

Generational Transmission of War Trauma and Approaches to Reconciliation and Restoration: Report on “Remembering Nanjing 2011” and the Assignment We Bear

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1. Introduction

As a clinical psychotherapist, it has been 20 some years since I began to get involved in trauma related to violence to women and children, including abuse, sexual and domestic violence. In parallel, I have become involved in activities designed to prevent such incidents. A result of this work has been discovering that there are trauma arisen by communities and history. My interest in the war derives from my personal consciousness toward the issue, but as a matter of fact, there is no mistaking that it has continuously affected my work.

Details of the course of this issue can be seen in my past publications (Muramoto 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010). Related to this work, I was able to meet Mr. Armand Volkas, through Mr. Haruhiko Murakawa, in July 2007, and HWH (Healing the Wounds of History). I also attended the “International Conference of the 70th Anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre” in Nanjing in November 2007. At that conference, I met Professor Lianhong Zhang and students from Nanjing Normal University and together, we have been holding trial workshops regarding the massacre thanks to the cooperation of Chinese and Japanese members. This workshop was conducted at “Remembering Nanjing 2009” in October 2009 and “Remembering Nanjing 2011” in October 2011. Here, the author reports on the latter event.

The 2011 workshop was a seminar funded with a grant from “Based on Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B): Development History/Peace Education Program in East Asia for the Post War Generations of the Second Sino-Japan War.” from

the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Mr. Armand Volkas acted as the facilitator, with Mr. Eddie Yu and Ms. Aya Kasai as both supporters and interpreters. Additionally, we had the cooperation of Playback Friends from China and Playback AZ in Japan to offer more developed program. Other guests, such as Murakawa (Physical Education), Mr. Yuichi Kanemaru (History of the Relationship between Japan and China) and Mr. Hiroshi Oda (Cultural Anthropology) gave the seminar a wider interdisciplinary view. I feel it meant something that the seminar was held with a grant from the Japanese government, even if the meaning was a modest one. A detailed data analysis will be held later, but in this paper, I'd like to look back at the seminar, summarize what happened and relate my observations at this time.

2. Deepened ties and a progression of “steps toward reconciliation”

Healing the Wounds of History has developed “6 steps toward reconciliation”: 1) Breaking the taboo against “enemies” speaking to each other, 2) Humanizing each other through sharing of personal stories, 3) Realizing the potential perpetrator in all of us, 4) Experiencing deep grief, 5) Taking steps towards healing personal and collective wounds using creative and experiential methods, and 6) Transforming historical trauma into constructive action and service. According to Mr. Volkas, continuous practice of HWH will allow these steps to progress even when the participants change. It was the second workshop using this HWH practice, and there were several core members who were participating for the third time, the initial meeting being a 2007 international conference with participants from both China and Japan. Due to this, I could truly feel the trust they had in continuing to use this process and that the ties among some of the individuals surpassed national boundaries.

It became apparent during the 2009 seminar that participating in this type of workshop means “breaking the taboo against ‘enemies’ speaking to each other”. Whether Chinese or Japanese, the participants took this first step once they decided to participate in this seminar, but this step contains the process of coming and going. Also, Chinese and Japanese decide to take this step in different ways. Likewise,

participating in this kind of workshop promotes the process of “humanizing each other through the sharing of personal stories”. To the Chinese, the fact that there are Japanese people participating in this kind of seminars and trying to face the past leads them to realize that they cannot consider the Japanese people as a group. Conversely, it carries a significant meaning to the Japanese when Chinese people warmly accept them when they fight the guilt and fear of revisiting the events of Nanjing. Naturally, the sharing of individual stories in a face to face relationship will deepen it, which is the point of this step. At this seminar, there were participants from various backgrounds, such as Chinese living in Hong Kong or other overseas countries and foreign residents in Japan. This also helped the participants realize that this issue is far more complicated than the simplistic China versus Japan viewpoint.

However, regarding “the potential perpetrator within all of us” seems to require a progression of steps. Within the configuration of China versus Japan over the Nanjing Massacre, the perpetrators and victims were clearly set at once, so it has been easy to fix the identities of both parties. On the Japanese side, males in particular are easier to identify themselves with the perpetrators, and because of that, they show resistance. The “The potential perpetrator within” shown by Japanese women started from the realization that the “right wing voice” had been taken up by herself. There were 2 impressive episodes during the 2011 event that occurred while sharing stories with Chinese men. One man had a story about his friend, who went to the U.S. to study and ended up volunteering to join the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Chinese man cynically insisted, “In war, if you don’t shoot the enemy, they will shoot you. If I had been there, I would have done the same thing.” Another offered words of consolation saying, “Don’t cry any more. Everybody does bad things depending on the situation. Not only the Japanese. I think I would, too.” Both of them were admitting that humans have the capability of becoming savage wrongdoers when they are under extreme stress. The big assignment here will be how much we can progress together from that point. Personally, I think it is not “therefore, I had no choice” but “therefore, we should not do things that could lead to putting ourselves in any extreme position”.

It is indispensable to have a certain depth of understanding the emotional level regarding Nanjing Massacre as an “experience of deep sorrow”. The depth increases as one listens to the episodes related by the participants, especially from survivors, and it seems that the grief reaches its peak at the symbolic memorial ceremony. “Experiencing deep grief” has several different dimensions, such as grief for what happened to the victims, grief for the occurrence of such cruelty, and grief for witnessing the cruelty and evil which human beings are capable of. With professionals leading the way in using methods of deepening ties and artwork, descendants of both perpetrators and victims came closer than they had in the previous event and could face up to the difficult task of opening their minds and sharing their real feelings by going one step beyond courteous and constrained interaction. Behind many of the Chinese and Japanese voices are the hidden cries of the wounded child. Mr. Volkas encouraged participants to express this by setting a “Chinese Chair and Japanese Chair” on the stage, and sometimes using doubling (backing up using the voice of the therapist). I think the descendants of both the perpetrators and victims could feel deep sympathy and sadness at a physical level. Since it was quite possible for a Japanese to sit on the Chinese chair and vice versa, we encouraged participants to take the other side’s position and use it to examine their own position.

“Taking steps towards healing personal and collective wounds using creative and experiential methods” was promoted in the last part of the program and the step of “transforming historical trauma into constructive action and service” would be expressed in the statements of future determination. I expect to receive some reports of commitment regarding peace activities from participants as time goes by, as they begin active involvement in this project as interpreters and through translations.

3. The power of art to help expression

One of the biggest features of HWH is their usage of drama therapy/expressive arts therapy. Mr. Volkas says drama therapy includes the elements of a game and games have a lot of amiable settlement functions in cross cultural conflicts. Taking

the playful mind into serious theme like war can soften long inherited group trauma while drawing out a “child’s” ego-state from the participants. Then, a “parentified child” is partly released, helping to return their lost purity. Volkas added that creating artworks and social activities from traumatic images, memory and inherited messages is the strongest methods available to overcome trauma (Volkas, 2010).

The effectiveness of drama therapy/expressive arts therapy has been referred to by many participants since the last seminar. Because historical wounds remain at a deep physical level in one’s consciousness and language, there is a limit to settling them intellectually. It can be pointed out that sublimation is promoted by expressing the experience through bodies and works using drama and art, allowing one to understand that the wounds of history are not abstract general data but very personal in nature, and one can avoid secondary wounds by expressing themselves through energetic body movement.

Twice at this seminar, we conducted the “Chinese Chair and Japanese Chair” exercise, setting those two chairs in a confrontational position. By using the one side of the chair (the social face and voice on the surface) and the other side (a fragile child’s voice) separately, the differences of each position were clarified, making it possible to express various voices simultaneously from both sides. Such staging becomes a device not to express personal voices but to safely express the collective voice polyphonically.

At this time, we re-introduced the playback theater. I have already talked about the earlier encounter with playback theater (Muramoto, 2009), but its form is that one of the participants introduces his/her experience as a teller, led by the conductor (moderator), which is played by actors/actresses who improvise to share it with all the participants. Because we had “playback” actors participating in this 4 day seminar, we could utilize the playback theater method with the cooperation of Chinese Playback Friends and Japanese Playback AZ. It was a large group workshop with 40 people, but the presence of playfully minded playback people helped us widen the participants’ expressions.

The night of the third day, the playback theater was opened to the public. The

last step of HWH is “Transforming historical trauma into constructive action and service”. A small group of intensive workshop participants played the roles of emotional leaders in a community and held public events in the form of ceremonies and performances to try to extend their ripple effect on society. Again, I clearly came to feel that art is a powerful tool for social reform. Many participants were probably not aware, but because this was the first time Chinese and Japanese playback actors were collaborating together, they enthusiastically and repeatedly conducted rehearsals each night after all the workshops directed by Mr. Volkas. It’s a sight I cannot forget. I would like to add that I was truly and deeply moved by the fact that this seminar could be made possible with the cooperation and support of professionals from both countries.

4. The receding and current wars

On the third night, “Remembering Nanjing 2011: Playback Theater in Collaboration with Japan and China” was held. 4 stories were shared and performed on the stage, but all were stories of three generations beyond the Nanjing Massacre itself. Looking at the entire flow of the HWH workshop, it can be considered that they had already worked on the stories of the first two generations, and through the 3 day process, we could finally express the third generation stories, the main characters of this workshop, taking the leading roles.

What we saw was the inseparable relationship between both countries, who had overcome the past victims - perpetrator relationship, in the forms of lovers, exchange students and economic relationships. There were young people who may have been bewildered, depressed or lost, but decided to reach out and proceed hand in hand. I was touched, feeling that, “The time has changed. Generational change has occurred.” But on the other hand, I started to deeply think about how we can successfully relay the memory of Nanjing to latter generations.

On the first day of the workshop, many participants answered “no” to the question, “Have you directly listened to the story of the war?” in the Socio Circle. We can see many Japanese youngsters who don’t have that experience, but it was notable

at this time that there were young Chinese with the same lack of knowledge. Chinese participants at previous seminars were either born around Nanjing or students living in Nanjing, but this time, there were many Chinese of various backgrounds, some coming from more distant locations. There were even some who stated they didn't know much about the massacre. The young Chinese student I happened to encounter and spoke with at the memorial ceremony said, "I barely know about the incident." He said he will attend a Japanese college next year. Shortly after he began talking with us, he quickly reacted to the announcement, "Next, the Chinese group will go to mourn," and rushed to join the Chinese group.

At these 2007, 2009 and 2011 Nanjing Seminars, we have had some wonderful opportunities to listen to stories from survivors. There they were in front of us, some of those who had miraculously survived unimaginably fierce experiences. Their presence itself was a very powerful force. Learning from them was much more powerful than learning these things at the massacre memorial museums and through literature. Furthermore, they seem to be the least reluctant to speak with the Japanese about their experiences. With their great breadth of mind, participants have been encouraged to be led to see the dark side. However, we have to remind ourselves about the many survivors who never want to see a Japanese person again. Sadly, the number of survivors decreases every year. It should always be remembered that these seminars have been supported through the power of these survivors. Can we continue to hold them in this form for the next 5, 10, or even 20 years?

On the other hand, as I mentioned above, the story about how one participant's friend joined in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan was shocking. Certainly, when we look at the entire world, disputes and wars have been a constant around the world. That means many young people are drawn onto the battlefields (and I have even known young children pulled onto such fields), but I have always seen these as ongoing incidents somewhere far away. At the very least, I have never heard about Japanese exchange students applying to join the American military and go to war. It could be simply defined as a lack of imagination, but through the exchange we've had in these three seminars, now I feel great affection for the Chinese youngsters

who participated, and when one of them said, “If I were on a battlefield, I would shoot the enemy,” I was shocked as if I had imagined seeing my son holding a gun in battle.

We have received some criticism saying, “Massacres did not only happen in Nanjing”. That is totally correct. However, considering there is a limit to the matters we can handle at one time, Nanjing becomes an absolute one because it can be seen to have a meaning that surpasses the framework. It is a huge challenge to make sure that Nanjing is remembered not in relative form but in a way that sets the overall flow of the picture.

5. Gender and wars

Another issue that was a strong factor was the gender issue. Through the work of the “Chinese Chair and Japanese Chair,” I heard the voices of “men” (actually, I should say this doesn’t mean actual males, but “something masculine” or “male as a category”) both from the Chinese and Japanese sides. For example, from the Chinese side, it was, “You trampled our country before. That means you are ready to do it again. You always attack us. We will protect our country. We must become strong.” “We are forever trying to remember our past history and its pain. We have been hurt not only by Japan but also by other countries in the modern era. Do you want to review such a painful history over and over? Do you think we want to get hurt repeatedly?” “We feel insulted. The ties between China and Japan have become more and more close, but not good enough yet.” In addition, a scene in which a group of Chinese shook their fists high in the air and swore to be strong, though it was explained to us to be traditional, was quite shocking.

When Ms. Aya Kasai and I held an experiential HWH workshop with about 200 people at the International Expressive Psychotherapy Symposium in Suzhou in August 2011, during the socio circle, one Chinese man spoke out to others, “Those who want to know why 300,000 Chinese were killed without even resisting!” and another addressed, “Those who think we should become much stronger!” Many Chinese people joined the circle they were in. Although we didn’t understand the language,

I felt we were being overwhelmed by the energy of their mortification, anger, sadness and bitterness. The seminar chairperson, Mr. Yasuhiro Yamataka stated in his closing address, “Compared to China, Japan is a small country without many natural resources. You are already superior to Japan in land size, population and economy. You are already strong enough. You don’t have to be stronger anymore. Please be gentle from now on.” I don’t know how the Chinese men felt when hearing these words from a Japanese man who was seen as a wise, old person in this conference organization, but I will remember this incident.

On the other hand, voices from the Japanese side are very similar. From outside of the chair, “What are you doing? Why are you apologizing about such an old event? That’s not relevant. We lost the war, but we lost to the Americans, not the Chinese. We have been economically successful and you became number one.” From the backside of the chair were, “I want to stop this. I don’t want to show my weakness, I just want to hide inside the armor I created. I don’t want to accept anything. I don’t want to face the truth. I don’t want other people to find out I’m a weak person that is being used. I don’t want to be looked down at by others. I don’t want others to see my true, weak figure.” “Our life cannot exist without China. Most Japanese products are manufactured in China. Many foods are imported from China. We won’t be able to live. Chinese know these things and put pressure on us. In 100 years, Japan may become a Chinese colony. I’m scared.”

This, as the social face of the chair, comes out like this. “You can’t economically beat the Japanese. That’s why you are tearfully accusing us. Your measures are dirty. Now, economics is the real battlefield. You use our techniques. Because you use Japanese techniques in all of your operations, your economy has been developed well. You are so afraid, so you lie.” “Enough. You call yourself victims while at the same time increasing your military power, making carrier vessels. You lie in this chaotic condition and try to possess the entire South China Sea. The same with the Spratly Islands. All you want is to expand your interests. If you keep doing that, we’ll think about developing nuclear weapon, too.”

While directly facing this obsessiveness with strength, which is common on

both the Chinese and Japanese sides, and a fragileness hidden behind the feeling, I realized the composition of the female versus male situation separate from the China versus Japan one. I remembered the “Memory of Gentle Grandpa”, a story once played out in the workshop. “Men” were trying to be strong to protect those precious to them, including grandchildren, children, wives and parents. Conversely, the most effective way of defeating the other side was to hurt their precious ones. The so called Rape of Nanjing is not so far from the issues of wartime rape and comfort women. The more the women request protection and strength from men, the more difficult it is for men to change the script. Men fight in wars, but women sit behind them. I felt an urge to run over to the Japanese chair and say, “You don’t have to be that strong. You don’t have to protect us. You don’t have to do everything by yourselves. So, first, apologize for the wrongdoing. Then let’s think about what we should do in the future together.”

The international seminar held in 2007 was led by older men and women. In the memorial ceremony, we rued and apologized for what our ancestors did to the Chinese people, and I experienced a somewhat healing feeling as a woman watching Japanese men tearfully apologizing. As a psychotherapist, I have listened to many cases of abused and raped children and women. At the ceremony, I realized how much these cases hurt me as a woman. In the 2009 seminar, there were no Japanese men except for some students I took with me. To be honest, I was very sorry and felt sad although it was unavoidable at the time. In the seminar, we did an exercise called “human sculpture”, in which I played the role of Chinese woman who had been raped. After the play acting, we participants held each other and cried. We felt connected as women, no matter the boundary between our countries.

In 2000, The Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery was held in Tokyo as various nationalities’ women united to bring attention to the “Comfort Women” system conducted by the Japanese military during the war. At the tribunal, there were men who tried to use the “man in a category” argument. Military systems increase the violence of soldiers and make them do inhumane acts by actively using all kinds of prejudicial power relationships includ-

ing sexual and racial discrimination. In truth, this seminar couldn't be established by men or women alone. In that sense, it gives me hope that several Japanese men joined us in 2011.

6. Sense of helplessness and taking action

One of the keywords we extracted is "sense of helplessness". In particular, the Japanese side expressed a sense of helplessness regarding right wingers and the government, which irritated the Chinese side. "I want to do something, but there are so few things I can do. I'm frustrated and feel like crying." "It would be nice if it were possible, but I don't think it is. I really want to represent Japan and apologize to the Chinese people, but I can't be that representative." "Being Japanese, I really feel sorry. I feel helpless when you refer to Japanese government. I'm trying, but I'm helpless." Those statements of helplessness came out one after another, and the Chinese side replied, "Japan has not changed even after you come here and apologize. Why you don't try to change your own country? Before you come and apologize, make your country change." "You really cannot change Japan? I'd like to say a little cruel thing to you here. We have an old saying, 'A father's sin must be compensated by his son.' You must accept what your ancestors did. That's your fate. Do you really understand what your ancestors did in China? How cruel they were? It was the cruelty that no human should endure!"

After that, the Japanese side said, "Right wingers' voices stand out in Japan, but there are school teachers who have been trying to educate young people and conduct their own research. But, even they become to hate Chinese and stop their activities. Please work and support us at some level." At that point, the Chinese side said, "There are people who try to change themselves in China. Please trust us." "We shouldn't run away from history, but I hope the picture of the depressed Chinese and apologetic Japanese will be gone someday. Don't give up." This session was held to discuss Mr. Volkas's question, "What are necessary for both parties?" The Chinese side said, "We want to walk to the same place together", which led to participants shaking hands and warmly embracing each other, a feeling of friendship and ties

before closing the event.

In this program, we took a step forward from the sense of helplessness. We could see the participants' determination to start doing what they could. Even though, it may take a little more time to get into the last step of HWH, "Transforming historical trauma into constructive action and service."

7. Identity

Finally, I would like to talk about identity. Work regarding identity held at HWH always starts with one saying "My name is (name). I'm (nationality)," and state what he/she feels. When we try to do it in Japan or China, most people feel uncomfortable and state the names of their hometowns instead of their nationality. It is accepted once, but then the participants are encouraged to state their nationalities. By the end, some kind of insight is brought out, but this has been making me think about what identity is. The example Mr. Volkas modeled as an introduction was this: "My name is Armando Volkas. I am a Jew. When I say this, I think about what kind of image you have about it. Even when I'm in my own country, I sometimes feel like I am a target, but in this country, I feel like a blank slate."

"My name is Armando Volkas. I am an American. I feel more complex. I feel ashamed of the actions America is involved in around the world."

"My name is Armando Volkas. I'm French. I was born in France. I have French citizenship. But there are so many American TV programs running in my head that I cannot become completely French."

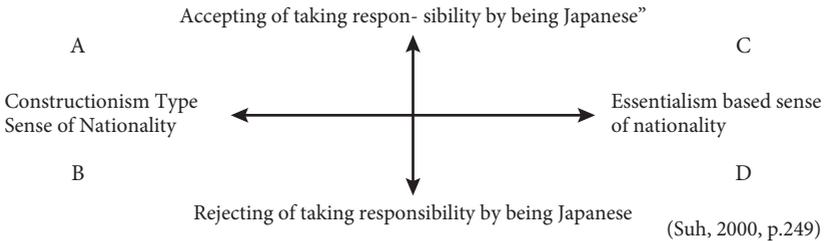
For Americans, who come from various backgrounds, a sentence like "I'm (nationality)" is relatively familiar, and therefore, they are conscious about their identities regarding nationality and race whether they like it or not. In comparison, although there are people with various backgrounds in this country, Japanese people live their lives obliviously of it, as if there were no such matter. Therefore, "I'm Japanese," is an unfamiliar expression to us and people are confused by it at first. Because some people are afraid of being misunderstood as being right wingers, "Identity as a Japanese" often receives a dismissive reaction.

Allow me to introduce my own process. The first time I visited Nanjing in 2007, I was also confused about how to define the relationship between myself and my country. There are many aspects to Japanese culture I like, but I had objections and was critical about the way the Japanese government and people had been, so I viewed my own country from a certain distance. Therefore, I couldn't immediately identify my nation nor with my Japanese nationality. Within this context, I couldn't say "I'm sorry" to the Chinese people right away. The change suddenly hit me at the Nanjing Massacre Museum. When I saw the picture of young Japanese soldiers brightly smiling next to a pile of naked women, I had to realize, "These are our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. Those people came back to a devastated Japan, rebuilt the country and we were born there." That was the moment I had to accept my being Japanese, someone who ate foods that came from that land, was educated and grew up there. From that point, a path of shame, anger and sad emotion opened up, and couldn't help feeling apologetic towards the Chinese as a person of Japanese nationality.

Participants who realized their Japanese identity for the first time at the 2009 seminar put it as "the feeling of having responsibility by being Japanese". "The sins of wrongdoing in the past war do not stand only in the past. There are those first generation, second generation and third generation people who are still suffering from the wounds of the war. We can't look away from their pain." They also added that "carrying the responsibility of perpetration" is not a fearful thing but they "rather feel it part of solidly standing in today's world and the current life we are part of."

Now, I'd like to look at an argument made regarding one's "responsibility as being Japanese" organized by Professor Kyungsik Suh(2000). Mr. Xu put the right wing sense of nationality, including the "Yasukuni sect" on the far right (here, it is "essentialism based on sense of nationality") and nation-state type (non-) sense of nationality on the far left (here, it is "constructionism type sense of nationality") on the horizontal axis. As it is not enough to organize current confused responsibility theory only with the horizontal axis, the "accepting of taking responsibility by being Japanese" and the "rejecting of taking responsibility" are put on the vertical axis (see

the figure below).



D is the ultra-right wing, such as the “Yasukuni sect”, which includes “Liberal Historical Standpoint” groups and Mr. Yoshinori Kobayashi. C is the “Global Standard Nationalism” which approves the necessity of compensation in a limited extent with a pragmatic view. Professor Norihiro Kato takes this position. B is the theory of criticizing nations from a constructionism view. Professor Chizuko Ueno represents this as stating theory of irresponsibility from relativizing the nation. Our destination is A.

Mr. Volkas said one of HWH’s goals is to “recognize and deconstruct cultural and national identity” (2009). Because quite a few Japanese don’t recognize “cultural and national identity,” we must construct it before taking it apart. As international politics function in national units, nobody can escape from the responsibility carried by the nation you belong to unless you are refugees. When people are not trained to recognize and dissect their “cultural and national identity” and remain unconscious about it, it should not be surprising that extreme nationalism comes out when triggered by an incident. In our latest workshop, recognition of identity and its dissection by listening to each person’s voice repeatedly occurred in the two chair workshop.

I had an opportunity to listen to psychiatrist Dr. Michael Ermann’s lecture, “Germans Who Remember Childhood Days in War Time” in October. He started his lecture with this line, “It is especially honorable to me that I can speak German, the language spoken by Goethe, Kant, Freud, Einstein and Planck, here in Japan.

However, I have to add the fact with shame that German is the language also spoken by Hitler and Goebbels, who were the worst political criminals in the 20th century.” I wonder if there are any Japanese who would start his/her lecture with this kind of statement. Mr. Ermann is German, born in what is today Poland, and had the experience of being persecuted by the German military. It was very interesting that he noted his identity not as a German or German national but as a “person who speaks German”.

8. Last words

Though it is not sufficient, I looked back at the seminar held in 2011. I can see various issues requiring solving in future. The biggest issue we have not yet solved is how we should define our work. The title of the seminar was “Remembering Nanjing 2011 – Generational Transmission of War Trauma and Exploration of the Possibilities for Reconciliation,” which we set as a temporary title. Is this peace education or psychotherapy? What we are striving for is work beyond disciplines including history, education, psychology and art, and there is no name for it yet.

In 2009, issues of interpretation and facilitation for the event were set out. Regarding interpreting, I think we have made good improvement by bringing in simultaneous interpreters. Regarding the facilitation, we have been working to have the programs run under the cooperation of both Chinese and Japanese people with Mr. Volkas as the leader, with the cooperation of the playback groups. The presence of Mr. Volkas as a third party was crucial. However, it will become necessary to train facilitators to continue and spread this method in the future.

An international symposium is scheduled for April 2012, in which involved people will get together in Kyoto, try to sort out these issues and find direction for our future activities. Just as our 2011 seminar materialized through cooperative work over boundaries, I sincerely hope the research and peace activities will continue in a non-nationality driven manner.

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