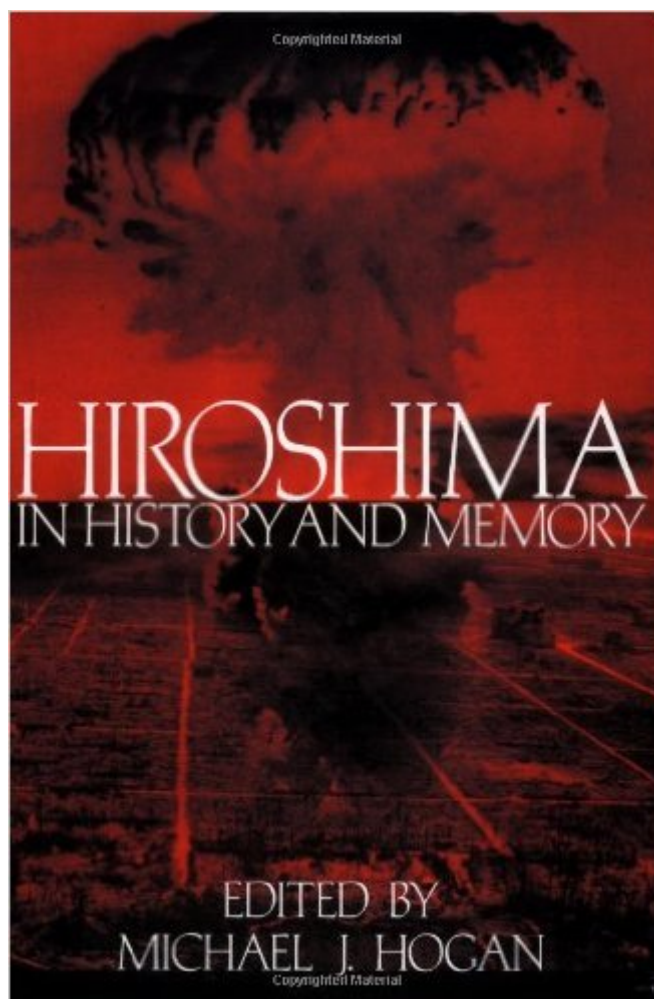


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Hiroshima In History And Memory



Synopsis

In this timely collection of essays, prominent historians survey the Hiroshima story from the American decision to drop the first atomic bomb to the recent controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit in Washington, D.C. The first essay surveys the literature on the atomic bombing of Japan, while the second and third essays evaluate the decisions that led to that event. The remaining essays discuss how the Japanese and American people have remembered Hiroshima in the years since the end of World War II. They emphasize the construction of an official memory of Hiroshima, the challenge posed by alternative or counter-memories, and the tension between history and memory in the Hiroshima story. The collection thus unites up-to-date scholarship by diplomatic historians with the recent interest in memory that has emerged as part of the new cultural history.

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Customer Reviews

An essential feature of any historical work is the selection of sources one wishes to present as an argument. The role of memory and access to history, that is public access to 'other' histories, is an area of much contention in the contemporary world. What I most enjoyed about this book is the authors have not shied away from commenting on earlier critiques of the proposed Smithsonian display, involving the restored fuselage of the Enola Gay. What was shameful about the ensuing debacle, I believe, was the attempt to discredit the further development of an alternate memory given 50 years had passed since the atomisation of Hiroshima. After all, was it not possible to show an American and Japanese view of the closing months of the Pacific War, regardless of who the victor was? It is critical to understand that Australians, let alone Japanese, cut a different slant on

the way we interpret history, particularly that of Pacific War history. I believe we are richer for the experience. But, of course, an alternate memory has developed, yet it is often dismissed by the euphemistic expression, 'historical revisionism'. This appears to be some sort of code for 'this sort of history is not acceptable to the conservative elements in contemporary American society, certainly much less to those who actually witnessed combat in the Pacific'. By virtue of fact, it has no legitimate place among orthodox histories. All history is subject to revision, for the simple reason new facts become available and each generation chooses to impose its own standards. This is certainly the case with Hiroshima. But this shouldn't be construed as 'wrong' or a 'threat', rather it adds to the debate and formation of ideas which underpin the importance of Hiroshima and historiography.

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