The Red Wind

March 10th, 1945 Tokyo Fire Bombings

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í Japónsku Máli og Menningu

Brynjólfur M. Brynjólfsson

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Abstract

The Great Tokyo Fire Raid during the World War II (WWII) is a period in American and Japanese history that is seldom given due attention. The purpose of this essay is to research and gain an understanding of how such an incident took place, what citizens of Japan had to go through, and how come the memory of this event seem so negligible. In doing so, the lives of Japanese citizens residing in the Tokyo before and after the attack on Tokyo will be analyzed, and information on the events that lead to this attack will be examined. This thesis will then go on to examine events on the fateful day, followed by a chapter on the recovery of Japan. In the final chapter the recovery of Tokyo and how this is remembered still this day today. Lastly, the results of the questionnaire will be analyzed and used to see how much knowledge there still exists regarding this event 71 years later.
# Table of Contents

- Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 6
- Methodology .......................................................................................................................................... 7
- America: Prior to March 10<sup>th</sup> .................................................................................................. 8
- Japan: Prior to March 10<sup>th</sup> ....................................................................................................... 14
- The Fateful Day .................................................................................................................................... 19
- The Memory .......................................................................................................................................... 21
- Recent Changes .................................................................................................................................... 26
- Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 36
- Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................... 38
- Appendix ........................................................................................................................................... 41
Introduction

With air bombings going on in Syria and the Middle East, one cannot help but to look back in world history and wonder if humanity has learned nothing from its past experiences. How many civilians have to suffer before we start to understand that war and killings are not the way to go about peace? Looking back 70 years, to 1945, when the climax of the World War II and the constant fighting was going on between the USA and Japan, one tries to imagine how horrible it must have been for those who were involved. One such example is the often overlooked air raids in Japan most frequently overshadowed by the first use of atomic bombs against civilians which took place in the latter half of 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Once USA got a footing in the Pacific in 1944 after fighting the Japanese for the islands south of Japan, planning began as to how to win Japan without a land invasion, they decided strategic, tactical bombing was the conclusion reached. It was not until March 10th that the USA felt finally that they were getting results. That was the day of the Great Tokyo Fire Raid.

The aim of this Thesis is to delve into preceding events, events and experiences concurrent to the fateful night that sent the citizens of Tokyo out of their hometown as well as the aftermath. Why is such little public information about this event available, how comes there seems to be very little knowledge about this as well as sources available? Has anything been done to commemorate the people lost in those attacks and to hold their memory alive?
Methodology

To gain a better perspective of this thesis an online survey was conducted among Facebook users with the hope to gain an understanding of the common knowledge and the opinion concerning the Tokyo Fire Bombings. The research was conducted on the Internet in English, advertised on social media and the number of valid samples used is 100. The questionnaire was available for 24 hours. The questionnaire is displayed in the Appendix with graphs and charts.

Anyone could answer the survey in hopes of obtaining a broader view on how well, if at all, the public is informed on the Japanese Fire Bombings on March 10th. Firstly, the respondents were asked basic questions regarding their age, whether they were Japanese or not and then their highest educational level. After answering those questions, the respondents moved on to questions that touched on the matter of fire bombings.

In total there were 100 respondents, 50 were Japanese, and 50 were non-Japanese. The respondents were of 10 different nationalities. Educational levels ranged from high school to master degree or higher, although most of the participants had an educational level of high school or bachelor degree.
America: Prior to March 10th

United States (U. S.) involvement in World War II started with 7th December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese military forces. The U.S. had before that maintained formal neutrality as made official by U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt in his 1937 "Quarantine Speech". President of the USA, Franklin D. Roosevelt, criticized the practice of civilian bombing sharply in 1939, when war erupted in Europe, declaring:

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities which have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years, which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenseless men, women and children has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity. (Roosevelt, 1937)

Japan and U. S. fought for ground in the Pacific starting early 1942 and with the Battle of Midway in June 1942, where the U. S. defeated Japan at sea, U. S. began to make its move to defeat Japan whatever the cost. The Battle of Midway was the decisive moment because the U. S. had seized the advantage. The Allies\(^1\) came up with a strategy referred to as Island hopping or the skipping the islands that had no strategic purpose. Because to the U. S air power was crucial, only islands that could support airstrips were on their target list. The fighting for the islands in the Pacific would be hard as the Americans would have to deal with a determined and experienced enemy who had experience fighting on the ground. To fully comprehend both sides of the war, who the central planners behind the U. S. bombings were and how it led up to the Great Tokyo Air Raid will be explained. Then for the Japanese side, the events that led up to the attack and what was expected of its citizens will be explained (History, 2014).

For the U.S., as early as November 1941, there were secret strategic meetings that indicated that the U. S. was discussing the preparation of the prospect of firebombing strikes against Japanese cities. In February 1945, the Anglo-American allies air raided the city of Dresden in Germany. A few days later, British Air Commodore C.M. Grierson said at a press meeting that some objectives that targeted civilians were inhumane. These words made the USAAF leadership annoyed, and one general of the USAAF stated the incident as “absolute stupidity by an incompetent officer”.

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\(^{1}\) USA, Britain, USSR & China
(Schaffer, 1985) The plane that was designed to deliver crushing strikes with precision bombing was the Boeing B-29 “Superfortress”. The cost of the development of it was 3 billion US Dollars² (Searle, 2002).

The design of the attacks on Japan had the main focus on precision targeting of industrial/military installations. Strategists knew that the vulnerability of Japanese cities were to fire, and that became the plan about a future air raid over Japan (Schaffer, 1985). Raymond H. Ewell, a chemical engineer, wrote in a report in April 1943;

> Anyone familiar with the M-69 (Napalm) and with the construction and layout of Japanese cities can make a few calculations and soon reach a tentative conclusion that even as small amounts as 10 tons of M-69’s would have the possibility of wiping out significant portions of any of the large Japanese cities. (Karacas, 2006)

To prepare for the air raid, in March 1943, General H. H. Arnold³ asked the Committee of Operations Analysts (COA) to make a list of potential bombing targets in Japan. Simultaneously, Arnold was looking into the use of incendiary bombs. In November 1943, the COA handed its first report to General Arnold. The report, *Economic Objectives in the Far East*, named the six main strategic targets in Japan in no order of priority: merchant shipping, steel, anti-friction bearings, aircraft plants, electronic and urban industrial areas. Within those larger objectives, the COA also mentioned the most vital targets that should be focused on. Concerning the urban areas, the COA explained:

> Japanese war production is peculiarly vulnerable to incendiary attack on urban areas because of the widespread practice of subcontracting to small handicraft and domestic establishments. Many small houses in Japan are not merely places of residence, but workshops contributing to the production of war materials. (Searle, 2002)

General Arnold approved of the COA report. Moreover, despite other officers requesting for trial run incendiary raids against Japan, Arnold held firm to precision raids. He wrote to LeMay⁴

> I have just learned that your Singapore attack had 41% of your bombs were within striking distance of the briefed aiming point. I do not have to tell you that I am impressed by this progress, but I think we can do better. (Arnold, 1944)

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² The atomic bomb was around 2 billion
³ The general of the USA Air Force (USAAF).
⁴ LeMay was then in charge of the XX Bomber Command in China
However, while Arnold was still steadfast to daylight precision bombing, the COA felt the focus on the urban incendiary bombing should be higher. They submitted its “Revised Report of the COA on Economic Objectives in the Far East” to Arnold on 10th October 1944. The aim of the list had been to focus three main targets and was not prioritizing the possibility for attack by the newly created XXI Bomber Command, soon to be based out of the Mariana Islands. The main significance was attacking the aircraft industry. Second was an attack on the urban industrial areas in Tokyo. The third was an aerial attack against shipping routes. Only one target required precision bombing, the aircraft industry. Essentially, its proposal was that as soon as the skies had been cleared of Japanese planes, the B-29s should turn on six urban areas for firebomb raid (BBC News, 2015).

Commander William M. McGovern, of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), said that the Japanese tend to be frightened was above other. As little a thing as fire could rouse this fear as it was “one of the greatest things they are terrified of from childhood”. He was all for Japanese air bombing, and his proposal was to:

raise Hell ... Knock out Tokyo, and the Japanese throughout the country would say we have been hit (McGovern, 1945)

Arnold never dismissed “radical thinking”. A wide variety of ideas passed by his desk, some more drastic than others, and were met with approval. As an example, he had showed interest in starving the population by the aerial attack of fishing lanes and the poisoning crops, just to name a few. Arnold continued his demand for the precision bombing, but did not overrule the possibility of incendiary attack. After a while, because of the USAAF small success with precision bombing, they changed their focus to the urban incendiary bombings. The pressure of decisions weighed heavily on General Arnold, so he would pass them on to his subordinates (Lloyd, 1945).

When the U. S. entered the WW2, how air power would be best employed was still not decided. General Arnold believed in the idea that planes would be useful and decisive weapons engaging in strategic bombing, not only as a support tool of armies and navies. His thoughts were that, there can only be one validation for their expensive Air Forces organization – it must play a decisive role in the defeat of their enemies. If the USAAF could accomplish this, then Arnold’s wish for Air Force independence would be in reach. Japan was the USAAF last and best likelihood to prove that it deserved independence (Ralph, 2006).
Arnold was not sure how much the AAF had to accomplish to prove its case, but he assumed that air power had to be pivotal in the WWII. The burden to do his best for the air force getting independence revealed itself in many ways. First of all, it was those within the B-29 program. Arnold had risked his career for this 3 billion US Dollars effort. It was the B-29 program that could help with air force independence, because it was the weapon that could deliver firepower in ways the Army and Navy could not. Admiral of the Navy wanted Arnold to combine his air force with the Navy, but Arnold was not interested (Ralph, 2006).

In early 1944 Arnold constructed his 20th Air Force\(^5\) to be relocated as far away as possible from other branches of the military as possible. If there were no progress to be seen with Arnold’s 20th Air Force, his planes could be relocated. Arnold needed his planes because he wanted his Air Forces to win the war. With General Curtis LeMay operating the XX Bomber Command out of China, General Arnold placed Brigadier General Haywood Hansell in charge of the XXI Bomber Command. Hansell felt pressure from the start. Because Arnold wanted results and quickly. Unfortunately, Hansell’s command was troubled from the start. His first target was the Nakajima aircraft plant at Musashino. It was the most important target in Japan, producing up to 30 to 40% of all combat aircraft engines. Due to weather, this mission was often canceled. After a week of wait, the raid went on 23rd November. Out of the 111 B-29s that took off, 24 planes bombed the primary target, 1% of the plant was damaged. He tried two more times, but both times were failures. In his words:

> The next three months (November 1944 through January 1945) were frustrating, to say the least. Schools worked hard to train the lead crews, determined to improve accuracy. Enormous efforts were made to upgrade maintenance… The weather was a terrible opponent, and there was no intelligence of its movements… Morale was a critical problem. The airplane engines were still unreliable. (Hansell, 1945)

Arnold compared the reports Hansell made to the ones LeMay made and saw notable differences. Arnold wrote to LeMay:

> The progress you have been making in adding to your bomb load is most gratifying. You will recall that at the time that you first took command of the XX, one of my greatest concerns was the fact that the B-29 had not yet demonstrated its ability to carry a reasonably large weight of bombs. We have not completely whipped this to my satisfaction yet, but I am pleased with the improvement. (Arnold, 1945)

\(^5\) which would contain the XX and XXI Bomber Commands
Arnold had photos of the destruction that the XX had inflicted and used to flaunt them to other officers to show the strength of the B-29. Arnold passed the news of LeMay’s achievements on to Hansell, with hopes he could encourage the XXI force forward. However, Hansell did not improve his performances. LeMay’s bombs were dropping 41% within 1000 feet of the target while Hansell’s best was 14%. That made Arnold rethink his situation if he wanted his Air Force a reality. As early as 13th November, Arnold wrote to LeMay saying he intends to move LeMay out of China.

Arnold made it perfectly clear to LeMay that he thought the USAAF could do more advanced bombing with the B-29 than has been done by any aircraft up to that time and made sure that he wanted him to prove that. Shortly after, Hansell was asked to show Arnold photos of destructions such as the ones provided by LeMay had provided but he could not do that. Therefore, Arnold relieved Hansell and replaced him with LeMay. Arnold wanted someone who would just get things done, he wanted results.

Arnold, whose health had been reclining rapidly, had his fourth serious heart attack on 17th January 1945. General Lauris Norstad\(^6\) took over his duties while he recovered. As pressure on Arnold to get results increased, he granted LeMay with more increased authority. General Arnold wanted as many bombs as possible dropped on the priority targets in any given period. LeMay was pressured now with his new command and having Arnold and Norstad telling him he was the best chance of achieving Arnold’s wish and winning the war. LeMay right off the bat, ran into immediate problems. He found the staff worthless. LeMay ran missions similar to Hansell’s. He Out of the eight missions he ordered, six were precision raids, and two were experimental urban incendiary attacks. His precision raids actually had worse results than Hansell’s nor did his incendiary attacks did not fare well either. When Arnold thought things could not get any worse, on the 17th February the Navy launched a carrier-based dive bomber assault on aircraft factories in the Tokyo area. The Nakajima plant was damaged substantially in the attack. The press spoke highly the Navy (Lloyd, 1945).

Arnold would have no more excuses. LeMay did not need a letter from Arnold to figure out that he had to do something. Two days after the Navy attack, he ordered 150 planes against the Nakajima plant. Not a bomb hit the factory. That was his 7th out of 7 attempts that had failed. To get results, LeMay said, “I had to do something, and I had to do something fast.” So what LeMay

\(^6\) General in the USAAF
did was, he planned a large scale incendiary raid on Tokyo residential areas. A significant change he suggested was to lower the altitude of the attacking planes significantly. That would not make weather an issue, flying at lower altitudes would require less fuel thus allowing heavier bomb loads and lower altitude also meant greater accuracy. However, lower altitude included increased danger factors, as the planes were more exposed. To reduce that risk, LeMay ordered the to attack at night. With darkness as a suitable defense, but worried about friendly fire, LeMay removed the guns, ammunition, and gunners from the B-29s, thus allowing them to carry an extra 2700 pounds of bombs each. The planes needed to fly alone because of the darkness; these tactics were so radical that most thought they were going to be killed on that mission. LeMay decided to order the attack without getting an answer from Arnold or Norstad. LeMay was putting his reputation and career in jeopardy, but he probably thought that both of these would be worse if he did not produce the photos Arnold demanded soon. As he later said: “There are plenty of wolves around who were looking for the job – Norstad one of them.” (Searle, 2002)
Japan: Prior to March 10th

As for the Japanese side, things were considerably different. In 1931, the Japanese government had begun making a national air defense policy, this was because of the Japanese Imperial Army had attacked the Chinese city Chinchou in September 1931. That next year Tokyo City created the Tokyo Defense Brigade (*Tokyo rengo bogodan*) that would carry out drills in case of fires breaking out, air alert readiness and for poison gas defenses. Nine years earlier, on September 1st, 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake struck Japan and destroyed Tokyo killing tens of thousands of people. So associating the earthquake with the need to guard Tokyo against a potential wartime disaster made sense because the former was still fresh in the memory of most Tokyo citizens. While the government remembered the past to prepare the citizens of Tokyo for air raids, others imagined Tokyo under assault from air raids to encourage people and prepare them to imagine the experience of an enemy attack might be like. Popular writers would write fictional accounts of wars where Tokyo is under attack by air raids. One writer, in particular, stirred much commotion throughout his years, his name was Unno Juza. His genre of novels was “Air-defense novel” and he wrote many books about Tokyo being targeted by air raids. He started writing these stories in the early 1930s when Japan was attacking China. His viewpoint was however if the U. S. would be conducting these air raids. His ideas reflected the growing awareness that military technology and aviation was advancing. In 1932, the same year that Tokyo Defense Brigade was made and started conducting air defense drills, *Air Raid Requiem*, Unno’s first “air-defense novel,” was published over a 5-month period in the Asahi magazine. What was interesting about this novel was that the air raids from the U. S. were mostly focused in Tokyo’s Asakusa district. The story is viewed from the perspective of a family in Tokyo and Unno’s story believes that Tokyo is not ready at all for an attack like that. Instead of what the Tokyo Defense Brigade want people to do, Unno’s description is that Tokyo citizens flee in panic. Then Unno writes about the commander of the United States Pacific Fleet orders 2000 planes to attack Tokyo and deal the final blow to the city. Tokyo is saved by a Tokyo scientist who figures out a way to destroy the planes from afar. Which shows that Unno knows that Tokyo’s lack of air defenses was that bad that Tokyo could only be saved by science fiction.

Unno’s story was met with mixed criticism, especially from government officials who thought his portrayal of Tokyo helplessness were not correct. Shima Shozo, Imperial Army major
general and chief of staff for Tokyo’s defense headquarters was one of the ones who believed his story did not reflect the true nature of Tokyo’s defenses. Shima said that the Imperial capital had “from the beginning resisted any insult/invasion and maintained the pride of divine purity because of the emperor’s presence”. Shima then ends his argument by saying Tokyo is in the hands of its citizens. In another novel, Unno writes about another attack on Tokyo, however in this one, he warns about the danger of incendiary bombs and the effect they could have in Tokyo. Even though his stories always ended with Tokyo’s victory, the fact he kept writing them unsettled some military officers in late 1930s. In 1938, a fierce debate erupted among government officials over the issue of air defense. They felt it was needed to lay a groundwork for a possible evacuation of urban areas to protect Japan’s cities and residents in the event of enemy attacks. However, others felt that having a civilian air defense would plant a seed in people’s minds the seed the suspicion that Japan might be vulnerable and could lose a war. Additionally, they felt that leaving their city would be considered treason. In 1938, after the publication of another Unno air-raid novel, the chief of the Imperial Navy’s information bureau, summoned Unno to his office and warned him never to write about the subject. When Unno asked why, the chief said that “Not one enemy plane will fly over the Imperial capital!” Because of this Unno stopped writing for a few years (Karacas, 2006).

Not soon after officials and other representatives from Tokyo decided that “air defense city planning” should be the main goal of urban planning. The following year, Tokyo’s Civil Defense Department and Planning Department, felt that Tokyo’s vulnerability was that Tokyo’s wooden structures stand naked before incendiary bombs. Because of that, they urged the government to enact a series of air-defense measures to create a “fire-resistant Tokyo.” That meant to fire-proof buildings, dividing the city into blocks bounded by wide streets and strengthening water delivery systems. Also to make Tokyo a less a desirable target, it was decided to move factories and important institutions to other cities. In November 1941, a revised Air Defense Law was passed that forbade evacuation of civilians from Japan’s urban areas. The government felt that it need to create a “spirit of preparedness” so in 1940 the Tokyo municipal government released info to urge citizens of Tokyo to be prepared daily for air defenses and used the 1923 earthquake as motivation. “Remembering the disaster, let’s build an impenetrable air defense.” However, using the earthquake as an encouragement was not a good idea. Since the earthquake was not that people were not prepared, but the Tokyo was mostly made up of wooden buildings that acted as kindling. Even though the government brought up these issues, they never heeded those lessons, the areas
that had been designated as fire breaks after a catastrophe were still filled with 200,000 temporary wooden barracks (Karacas, 2006).

The first air raid on Japan was on April 18th, 1942. That day 16 B-25 bombers led by Colonel James Doolittle took off from a carrier in the Pacific and attacked Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kobe with ease. In Tokyo only 39 died, and a few hundred houses were damaged. The government emphasized that the enemy has indiscriminately targeted civilians and praised those who dealt with the situation in a calm and responsible manner. The responses to this raid were little and contrary to government ideas and belief that preparation alone would be a sufficient air defense policy, Japanese cities were vulnerable to attack and people living in them were far from being prepared for another one. As for military defense, Japan could not prevent enemy planes from entering the capital’s airspace. During the Doolittle raid the air-raid alert did not sound until 25 minutes after the attack began, and instead of taking cover, many ran out into the streets to try to see the enemy planes. The raid, however, compelled the government to consider the need for policies regarding the evacuation of people and industrial facilities from its main cities. It still kept the idea that the best air defense was fire prevention and that the Imperial capital would be defended by its citizens. Citizens of Tokyo had a responsibility not to do anything that would bring injury to capital and must also do everything to prevent harm from occurring there (Karacas, 2006).

That harm was specified more clearly in a pamphlet called Companion to Air Defense made by the Home Ministry in 1943 and distributed to every household in Japan’s cities. In it, it was outlined what the government expected of its citizens during an air raid, the pamphlet scenario was frightful and reminiscent of Unno’s stories. In it says that even before a warning siren is heard large numbers of enemy planes might shower the neighborhoods with incendiaries. Even in those cases, fire prevention remained the responsibility of each person. “Throwing away our lives, we will protect our areas. To be prepared is to have no regrets.” The preparation included storing water in bathtubs, rainwater tubs, and buckets, and having sand, dirt, straw mats and long sticks were always available to battle the flames. The moment people were to hear the air-raid siren, they were to change into their air raid clothing, check the water containers and all other firefighting equipment, place all flammables and potential obstacles in a safe place and prepare their air raid shelter for use. That same year, Tokyo held an air-defense slogan competition. “Diligently protect the sky under which the Emperor lives” was picked as the winning slogan. However, people living in Tokyo would soon learn that protecting the sky was far beyond their ability. The government did
not address the need for shelters from the air raids until late after the war with the U. S. started. It was not until June 1943 that the Home Ministry ordered local governments to begin building public air raid shelters and have people who own homes to build their own. One reason behind that was that the government did not want to promote the construction of shelters because of fear the people would rather use them before the fulfilled their assigned duty of fire prevention. People were never to rush to an evacuation area at the start of an air raid. Provided the safety of children had been assured, people were to battle fire. Other responsibilities were, adults needed to carry steel helmets and cotton air defense hood at all times, civil defense units would regularly assemble at schools and other open spaces to conduct firefighting drills and newspapers would feature recipes for meals to eat during air raids. Throughout the city posters with slogans like “Air raids are inevitable, so always wear your combat clothing” were hung up.

It was not until September 1943; the government acknowledged for the first time since the beginning of the war that the evacuation of Japan’s largest cities might be required. In December 1943, the government made up a plan that addressed the evacuation of families, schoolchildren, and government and industrial facilities from Japan’s twelve principle cities. While it reserved rights to evacuate people compulsorily from the cities, the government initially did little more than suggest that children, the elderly, and other groups leave via a “contact evacuation,” which meant that people would join their relatives who lived outside the city and live with them. However, some issues followed that type of evacuation. Many people did not have family members in the countryside that could host them; parents did not want to part with their children and the fear of living in the countryside for those who had been born and raised in the city far outweighed uncertainties of future air raids (Karacas, 2006).

The summer of 1944, the USA effectively won the war when it gained control of formerly Japan controlled Marianas Islands. Gaining control of these islands put every important Japanese city within range of America’s B-29 bombers. Losing the Marianas brought a rapid response, beginning with the forced evacuation of school children from Japan’s major cities. On June 30th, 1944, the government called for the mandatory evacuation of 4th through 6th-grade elementary school students. In just a few months, Japan sent over 400,000 children from its main cities, of those 400,000, 225,000 came from Tokyo. In December, they encouraged pregnant women, mothers with infants, all remaining primary school children and people over 65 years of age to evacuate from urban areas (Selden, 2014).
At the end of November 1944, the USA initiated a series of air raids on Tokyo from their bases in the newly acquired Marianas Islands. The Chief of Staff of one of their air forces urged that large-scale attacks on the Imperial Palace should be carried out on December 8th, 1944, the third anniversary of Pearl Harbor. However General Arnold said factories, docks, etc. were better targets. Later on, they could destroy the whole city. Because of the constant misses from the bombers, citizens of Tokyo had become so used to the daily sirens that they simply ignored them and stopped using their air raid shelters. That month then ended with an attack on Nakajima Aircraft factory but because of cloud cover, they decided to attack Ginza-Yurakucho district on January 27th, 1945. They killed hundreds and destroyed much of the area. Japan’s inability to prevent enemy planes from flying over the country made many Japanese pessimistic about the future. They would say, “If enemy planes can attack the country, then there is no way that Japan can win the war,” and “Not even one out of a thousand firings from the antiaircraft guns is hitting the planes.” They would say that this might end up to be like the 1923 earthquake (Karacas, 2006).
The Fateful Day

For the March 10th air raid, Curtis LeMay targeted Tokyo’s most densely populated district, a twelve-square-mile area in which 1,300,000 people lived. The first B-29’s to arrive just after midnight on March 10th released incendiary bombs at four corners of the target area to create “pathfinder” fires that would guide other pilots to the site. As the citizens of Tokyo had been instructed over the last few years, neighborhood association defense units attempted to extinguish incendiaries. However, a half hour into the raid, the growing fires made the task impossible. The Metropolitan Police Department’s firefighters could not even battle the flames. The growing fires then began to cause large pockets of rapidly heated air to suddenly rise, allowing colder air to rush in with enough force to generate hurricane-like gales that flailed people and their belongings into midair and prevented many to escape. Women and children fled to evacuation sites, only to be consumed by flame. People took refuge in public or private air raid shelters, and as the growing heat announced death’s approach, they urinated on the futons (Japanese type of bedding) they carried in the hope that it might act as a buffer. Thousands of people, though, died of asphyxiation inside the shelters. When the raid finally ended, after 2 and a half hours after it had begun, the B-29’s had showered over 541,000 incendiary bombs that weighed a total of 2,660 tons on the district. The uncontrollable flames affected 26 of Tokyo’s 35 wards. Fukugawa, Honjo, and Asakusa wards had around 95 percent burned down.

The target area contained an average population of 103,000 people per square mile. The Asakusa ward, one of the most densely populated areas of the world, contained 135,000 people per square mile. Bombs of jellied gasoline rained down on the city for 3 hours, and by 3 am a firestorm literally like none other was churning across the city, whipped by its high winds, leaping effortlessly across firebreaks, flowing down the streets. People who were not consumed by the fire died while inhaling the heated air or were trampled to death in the panic. Many who found cover in shelters and under bridges met similarly gruesome fates and were baked, drowned and boiled (Ralph, 2006).

Even the pilots of the USA planes could smell the burning of people. A pilot named Chester Marshall writes:

we looked upon a ghastly scene spread out before us…. Flames and debris were climbing several thousand feet, and a dark cloud of smoke hurled upward to more than 20,000 feet. It was a great relief for us to exit the smoke because the odor of burning flesh and debris was very nauseating. (Karacas, 2006)
According to the official history of the USAAF, the destruction and deaths Tokyo exceeded that of any of the attacks in the western world. No other air attack of the war, either in Japan or Europe, was so destructive of life and property.” They estimated that around 72,000 to 97,000 had died in the attack. However, it is certain that over 100,000 thousand people lost their lives that night. Many of the 60,000 students who had just returned to Tokyo from the countryside to attend their graduation ceremonies bombings had either been killed or orphaned. A Home Ministry report listed just over 180,000 houses destroyed and 370,000 families displaced (Caracas, 2006).

In Tokyo, the governor, Yoshizo, made an impossible request:

We are calling upon the people of the capital to pledge themselves to be unafraid of the air raids, to strengthen their accord and unity with one another, and to steel themselves all the more to fulfill the great task of guarding the Imperial capital. (Karacas, 2006)

However, the mood in the Marianas was completely different. The attack was viewed as accomplishment by LeMay, Norstad, and Arnold. (Ralph, 2006) Nature helped man’s creation in the form of akakaze, the red wind of fire that swept with hurricane force and propelled firestorms with shocking speed and intensity. (Selden, 2014)

As for the citizens of Tokyo, there have been many books written with their statements and stories from this day. For example, a story names “A Plea” by Tai Kitamura goes like:

On January 13, 1945 – a dull, cloudy day – just before stepping into the shelter when the air-raid alarm sounded, I said a few words to one of my neighbors. In the next instant, he was hit by a bomb. When the raid was over, I went out of the shelter to find his head on the ground. I nearly fainted. But then I recalled my duty as a human being and began collecting the parts of his dismembered body, which were scattered over about three hundred meters. As I went through this horrible task, I was suddenly struck with the terrifying thought that perhaps someday soon someone would have to do the same thing for me.

On March 9, 1945, I took refuge in a shelter at the end of a large, grassy field near my house. The American planes first dropped something greasy and then incendiary bombs, which ignited the oily substance and sent fires racing madly through the neighborhood. Strong north winds fanned the flames. Later I learned that the Americans had counted on this kind of weather condition. Inside the air-raid shelter, I almost immediately lost consciousness. When I woke up, I could not open my eyes because of the soot and ashes that filled the air. Gradually, however, I came to see. Dead bodies were heaped in the cramped space. Some of them glued together by their burns.

Today I live in peace with my children and grandchildren. Sometimes I almost forget the horrors of the war. But they must not be forgotten. And I have written this little note as a plea to the younger generations. They must know what war is like the must do all within their power to see that it never plagues the earth again.” (Gage, 1978)
The Memory

The firebombing undeniably caused a loss of the people’s confidence in their government, and it destroyed any conviction that people could protect their neighborhood, homes, and families from further air raids. As for LeMay, his success with the March 9th – 10th raids destroyed an area of Tokyo larger than expected, he thought during the next ten nights he could destroy all of Japan’s major industrial cities. Later that year in April and May, the B-29’s returned to Tokyo to deliver four massive assaults. A total of 9373 tons of bombs were dropped. In only 5 missions, the USAAF had inflicted destruction equal to 41% of the complete destruction of German air raid attacks with less than 1% of the total bomb tonnage dropped on German cities (Ralph, 2006). On 3rd April, Norstad sent LeMay a letter that reflected on the mood of the USAAF Command:

The success of our operations in March was nothing short of wonderful … I think you and your XXI Bomber Command have demonstrated courage, skill and adaptability that will have a critical influence on the war against Japan. The next three months will certainly be Japan’s hour of decision.

Norstad was pleased not only with the destruction LeMay had achieved, his efforts must have slowed Japan’s war machine. Also, now that destruction of Japan could be done easily from air, there was one air force goal that now seemed more a reality – victory over Japan without a land invasion (Ralph, 2006).

With all the attacks combined, Tokyo had 120 air raids, with 6 of them destroying 56.3 square miles or around half of the city. In numbers, it had destroyed 45 percent of all factories, over half of Tokyo’s hospitals and 75 percent of its clinics. Because of all the air raids people fled Tokyo, and by early June 1945, Tokyo had lost 62 percent of its February 1944 population of over 6.6 million citizens (Karacas, 2006).

Because LeMay was left to make all the decisions even at such a young age and relatively new to the XXI head he has been blamed in history with the firebombing. However, to blame the deaths of Japanese civilians solely with LeMay is a distorted view of the history. Arnold, because he wanted the USAAF to prove a point, was not going to have sympathy. Did this attack contribute to the end of the war? The COA recommended urban area attack of only six major Japanese cities, not 67 (Ralph, 2006).
Arnold and LeMay both knew that the studies done by the COA and USSBS projected such destruction by the firebombing campaign, but they did not promote the assault. They would not abandon the impact of the death and destruction done by the raids, because they knew what benefits would result from the psychological effects on the Japanese, personal credibility, triumph and justification, to the ultimate goal of air force autonomy (Ralph, 2006).

Despite the high death toll, the firebombing of Tokyo left few traces in the memory of Japanese, or Americans. “When I go to speak at schools about what happened, the students just stare at me blankly.” Said Hiroshi Hoshino, a survivor of the destruction. To compare to the annual memorials to the nuclear victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are commemorated world wide, whilst the anniversary of the Tokyo attack passes almost unnoticed (French, 2002).

There are many reasons why the American fire raid campaign has received little attention. While the atomic attack still to this day remains unique in history. Moreover, for Japanese, the atomic explosions reinforced feelings of wartime, making the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims’ significant symbols to mourn. In contrast to the atomic bomb victims, little to nothing has been done to increase the memory of the civilians that died in the air raids in Japan, partly because this might raise questions about the work of the Japanese leaders during the war and because of the passionate pursuit of friendship with America after 1945 (French, 2002).

Since the occupation started, USA put on a tight censorship on anything related to the bombing, especially the atomic bombing. That meant a ban of publication of photographic and artistic images or any criticism of the bombings. While firebombing never became a a major subject of American self-criticism, the atomic bomb did. News of the terrible attack was withheld from the Japanese public by the US military during the occupation. Also, casualty statistics and film shot of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were confiscated (Selden, 2014).

Up until the "San Francisco Treaty" was signed in 1952, Japan was under the control of the USA, and when they took control, they forced media restrictions, which meant that one should not report things that reflected negatively on the USA (French, 2002). The Japanese leaders have talked very little about this event until now. For America, discussing it would raise questions about the prosecution of the war.

By May 1945, 69,000 families among 732,000 households lived in air raid shelters. A month later, 235,400 people, out of the two and a half million still in the capital, lived in some form of air raid shelters. The government promoted living in underground housing. They removed
structures from the built-up areas around hills to construct “living shelters” underground and in caves. In June 1945, the central government announced a summary outlining its emergency housing policy for its cities, which proposed three different sizes of underground shelters. A couple of days later, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department released its Guide to Life in Shelters manual on how to build shelters and adjust to living underground. Before the air raids this experience of and approach to Tokyo, in which people out of fear for their lives live underneath a devastated landscape, would have been unimaginable for most citizens of Tokyo (Fisk, 2011).

Following the government’s acceptance of the terms of surrender established in the Potsdam Declaration, the plans to move Tokyo underground could be abandoned. In early September 1945, 462 B-29’s, the largest amassing of the bombers to date, made another trip to Tokyo. Flying over the USS Missouri stationed in Tokyo Bay while representatives of the Japanese government signed the instruments of surrender, the roaring, low-flying planes served as a reminder of the men and machines that had brought such magnificent destruction to the capital and the rest of urban Japan (Karacas, 2006).

In May 1944, the governor-general asked the chief of Tokyo’s Park Division, Inoshita Kiyoshi, to prepare a set of procedures for dealing with the dead following an air raid. Inoshita’s “Outline for Managing Corpses”, detailed the various measures that relevant city and ward agencies needed to take to deal with fatalities. That included identification of the dead, family notification, autopsies, cremation, and storage of belongings. All unidentifiable and unclaimed bodies, according to the report, would be cremated and placed in a metropolitan charnel house. Inoshita estimated that 10,000 civilian deaths over a one-year period would occur in Tokyo once the air raids began. He based this on numbers from Germany’s civilian deaths from the Berlin air raids. However, he did not take into consideration the material difference between the two cities. He secured around 10,000 caskets and designated the facilities that would cremate the bodies. The March 10th raid made a mockery of Inoshita’s casualty projections. The central government and local authorities only buried the bodies as quickly as possible. A few factors motivated the urgency that precluded dealing with the bodies in the manner established by Inoshita. Another devastating firebombing could happen at any moment. The sight of a corpse-littered Tokyo would further dent the people’s resolve to endure a hopeless situation. The heat had ravaged many of the corpses to the point where all identifiable characteristics, together with clothing and documentation, had vanished. Finally, Tokyo simply did not have enough fuel to cremate the bodies (Karacas, 2006).
How they ended up dealing with the bodies, was with mass graves. Authorities retrieved from the corpses all valuables, which became the property of Tokyo. After some period, people got the opportunity to examine the bodies when they went looking for missing family members. The bodies, however, were some in groups of 2 to 3 thousand and buried in city parks, school grounds, temple and shrine precincts and on military and private property. Because of lack of personnel and finances, the bodies were kept in their temporary graves much longer than anyone expected. Because of that, some of the city’s parks used as burial sites began to take the appearance of cemeteries. Relatives would independently set up memorial tablets and elaborate individual gravestones at park locations that they suspected held relatives. People also reported the appearance of ghosts of the air raid victims near the mass graves. Even the police assigned to the Ueno Park claimed to see the ghosts, causing them to refuse to patrol the area (Karacas, 2006).

In 1937, the Imperial Army had donated the city of Tokyo a portion of land on which an industrial artillery school had been located, for the city to build a memorial tower to honor citizens of Tokyo killed in battle. The Tokyo Association of Bereaved Families, representing relatives of Tokyo’s military war dead, opposed Inoshita’s plan on the ground that a distinction needed to be maintained between the civilian and military dead. After two years of unsuccessful attempts to negotiate the issue, Inoshita met on several occasions throughout 1948 with a person invested with the authority to make a decision, lieutenant commander William Bunce, chief of the religions Division in the Civil Information and Education Section of the Occupation’s General Headquarters. Bunce, while sympathizing with the need to honor those killed in the air raids, deemed the proposed site inappropriate due to its current use as a memorial space dedicated to deceased military personnel. He directed that Tokyo instead use another metropolitan charnel house, Earthquake Memorial Hall, as the location in which to store the remains of air raid victims. That Hall was formerly used as a memorial for all the people who were unidentifiable after the fires of the Great Kanto earthquake in 1923. In 1948, after William Bunce decided that the remains of the firebombing victims should be stored in Earthquake Memorial Hall, the disagreeable task of exhuming the bodies began. Between 1948 and 1950, the Tokyo Metropolitan Park Division, operating with funds supplied by the national government, exhumed over 100,000 bodies from 144 locations.

September 1st, 1951, the anniversary of the 1923 earthquake, the Tokyo Memorial Association sponsored the first Buddhist memorial service for the victims of both the 1923 and the 1945
disasters at Earthquake Memorial Hall, officially renamed Tokyo Metropolitan Memorial Hall. Since then, the Tokyo Memorial Association has hosted biannual Buddhist memorial services, held on March 10th and September 1st, in memory of both groups. On these two days, the door leading to the charnel house is opened for people to glimpse the urns while offering prayers and incense to the deceased. The Tokyo Metropolitan Memorial Hall officially remembers civilians in the air raids, not military personnel (Fisk, 2011).
Recent Changes

In *On the Natural History of Destruction*, William Sebald explains why Germans did not publicly remember and question the destruction of cities in WW2. A defeated nation, he wrote,

> could hardly call on the victorious power to explain the military and political logic that dictated the destruction of the German cities. Quite some those affected by the air raids...regarded the great firestorms as a just punishment, even as the act of retribution on the part of a higher power with which there could be no dispute. (W.G Sebald, 2003)

Japan appears to have taken a different path of remembering, quickly seizing upon the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to claim a position of individual suffering that simultaneously allowed a general forgetting of the suffering it had caused throughout Asia. One unexamined aspect of this selective memory is that any sustained attention given to the firebombing of urban Japan would have threatened the positioning of Japan as a victim, as it had embraced the aerial bombing of many Chinese cities. Social Geography undoubtedly played a role in public forgetting that the Tokyo air raids occurred, as the human devastation wrought by the March 1945 firebombing was confined to a working class and artisan section of the city.

Japanese authorities emphasized the atomic bomb over the firebombing. For that there were two reasons, first of all, they suggested that there was little that they or any nation for the matter could have done with facing such overwhelming technological power. Discussing the fire bombings might raise an issue about the Japanese authorities, since they. Second of all, Japan’s bombing of Chongqing and other Chinese cities in the war might raise questions about its own bombing (Selden, 2014).

For almost a quarter century, however, public actions related to remembering the raids did not break beyond that scale to expand to that of the city and nation. There was no citywide initiative or movement was taken by individuals, citizens’ groups or municipal authorities to memorialize the raids. The silence also permeated to written accounts. Occupation authorities prohibited published writing about the Tokyo air raids. In remarkable contrast to the experience of those two cities, however, even after the end of the Occupation, hardly anyone wrote about the Tokyo air raids, and none of the few pieces written generated any widespread or sustained interest.

In the late 1960’s, a few key events and actions for particular individuals initiated a process of a general recovery of memories of the raids. The protest movement in Japan against the USA’s
war in Vietnam was at its highest point; regular marches and massive demonstrations took place throughout Tokyo, and some people drew attention to some parallels between Vietnamese suffering caused by napalm fire bombings and their air raid experiences. Political changes at the local level also had a decisive impact on how the city remembered the air raids (Karacas, 2006). Research on the Great Tokyo Air Raid did not begin thoroughly until the 1970s. This was during the Viet Nam War. As the conflict there gained heat, the air raid survivors in Japan started to rethink their experiences. American military documents that were related to the raids were also being made public. That began a movement for Japanese survivors to begin recording their history (Masahiko, 2011).

Saotome Katsumoto, a writer, was 12 years old at the time of the Great Tokyo Air Raid and worked in a factory. He had no formal education beyond primary school but is one of the main forces behind pushing this event into a more conscious state. He had written about his experiences in the air raids, but a few experiences that he had in the late 1960s compelled him to take a more active approach to ensuring that Tokyo did not forget what had happened to the city in 1945. In 1967, Saotome received a visit from journalist and magazine editor Matsuura Sozo, who begun to research the connection between Occupation censorship and the general forgetting of the Tokyo air raids (Sams, 2015).

On March 10th, 1970, the 25th anniversary of the Tokyo Air Raid, the Asahi Shimbun, one of Japan’s largest daily newspapers, led off its Koe7 - Letters to the Editor section with a letter from Saotome. While it is not surprising if the date carries no meaning for most people, he states, it is one that he can never forget. He describes the harrowing experience of escaping the bombs raining around him, and closes with an appeal:

Those of us who have experienced the raids, at least on this day, just for one day, shouldn’t we speak of the actual conditions of war? Moreover, shouldn’t we also think about the bombs indiscriminately falling on Vietnam? (Sams, 2015).

Up until that moment, the Tokyo air raids had received negligible treatment by the media. After Saotome’s letter, people answering his plea, many readers sent to the Asahi Shimbun written accounts of their experiences. To accommodate the responses, the Tokyo edition of the newspaper

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7 Voices
had to feature a special daily column called *Tokyo Hibaku Ki*\(^8\) containing the recollections of air raid survivors. The term *hibaku*\(^9\) usually had been reserved to refer to the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The column ran from the beginning of July through the middle of August 1970, each day featuring a brief first-person account of the air raids. That lasted over a 40-day period. While the Asahi Shimbun featured the testimonies, Saotome seized upon the momentum and brought together a dozen intellectuals and air raid survivors to form the Society for Recording the Tokyo Air Raids. They sent then Governor Minobe Ryokichi a letter stating while Tokyo’s expressways and skyscrapers continued to increase in number, mementos of the raids that destroyed the city and killed so many people were few (Sams, 2015).

Representatives of the group met up with Governor Minobe on August 5th, 1970. After listening to their proposal, Minobe offered the city’s financial support for the project. This commitment, coming on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the end of the war, represents the first time that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government committed to support a documenting of the history of the air raids. Moreover, more importantly, it illustrates the considerable discretionary power that the Tokyo’s governor exercises, and how that authority can translate particular convictions and visions into reality and play a fundamental role in how the city’s past is represented (Fisk, 2011).

Following the 1971 publication of Saotome’s bestselling *Tokyo Daikushu*\(^10\), between 1973 and 1974 the Society for Recording the Tokyo Air Raids published its 5 volume *Tokyo Daikushu Sensai Shi*\(^11\). Both of the publications played a significant role in recovering air raid memories and compelling further action. Teachers belonging to the Koto Ward branch of the Tokyo Teachers’ Union, after a survey revealed that the ward’s elementary students had a greater awareness of the atomic bombing of the Hiroshima than the complete destruction of their neighborhoods, had school children ask their parents or other relatives to recount the experience of the air raids. Survivors shared their experiences at public meeting hall events. People also organized belated primary school graduations: many children returned to Tokyo from their countryside evacuation sites on March 9th, 1945 to attend graduation ceremonies; just hours after being reunited with their families, the air raids began. A major department store agreed to host the first air raid exhibit, featuring

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\(^8\) A Chronicle of Tokyo’s Bombings
\(^9\) Damage by bombing
\(^10\) The Great Tokyo Air Raid
\(^11\) Record of the Great Tokyo Air Raids and War Damages
related artifacts and photographs, as well as talks by Matsuura, Saotome, and others. A few dozen people swam the span of the Sumida River, associated with most Tokyo citizens with firework festivals, to remind the city of another feature of the river: as the site in which the lives of 10,000 people were extinguished by drowning, hypothermia, or fire (Sams, 2015).

By 1971 citizens’ groups in 40 cities founded similar associations to write the histories of their own city’s air raids. In August of that year, the first meeting of the nationwide Society for Recording Air Raids and War Damages took place in Tokyo. At the group’s third annual meeting in 1973, the association agreed to work toward building air raid and war damage resource centers in each of their respective cities. In Tokyo, members of Society for Recording the Tokyo Air Raids established the Society to Build an Air Raid and War Damage Memorial and again solicited the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s support to build both a center to exhibit air-raid related materials and a monument dedicated to those killed in the fire bombings. While Governor Minobe favored the proposal, Tokyo’s fiscal crisis at the time inhibited him from committing the money to secure a site and build the structure. He did, however, provide the group funds for materials acquisition, and promised to commit Tokyo to the construction of the facility once the city’s financial situation improved.

In 1979 a new governor was elected, Suzuki Shinichi. While running for the post, Suzuki voiced his enthusiasm for what some now called the Tokyo Metropolitan Peace Memorial Museum. Tokyo stated candidate Suzuki, like Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Okinawa, all of which had facilities to “convey the horrors of war and to honor those who died,” ought to have its symbol of peace. After he had been elected, however, Suzuki proved to be decidedly less enthusiastic than Minobe about committing the city’s resources to the construction of the museum. When Tokyo’s fiscal situation improved to the point that the city embraced numerous large-scale development projects, Governor Suzuki, reelected to the position three times and was serving until 1995, attempted to placate the demands of what he considered the antiwar/peace camp without committing himself to the construction of the Tokyo Peace Museum. That included supporting the establishment of March 10th as Tokyo Peace Day. Meant to “confirm the significance of peace and to promote peace-consciousness,” the ordinance obliged the city to support annual commemorative events that would include concerts, film festivals, peace parades, and Tokyo air raid-related exhibitions. Throughout the rest of Suzuki’s tenure in office, the city provided generous funding that averaged 250 million yen annually (Karacas, 2006).
Suzuki also offered to give greater emphasis to the air raids in a “War Damage and Reconstruction Corner” exhibit within the Edo-Tokyo Museum scheduled to open in 1993. Saotome Katsumoto, who provided both information and display contents for the exhibit, and others considered it an unacceptable substitution for the proposed Tokyo Peace Museum. The story of the Tokyo air raids should not only be squeezed into 1/40 of the Edo-Tokyo Museum’s entire display area (Fisk, 2006).

Changes in the local political landscape of the early 1990s created an atmosphere in which Suzuki finally became amenable to demands that Tokyo builds the peace museum. However, his fourth and final election to the post in 1991 found his political power significantly weakened. Facing demands that Tokyo builds the structure, in January 1992, 13 years after voicing his support for the idea, Suzuki announced the directive to plan the Tokyo Peace Museum. Stating his intent to complete the design phase of the project by March 1995, the 50th anniversary of the Great Tokyo Air Raid, Suzuki appointed a 16-member advisory committee to conduct the initial planning. In addition to designing the structure and investigating potential locations for it, the Tokyo Peace Memorial Museum Planning Discussion Group considered the philosophy of the museum and how that philosophy ought to be conveyed via its permanent exhibits. First convening in September 1992, the group met six times over the course of 1 year, during which it also visited other peace museums throughout the country, including ones located in Osaka, Hiroshima, and Okinawa. The group’s final report, issued in 1993, stated that the peace museum, “Tokyo’s 21st-century symbol of peace,” had two purposes. First, the structure ought to serve as a memorial for citizens of Tokyo killed in the air raids. Tokyo Metropolitan Memorial Hall in Yokoami Park would continue to hold the ashes of air raid victims and remain the site of the Buddhist memorial services. The committee stated that the Tokyo Peace Museum ought to have the appearance of a memorial space and that a monument dedicated to the air raid victims accompany the museum. Secondly, the museum should convey the experience of the Tokyo air raids via permanent exhibitions featuring photographs, artifacts and narrative accounts (Fisk, 2011).

The Tokyo Peace Museum, concluded the report, ought to be significant not only in the meaning of its exhibit contents and the accompanying monument. Given the status of Tokyo as a global city, and the fact that the structure would be Tokyo’s symbol of peace for the 21st century, the museum need to be a major structure. They wanted to have it around 4,500 – 5,000 square meters, and have, in addition to the exhibit space that would encompass one-half of the structure,
a reference library, meeting rooms, a 500 seat lecture and concert hall, and a museum shop. In
1993, the same year that the Tokyo Peace Memorial Museum Planning Discussion Group released
the above report, an important conversation and battle about war responsibility and how to
remember the war from the perspective of Japan’s actions in Asia took place. At issue was the
planning of a national peace museum being planned by Japan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare.
Protestors criticized the proposal exhibits for only focusing on the wartime of Japanese civilians.
To focus exclusively on the deaths of 3 million Japanese and suffering of the Japanese civilian
population during the war precluded a legitimate appeal for peace because they ignored Japan’s
role in the deaths of tens of millions of people in Asia. The critics demanded – but did not get –
that a more democratic, collaborative discussion of the exhibit content takes place and that its
designers take into account the concerns of neighboring countries. (Karacas, 2006).

Instead of acting on the advisory committee’s recommendations, Governor Suzuki,
scheduled to finish his fourth and final term in 1994, chose to let his successor, Aoshima Yukio,
inherit the city’s commitment to building the Tokyo Peace Museum. In April 1996 Governor
Aoshima created another advisory group, the Tokyo Metropolitan Peace Memorial Museum
Construction Committee, to finalize the plans for the structure and its exhibit contents. However,
during the committee’s first meeting in May 1994, controversy erupted when representatives from
the governor’s office explained that, due to the city’s deteriorating fiscal situation, the original site
for the museum was not out of consideration, leaving only one city-owned location available,
Yokoami Park. Due to the park’s 2-hectare size and the lack of open space within it, the scale of
the peace memorial needed to be reduced significantly. The plans for the 500 seat auditorium would
be eliminated, and the exhibit space cut from 2,000 square meters to 900 square meters. Even with
this reduction, space constraints within the park required the demolition of most of Reconstruction
Commemoration Hall, the structure that held exhibits relating to the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.
These remnants, together with the building’s exhibits, would be joined with the new peace
museum. Dismayed, some people decried Tokyo for attempting to repeat a mistake made long ago
when the city interred the remains of air raid victims with those of the 1923 catastrophe (Sams,
2006).

In June’s meeting, a majority of the construction committee members voted to build the
Tokyo Peace Museum in Yokoami Park. Proponents of the decision claimed that the park was an
appropriate site gave both its location in Shitamachi, where the vast majority of deaths took place
and the fact the park’s Tokyo Metropolitan Memorial Hall held the remains of the majority of the people killed in the raids. On practical grounds, the popular Edo-Tokyo Museum, as well as stops for a major train line and soon-to-be completed subway line, was in the immediate vicinity, which would create greater foot traffic and allow for easy accessibility. Their third meeting in November the same year, a majority vote approved the plan to tear down Restoration Commemoration Hall (Karacas, 2006).

However, to this plan, there was much opposition. Some protested that building the peace memorial in the park and anchoring Tokyo air raid memories there would further infringe upon the park’s significance as a commemoration space honoring those killed in the 1923 disaster. Given the scale of suffering experienced on the site in 1923, claimed committee member Hashimoto Yoshiko, there is no room to represent another tragedy of entirely different origin. The structures and memorial in the park, according to Hashimoto collectively make the area “a sacred space for the victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake.”

Resistance to the plan to tear down Reconstruction Commemoration Hall proved somewhat effective. In June 1997, the governor’s office announced at a meeting of the construction committee that the Tokyo Peace Museum would be built underground in Yokoami Park, adjacent to and partially adjoining Reconstruction Commemoration Hall, so as to preserve that building. This proposal, agreed to by majority vote at the committee’s next meeting in August 1997, did not placate those calling for the complete preservation of Reconstruction Commemoration Hall, and only deepened the opposition among those who had labored to build the peace museum. To place the structure underground, they charged, was certainly not fitting for Tokyo’s 21st-century symbol of peace. While many individuals such as Hashimoto had worked for over 2 decades to build the memorial, they now found themselves in the position of coming together October 1997 to form a group – led mainly by women who had experienced the Great Tokyo Air Raid and/or lost family members in it – calling upon Tokyo to reconsider its plan to build the peace memorial.

By March 1998, Tsuchiya managed to pass a resolution through the general assembly that required the full assembly’s approval of the exhibits before construction on the Tokyo Peace Museum could begin. A year later, On March 11th, 1999, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly passed another resolution stating that because of both the controversy surrounding the exhibits and Tokyo’s difficult financial situation, the construction of the museum now required its approval. The resolution also declared that the monument for Tokyo’s air raid victims henceforth should be
considered separately from the peace museum and that it be built as quickly as possible in Yokoami park. Contrary to former plans, the monument was not to mention anything about “worldwide victims of the war.” According to the Assembly resolution, the monument’s inscription could refer only to the air raid victims, mourning, and peace. The resolution specified that the memorial is designed to store a list of the names of air raid victims. Although Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Okinawa all had composed a meibo, Tokyo had taken no efforts to do the same. In the early 1990s, a citizen’s group led by air raid survivor Hoshino Hiroshi began a grassroots effort to begin assembling such a list. With the controversy over the exhibit contents of the Tokyo Peace Museum showing no signs of abatement, Governor Aoshima decided to adopt the project of creating an official meibo of the dead (Fisk, 2011).

In August 1999, the assembly passed a resolution that “froze” its construction and reiterated the call for the immediate building of the monument. Newly elected governor Ishihara Shintaro agreed to honor the wishes of the assembly and moved forward with the development of the monument by soliciting design proposals. The proposal that won was by artist Tuschiya Kimio. He had read the literature on the Tokyo air raids, visited Yokoami Park daily, and created a design that adhered both to his sensibilities and to the restrictions on the size, height, and location of the monument due to the park’s small area, limited open space, and centrality of Tokyo Memorial Hall. The finished product, titled “Dwelling of Remembrance”. The centers of the installations are just large enough for one individual to enter via a path leading through a single opening (Karacas, 2006).

While the memorial is intended to honor the dead, according to Tsuchiya the Tokyo Metropolitan Government also wanted to create a space that the general public would see as inviting and bright, space at which people would be comfortable to sit down at while having lunch in front of some colorful flower. The monument’s interior space is visually stunning. 40 thick books, their covers made of the fine-patterned dyeing technique, contain the names of tens of thousands of civilians killed in the Tokyo air raids. On 2nd March 2001, Governor Ishihara Shintaro presided over the dedication ceremony at Yokoami Park of what the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, following the conditions of the assembly resolution mentioned above, officially designated as the “Monument mourning the Tokyo air raid victims and praying for peace”. The

\[12\] lists of those killed in each of their respective catastrophes.
ceremony closed with representatives of bereaved families carrying the meibo that held the names of 68,072 air raid victims into the monument and depositing them within (Karacas, 2006).

Responses to the structure were varied. Some bereaved relatives were indeed pleased that, after more than a half-century, both a list containing the names of their killed family members and a monument to mourn them finally had been created. Others were less impressed, believing that the memorial – built without the memorial museum, and constructed in this location – fails to pay adequately tribute to the dead and that it is not a legitimate appeal to peace. Other criticisms included the size of the structure, which seemed too small, especially when compared to the nearby towering memorial built for the victims of the 1923 earthquake. Some bereaved family members wondered why the names of the air victims were hidden from public view, stating that they would have preferred a memorial comparable to Okinawa’s Cornerstone of Peace, in which the names of the victims are inscribed in stone for everyone to see. One of the more striking and revealing comments came from women who exclaimed, “It is as if they’ve once again been forced to an awful air raid shelter.”

With the construction of the “Dwelling of Remembrance” monument, Tokyo has portrayed Yokoami Park as a commemorative space capable of accommodating the memorialization of 2 separate catastrophes. It has gone a step further by attempting to shift the weight of memory contained within the park and remap its history. Tokyo wants to represent the park as a space associated with the Tokyo air raids. Thus, a Tokyo Bureau of Citizens and Cultural Affairs pamphlet about the new monument mistakenly professes that Yokoami Park has been known as “war damage memorial park” since the early postwar period. A 2003 brochure produced by the food market chain Tokyo Coop suggesting sites to visit for Tokyo Peace Day, describes the charnel house as the structure that holds the ashes of the victims of the 1923 catastrophe, failing to mention the other 100,000 sets of remains. Moreover, among the plethora of Tokyo guidebooks, descriptions of Yokoami Park will mention the site in connection to the air raid victims as, at best, an afterthought, a minor addition to the actual symbolic meaning of the park as related to 1923. On one level, though, the controversy over the how to remember the Tokyo air raids and cancelation of the building of the Tokyo Peace Museum has been buried the very monument that supposedly commemorates the victims. According to some air raid survivors, the processes by which the monument was created, and the museum was abandoned, as well as where the monument is located,
prevents the monument from ever being able to express the misery and grief experienced in Tokyo (Karacás, 2006).

The Great Tokyo Air Raid and War Damages Resource Center, opened in 2002, is difficult to find. It is not close to a train or subway station and is tucked into an area of Koto Ward that is dominated by car repair shops and public housing apartment complexes. The center, a small, nondescript 3-story structure built with private contributions on land donated by an air raid survivor, is not meant as a replacement for the Tokyo Metropolitan Peace Memorial. The center is how they will preserve the experience and memory of the air raids until that moment. In a 14th August 2002 statement, the group issued its opinion of events that led to the Tokyo Peace Museum not being built. “We have lost this one battle,” the group claimed, due to “those who affirmed and glorified Japan’s war of aggressions.” It also issued the longstanding position of its members: That people in Tokyo suffered indescribably under the air raids; that Japan brought much suffering to Asia during the war; and that Tokyo Metropolitan Government should build the peace museum (Karacás, 2006).
Conclusion

As mentioned above in the Methodology, a questionnaire was conducted on 100 participants regarding their knowledge on the Tokyo Fire Bombings. The participants ranged from 11 – 70 years-old and half were Japanese. The participants answered in English and Japanese. Their education levels ranged from compulsory to MA degree or higher with most of them, around 61%, having a BA degree. In total 73% of the participants knew or had heard of the event, 100% of the Japanese participants had heard of it. Most of them had learned about it from compulsory education or from television programs. However, when those who knew of the event were asked to write what they knew, they knew little more than how many died and what year this event took place. When asked what should be done to keep the memory of this event and the suffering of those hit alive, 44% believed that making this a bigger topic in compulsory history lessons, while 37% agreed on finishing the building of the Peace Museum in Tokyo would be the best way to keep the memory alive. Second to last, when asked what this event reminded them of in World History, over 70% mentioned the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lastly, asked if an event like this could occur again, 54% thought it were likely or very likely.

Looking at these results, it is fair to say that the Tokyo Fire Bombings are not yet as common knowledge as other events in history, such as the atomic bombings, might be. The fact that out the 100 participants, more than half knew that this had happened was a good sign. However, out of those who knew, only a few knew any details about the event, for example how many died, means that this has not reached the status of a major event in history. Also, the participants, when asked to mention a similar event in history, most all of them mentioned the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, in a way, that is something that is completely different. This shows that when people think about the WW2 in regards to Japan, the Atomic bombings are one of the main things that come to mind. In order to make the March 10th Tokyo Fire Bombings a memory that will never be forgotten, the Tokyo Peace Museum should be built. Even though it happened many years ago, 71 to be exact, there are still citizens of Japan that lived through the attacks that are still alive. Before they all pass away, a museum to commemorate their experiences should be a big priority. However, it is highly unlikely it will be built is highly unlikely. Tokyo
does not have the money needed to build such a memorial, because most of their money now are being spent on preparing for the Olympics that will be held in Tokyo in four years.

That this happened in Tokyo is horrible and that the government of Japan has not done anything to commemorate this is not acceptable. There are reasons for that, seeing as Japan also conducted air raids in China during the WWII, but this is still something that people should not forget. The fact that it has been forgotten by so many, is one of the reasons many people see nothing wrong with civilian casualties in the Syrian air raids. “They deserve it” is an opinion many have, but is that reason enough to kill innocent people that did nothing wrong? The Tokyo Air Raids should be commemorated more in order to people see the sadness and tragedy it inflicted on innocent civilians and their bystanders. They should be remembered as something the human kind did wrong and should not be repeated. So that the innocent people around the world who are conflicted in war won’t have to go through live seeing their relatives dying and their skin peeling off due to injuries, they should not be forgotten. The Tokyo Air Raids happened and there is nothing that anyone can do that will fix those involved, but just to remember that they happened is enough to keep the memory of everyone that suffered, alive.

Brynjólfur M. Brynjólfsson, 19.01.16
BA Student in Japanese Culture and Language
Bibliography


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13 The author of this thesis understands that this is a book made by a religious group but felt it gave a good insight to experiences of those involved.


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Appendix

Questionnaire

Hello there! My name is Brynjólfur M. (Binni) and I am currently working on my Bachelors Thesis in Japanese Culture and Language at the University of Iceland. In order to get a good understanding of my material, I wish to ask both Japanese Nationals and non Japanese Nationals about my topic in order to see how much knowledge they possess about it either from their environment or official schooling. The data gathered from this questionnaire will solely be used for the purpose of the Bachelor thesis and at no point can the information gathered be directly associated with any one person. This questionnaire has been approved by the Japanese department of the University of Iceland.

My main focus is on the Fire Bombings that occurred on 9th-10th March 1945 but I will also look at the event leading up to the events as well as the consequences.

Please answer the questions without Google-Sensei (Or other people) as for the purpose of the material it is important to glean what general knowledge on this topic might be.

I sincerely appreciate your participation. Should you have any questions or comments please don’t hesitate to contact me at bmb6@hi.is

Thank you,

-Binni
1. What is your nationality?
   a. Japanese
   b. Non-Japanese

2. What is your age?
   a. 11 – 20
   b. 21 – 30
   c. 31 – 40
   d. 41 – 50
   e. 51 – 60
   f. 61 – 70
   g. 70+

3. Please indicate your highest education level.
   a. Compulsory Education
   b. High School
   c. Vocational Training
   d. Bachelor Degree
   e. MA Degree or higher

4. Have you heard of the Tokyo Fire Bombings?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. If yes
   a. Where did you hear about it?
   b. Please write a short description of what you know about it.

6. In your opinion, what is the best way to keep the memory of this event and the suffering of those hit, alive?
   a. Build a Peace Museum in Tokyo
   b. Make this a bigger topic in history classes
   c. The current situation is sufficient
   d. Other

7. Do you feel this event should receive further or more in-depth attention in compulsory history lessons?

8. Is there any other event in history that you can think of that is similar to this one? Which one?

9. Lastly, do you think it is likely that something like this might happen again?
   a. Unlikely
   b. Very Unlikely
   c. Likely
   d. Very Likely
Please indicate your highest education level (100 responses)

- Compulsory Education: 61%
- High School: 22%
- Vocational Training: 11%
- Bachelor Degree: 11%
- MA degree or higher: 6%

Have you heard of the Tokyo Fire Bombings? (100 responses)

- Yes: 73%
- No: 27%
Lastly, do you think it is likely that something like this might happen again?
(99 responses)