooperation to work toward everlasting world peace is not seen in the creation of any other monument in Japan.

This paper will present for the first time in English details of the construction of this peace monument in Tokushima, explain how people from around the world contributed to this project, describe the Emperor's visit to the monument in 1950 and the history of the monument up to recent times.

Creation of the “Children's Society” (Kodomo Minsei-iin)

Hiraoka Kuniichi (平岡国市, 1897~1985) created the Kodomo Minsei-iin in Tokushima shortly after World War II in order to get children involved in helping one another, helping society, and to promote peace. In 1897, Hiraoka was born in a small village in Tokushima prefecture as the eldest son of seven children, but due to a weak body and a stuttering problem he did not go to middle school. However, he loved to read and thought that someday that he would like to become a politician. In 1916 two of his sisters died from tuberculosis. In 1925, he moved to Tokyo and started working temporarily at the Tokyo District Court and later in other departments. He also attended the political science department of Waseda University first as an auditing student, but later as a regular student. In 1929 he was appointed as a government clerk, but in August of that same year was diagnosed with tuberculosis, so returned to Tokushima and spent seven years trying to overcome the illness. When he was better, he began looking for a job and in 1936, thanks to the introduction of a friend, was hired to be a clerk in the Tokyo Prefectural Social Affairs Division. He transferred to the new Military Assistance Division in 1937 and was able to learn about the many people who were suffering due to the war. Four years later, he returned to Tokushima to fill a vacancy as the Tokushima Prefectural Social Business Director. In this position he travelled around the prefecture to instruct local social officials to help families in need or to meet with local leaders to create a social welfare office.

On July 4th, 1945 Tokushima was bombed by American planes and most of the city was destroyed. A month later when the war was declared over, Hiraoka worked diligently to improve the local situation, but in March 1946 was asked to retire due to changes in the number of personnel working at the prefecture (Sakano 12~16). It is said that after witnessing the sight of vagrant children in front of Tokushima train station and on the black market he was convinced that if children took the initiative in tackling local issues, the spirit of peace and welfare would eventually take root (“Tokushima Social Welfare Council”). And so, in July 1946, he created the first “Children's Society” (Kodomo Minsei-iin) at Nishioka elementary school in Miyoshi city in the western part of Tokushima prefecture. Some activities that the children participated in were going to school as a group, cleaning shrines, supporting families with disabled children, raising funds, and helping during the farming season. Within a few years, every elementary and junior high school in the prefecture had established a children's welfare committee, and by 1955 about 10,000 people were participating as members in the prefecture (“Tokushima Social Welfare Council”). The slogan for the society was “Let's make all our friends happy” and the society focused on five things:

1. Let's get along with all of our friends.
2. Let's help anyone in need.
3. Let's always follow what our teacher teaches.
4. Let's study hard.
5. Let's become someone who can help the world.

Hiraoka thought that it was especially important to connect children with peace and believed that the real restoration of Japan must start with children. In the fall of 1946, he shared this idea with the top people in the Tokushima Prefectural Education Group and the Prefectural Teachers' Union and received their approval. He also received support from personnel with the Tokushima Military Government such as Major Lowell Culbertson, but more so from the Head of the Welfare Division, Edward E. Mueller, who travelled around the prefecture in his jeep to attend meetings of the children's society.

So, from the wish of everlasting world peace and that the achievement of world peace begins with children, the idea of constructing a children's peace memorial monument emerged. It is said that about 1,000 letters of invitation were sent to every prefecture in Japan and about 1,000 letters to foreign countries through each country's Red Cross asking children to contribute rocks, but due to the delay in the peace settlement after World War II, only stones from the United States were received. None came from other countries despite Ripley's Believe or Not claiming in 1953 that "The International Memorial – a stone monument at Tokushima, Japan – consists of rocks from every state in the U.S and most of the countries of the world" ("Ripley's – Believe or Not). In Japan, however, hundreds of thousands of small stones were collected from Hokkaido to Kyushu, and there were many tearful letters from children (Hiraoka 39). Another unexpected problem was that there was a shortage of materials, for example, cement to combine these pebbles because of rationing, and copper to make statues was not available, but with the cooperation of the occupation forces and a carver in Tokushima these problems were solved. (Kasho 15).

Clues as to what was sent from the United States to Tokushima appear in only a couple of newspaper articles. For example, the Courier-Post newspaper on February 19, 1948 states that a woman in Oaklyn, New Jersey received a letter from the governor of Tokushima, Japan, thanking her for the interest she and her son had in preparing the way for a peace memorial bridge (32). She sent a two-pound stone to her son, who was stationed in Tokushima. The article continues with,

The governor explained that the span, to be known as the Kodomo Minsei Memorial

Peace Bridge, was started at the suggestion of Giffin³ [her son] and other soldiers of the unit in Tokushima. The soldiers, who represent all sections of the United States, each sent home for a piece of rock, which is typical in their part of their country. The governor declared that thanks to their efforts it is possible to “build a bridge which will stand as a lasting reminder of peace between our two countries”, however, it is unclear why the word “bridge” was used instead of “tower.” An article from another newspaper, the Press Democrat, on May 27, 1948 states, “A piece of petrified wood sent by the Junior Red Cross to the Tokushima Prefecture Peace Tower in Japan has been received and the Japanese Junior Red Cross has sent its thanks to the American students” (“European H.S Sent Chest by Jr. Red Cross”).

Contribution of Edward E. Mueller

After World War II, the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces were assigned to the Shikoku and Chugoku regions of Japan to assist the local governments and people rebuild their educational and welfare systems. Among the American and Australian staff assigned to Tokushima was Edward E. Mueller who “was a [public] welfare officer with the Military Government at Tokushima, Shikoku Island from June 1947 to July 1948” (“Japs Thanks Mueller For Mental Clinic”). The welfare team acted “in an advisory and supervisory capacity to the prefectural government in such matters as public safety, sanitation, public works, personal and public health, education and the various other administrative duties.” Mueller is said to have “organized the first mental hygiene clinic and mental hygiene society in the Japanese empire” and trained many people in welfare techniques (“Warrens Lieutenant Serves in Japan Post”).

Mueller describes the activities of the Kodomo Minsei-iin, which he calls “Children Social Workers.” He states that this group only existed in Tokushima prefecture, that the group consisted of children between the ages of 8 to 14 and their activities similar in some respects to the Junior Red Cross and Boy and Girl Scouts (Mueller 1954, 81). One article claims that “When the author was in Japan with the Military Government, he developed an organization called the Kodomo Minsei-iin (lit. Trans. “Children Social Workers)”, but it is clear that Hiraoka Kuniichi created this group in 1946 before Mueller’s arrival to Tokushima.

Mueller also played an important role in the creation of the children's peace memorial monument. A newspaper article states that “One of [Mueller’s] projects with the children of Tokushima was the erection of a peace monument in the city park. Bronze and brass originally collected for the war effort was used to cast the figure of a boy. The figure stands on a pile of

³ “Giffin is assistant of the public welfare officer in Tokushima.”

stones. Some were collected by the children and others were sent from all parts of the world.” (“Warrens Lieutenant Serves in Japan Post”).

Mueller’s work in Tokushima was very much appreciated by the governor of Tokushima. In fact, when Mueller was to leave Tokushima the governor gave him a letter, which in part stated, “Your suggestions were very effective for Kodomo Minsei-iin to build up the Peace Memorial...I would like to give this letter of appreciation to you in commendation of your strenuous effort and good contribution to an epoch of welfare activities in Tokushima” (Mueller, 1950. 301). Mueller was also presented with a presidential citation and commendations that have never been previously given to a non-Japanese (“Public Welfare in Ohio Today”).

Completion of the tower and Emperor’s visit

Only a year after the plan to build the peace memorial monument was initiated an unveiling event was held on November 3, 1948. The ceremony began at 9:40am and despite it being a rainy day, more than 120 children from numerous schools around Tokushima prefectures and many government representatives attended. A local grade six student gave the opening remarks, a brass band played, another student pulled down the curtain in front of the monument, and some other students washed the plaque with water. The ceremony was over in about an hour. It is said that due to the cooperation of children around Japan and America that 600 unique rocks had been collected including fossils from the famous St. Helena, which were sent by the Junior Red Cross in Santa Rosa in California (“Akisame kemuruchu ni Saint Helena...”).

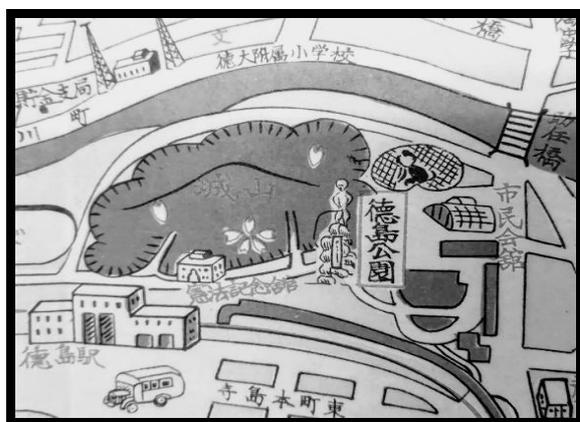
Visit by the Emperor in 1950

Between 1946 and 1954 Emperor Hirohito (1901~1989) participated on imperial tours to each prefecture in Japan to “strengthen himself in the new role of a ‘man of the people’” and to “emphasize contact with the Japanese people” (“Hirohito Planning Tour”). During that period, he also visited the four prefectures of Shikoku. On March 12, 1950 he left the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and travelled to Kyoto where he stayed the night. Then on March 13, 1950 he went to Ujino train station in Okayama prefecture and took a public ferry to the port in Takamatsu city. People were anxiously awaiting his arrival and it is said that “A National Railway Corp. brass band blared a welcome exceeded only in volume by the roaring ‘banzais’ from the chilled crowd” (“Hirohito Starts Tour of Shikoku Island”). From there he travelled counterclockwise around the island and visited Matsuyama city on March 18, Kochi city on March 22, and then

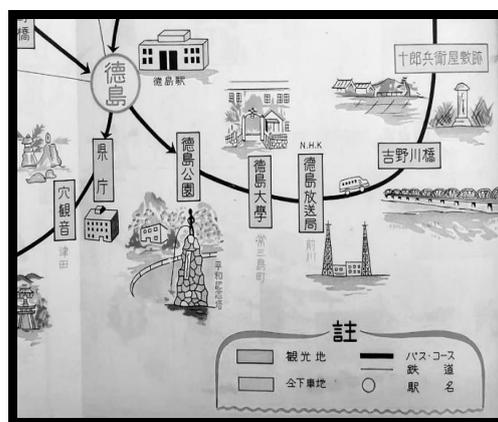
arrived in Tokushima city on March 26 (“Showa Tenno”). From 3:10pm that afternoon he visited the Children's Peace Monument for approximately fifteen minutes (“Nishi no maru hougeiba gochaku”). More than four thousand people attended this short visit including almost a thousand elementary school children. One grade five student, Yamamoto Taeko (age 12), gave a short speech and pointed out to the Emperor the rocks on the monument that he and his younger brother, Prince Hitachi Masahito (1935~) had contributed. She added that this monument is a symbol of love and that she intends to work to better all people and the world. One spectator, who was so impressed by the interaction between the Emperor and Taeko and the construction of this monument, said, “I believe that the prayer for world peace contained in the Children's Peace Monument, which was handed down by the boys and girls of Tokushima Prefecture, should without any degree of shame be shown to the world” (Hagi 2).

Decay and repairs

Three years later the local government in Tokushima was busy involved in improving the infrastructure, creating parks, enlarging the main train station as well as promoting the city and prefecture to Japan and the world. That same year Tokushima prefecture published a 170-page book entitled, “Tokushima Tourism and Industries” (徳島懸の観光と産業) in which various sightseeing sites in Tokushima city including Tokushima park are described, but the Children's Peace Monument is described in only a few lines. For example, the book states that the monument was made of pebbles for peace donated by countries around the world and that the monument stands as a symbol of an independent Japan (21). The monument is included on two city maps (p23, p.77) as a “sightseeing spot” and is recommended as a place to see when participating on a tour of Tokushima. (see photos)



Left: page 23



Right: page 77

However, despite the fanfare of the Emperor's visit to the monument in 1950 and the inclusion of it as a place to see, upkeep of the monument did not seem to be a high priority among city officials. One local citizen asked the local government, "why is the water not flowing from the statue and why have the rocks that had been collected from around Japan been left to turn a rusty colour?" The response from the city water department was that it costs money to keep the water flowing and so it has been turned off and the reason for the rusty colour was not due to a plumbing problem, but due to salt in the disinfectant. Another city official was more specific and said that it costs 100,000 yen per year for the water, an amount that the tourism bureau could not afford. One suggestion was to turn the water off during the weekdays and evenings and turn it on Sundays and holidays when tourists and others are in the park ("Nantoka naranu ka").

Seven years later, in May 1960, the local television company very briefly mentioned the monument as part of a news clip related to a sketch contest for children. Children from around the city submitted sketches of objects in the park and a boy from Fukushima elementary school won the with his picture of the bronze peeing boy statue on top of the Children's Peace Monument ("Shikoku Hoso"). For the next thirty years, there is no mention of the monument in the local newspaper or in other media. Finally, in 1994, the Tokushima newspaper reported on the awful condition of the monument and statue and stated that the water pipe had broken, and water was spraying all over. The reporter said that this monument was built with the wish for world peace and appealed to the city that something be done ("Chokoku no aru fukei"). As a result, the following year, the boy statue was removed for repairs and in August 1995 it and the two pigeons, that had mysteriously disappeared sometime after it was erected, were restored ("Tokushima Chuo Koen"). On November 3rd, 2005, a commemorative event was held at the monument and a symposium held at Shikoku University Koryu Plaza, close to Tokushima train station. Suzuki (Yamamoto) Taeko, who had spoken with the Emperor Hirohito when he visited the monument in 1950, gave a speech at the monument and a small group of children sang some songs ("Rekishi furikaeri shikiten ya shinpo"). In 2011, another article from the Tokushima newspaper describes the history of the creation of the monument. It states that Kitani Yoshihiro (木谷宜弘) (1929~2012) who took over the Kodomo Minsei-iin after Hiraoka said that sixty-six years have passed since the end of World War II and there are few people who know the meaning and origins of the Children's Peace Memorial Monument ("Fusen he no negai kesshu"). Another concerned long-time resident and educator in Tokushima was Iihara Kazuo (飯原一夫) (1929~), who said in 2015 that "Peace and children are irreplaceable. We must take care of the [children] ... and just like the existence of the monument has been forgotten, the awareness of

the importance of peace and the Constitution has been diminishing.” He asked the readers, “Have you forgotten the desire to promote peace?” (“Taisetsu na mono o tou”). Since 2015 there has not been any mention of this monument in the local media and the existence of this important monument as well as the reason why it was made has faded from people's minds.

Future

Peace towers, monuments, and statues built after World War II can be found throughout Japan. Some like the ones in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are well-known and well-visited. Others were built but torn down. Some that were to have been built, never were. However, the Children's Peace Memorial Monument in Tokushima, which was completed only three years after the end of World War II, is a rare example of a monument for everlasting world peace because it was mostly based on the efforts of children, not adults. However, if it were not for the efforts of Hiraoka Kuniichi and the formation of the Kodomo Minsei-iin, as well as for the cooperation of several key figures in the occupation forces in Tokushima as well as Junior Red Cross groups in America etc., this monument would not have been completed. This small monument, which stands rather unnoticed and unknown to many, is clearly an important reminder of cooperation, international friendship, and world peace.

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