

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor x Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Yuki Takenaka

Thesis title: Culture of Commemoration: Unravelling Official and Unofficial Memories of Hiroshima in Contemporary Japan

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Maria -Alina Asavei

Affiliation: IMS, Charles University

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Methodology	x <input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Thesis structure	x <input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

The relationship between the research proposal and the thesis is generally consistent and the three changes are clearly explained and appropriate.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	B
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	B
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	B
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	C
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	A

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):

Yuki's thesis contributes to the academic knowledge production of Hiroshima's public memory in contemporary Japan. The approach is innovative, especially because the thesis does not only focus on the official memory culture (as usually done) but also on the vernacular (unofficial) cultural renderings of this traumatic past. The theoretical framework is very well chosen for a topic addressing the culture of commemoration of Hiroshima in contemporary Japan. The engagement with the main theories of public memory, collective memory, memory culture, official-vernacular memory cultures is appropriate and convincing for a MA thesis. The next step would have been to engage with the "grey zone" of public memory making by zooming-in on the Japanese memory culture of those who do not neatly fit the reducing history's cast of characters in dichotomic categories (e.g., "victims" versus

“perpetrators”). The secondary literature is adequately described and applied yet not critically evaluated.

The empirical research is generally sound and appropriate for the task. The methods are appropriately selected and motivated but there are minor flaws in their application to the concrete sources. Conclusion summarizes the finding partially and suggests new directions for further research on the topic. However, the suggestions for further research are not detailed or convincing enough.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	A
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	C
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	B
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	B
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	D
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	B
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	B

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

From a formal point of view the thesis reads well and it is consistent in terms of citation style.

The structure and academic use of terminology is well presented.

The main problem pertains to the analysis of the sources and incomplete argumentative engagement. The literature employed is accurately presented, yet not critically engaged with. The argument is not fully unpacked although it is clear where the thesis is heading to. There are 2 paragraphs that might raise concerns: For example, on page 22 there is a large block of text where discourse analysis method is described and the lines starting with “The former centres on the formal and written aspects...” and ending with “with a certain period of time” (cc. 6 lines) are marked as similar with the source but there are no quotation marks. However, the source is clearly indicated. It looks more as an instance of sloppiness than intentional plagiarism. The second paragraph is on page 37 (It starts with “The NPT a foundational treaty.....” and ends with “The United Kingdom, France and China.” This looks like verbatim also the source is indicated above. The rest of the thesis, and especially the analysis of the sources does not reveal any problems.

4. OVERALL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis’s strengths and weaknesses):

Strengths:

The theoretical framework is well chosen and the focus on the two main facets of public memory (official and vernacular) is suitable to answer the research questions.

The thematic selection of the cultural memory enactments is appropriate.

The structure of the thesis is good enough and the argument is easy to follow

The perpetrator related mnemonic instantiations are dully acknowledged moving the discussion beyond the common approaches of the topic from a victimhood standpoint exclusively.

The writing style is clear, and the academic tone is appropriate.

The selection of primary sources serves well the aim of the thesis and substantiate the argument

Weakness

The analysis of the sources is not nuanced enough. At points it reads as a description than as an analytical engagement.

There is some sloppiness in paraphrasing at least two big paragraphs (mentioned above).

While the first research question is generally well answered in the thesis (the discourse of victimhood constructed around the “never again” moral and political imperatives), the second research question is less engaged with (or at least not as convincingly).

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	Are there any “grey zones” in-between the official and vernacular commemorations of Hiroshima? For example, are there “semi-official” instances of this memory culture? If yes, what exactly underpinned the quasi-official commemorations?
5.2	You mention in the conclusions that “quantitative research” would provide more “generalized data.” What do you mean by “generalized data” and what exactly quantitative research can illuminate about the public memory of Hiroshima that the qualitative one obliterates or is unable to reveal?
5.3	Are there any nuances in Japanese discourses about cultural memory that are not fully conveyed in other languages (e.g., in English)?
5.4	Can you elaborate on relationships between Japan as both victim and perpetrator narratives as they appear materialized in the vernacular culture of commemoration of Hiroshima? What about those who do not neatly fit any of the two roles? Are there any references to the “grey zone” of transitional justice in the vernacular memories you analyze (e.g., complicity to violence, bystanders)?

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

x The reviewer is familiar with the thesis'URKUND score.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	Overall similarity index is 22. After checking out the thesis it reveals that there is no intentional plagiarism. The relatively high score is due to the large blocks of quotes and
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sloppy paraphrase. There are 2 paragraphs that might raise concerns: For example, on page 22 there is a large block of text where discourse analysis method is described and the lines starting with “The former centres on the formal and written aspects...” and ending with “with a certain period of time” (cc. 6 lines) are marked as similar with the source but there are no quotation marks. However, the source is clearly indicated. It looks more as an instance of sloppiness than intentional plagiarism. The second paragraph is on page 37 (It starts with “The NPT a foundational treaty.....” and ends with “The United Kingdom, France and China.” This looks like verbatim also the source is indicated above. The rest of the thesis, and especially the analysis of the sources does not reveal any problems.

6. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- A excellent
- B very good (above average but with some weaknesses)
- C good (average with some important weaknesses)
- D satisfactory (below average with significant weaknesses)
- E marginal pass (meeting minimal requirements)
- F not recommended for defence

If the mark is an “F”, please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

Date: 11.09.2024

Signature:

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer’s behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.