

Liverpool and HANAOKA : Two Museums of Reconciliation*

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Introduction

Reconciliation between the aggressor and the victim who existed in a same historical event is difficult to bring about. Also difficult is reconciliation between their respective descendants who, after the event, live in the same period of time. A first and basic step to reconciliation in such a case may be to share the facts of the historical event on both sides. And an even more challenging way will be to acknowledge the facts of the wrongdoings on the part of the aggressor and their descendants. That will be a prelude to a reconciliation that the victim and their descendants can accept. Such challenges are going on in the English city of Liverpool and in the Japanese town of HANAOKA, both of which are the very spots where the respective aggressions took place.

Liverpool, as one knows, was a centre port of the slave trade for about 400 years until it was prohibited in 1807, during which time slave ships from Liverpool made 5,000 Atlantic crossings. And, owing to it, the city became prosperous whereas a great number of African people then treated as slaves lost their dignity as human beings. To acknowledge this history, the Merseyside Maritime Museum of Liverpool opened a permanent gallery devoted to transatlantic slavery in 1994.

HANAOKA, a very small town in the northeast of Japan, was one of the places to which the Japanese Imperial Army of the war-time sent Chinese POWs and kidnapped civilians as slave-

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workers for Japanese mine corporations. Owing to the severe labour forced to them, the slave-workers tried to escape, but were caught soon and brutalized by the people of the town. In 1989, the survivors and the bereaved families formed HANAOKA Victims Liaison and started a lawsuit against Kajima Construction Company, one of the leading mine corporations at that time, demanding their official apology, their compensation, and their efforts to set up a museum which tells the facts of what had actually happened at HANAOKA. In 1990 an official apology was made by the company, and, as regards their compensation, a legal reconciliation was brought about in 2000. Yet, the third demand has not been met so far. In 2002, a civilian group called HANAOKA PEACE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION, of which most of the members are HANAOKA people, was formed with the first objective to set up a museum. The museum has not been built yet, but it's on the way.

The following is my research notes on the two museums; what are they like? and what is the difference between the two?

1 . Liverpool

“The State in which these unfortunate creatures were found is shocking to every principle of humanity. Seventeen men, shackled together in pairs, by the legs, and twenty boys, one on the other, in the main hold, a space measuring 18 feet in length, 7 feet 8 inches main breadth, and 1 foot 8 inches in height; and under them the yams for their support. One of these unfortunate creatures was in the last state of dysentery, whose natural evacuations ran involuntarily from him amongst these yams, creating effluvia too shocking for description. On their being released from irons, their appearance was most distressing; scarcely one of them could stand on his legs, from cramp and evident starvation. The space allowed for the females, thirty-four in number, was even more contracted than that for the men, measuring only 9 feet 4 inches in length, 4 feet 8 inches main breadth, and 2 feet 7 inches in height, but not being confined in irons, and perhaps allowed during the day to come on deck, they did not present so distressing an appearance as the men.” — from *Annual Register*, 1788, quoted in *The Survey of London in the Eighteenth Century* by Sir Walter Besant, pp.61-62.

I was in the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery twice. Each time I tried a walk-through experience in the recreated hold of a slave ship, remembering in mind the above-mentioned note on the de-

humanising treatment of the slaves on board ship. The Gallery provides 12 spoken accounts of the slave ship in the 18th century, which visitors can hear by the telephone devices.

The Transatlantic Slavery Gallery, the subtitle of which is '*against human dignity*', is in the basement of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool. The size of it is about 400 square metres, not large but compact. On the plaque of the entrance, there is a guide-word as follows: "In the four hundred years between 1500 and 1900, Europeans enslaved millions of Africans. They shipped them across the Atlantic in conditions of great cruelty". And, once you step in, you will soon realize that it takes quite a long time to get all exhibits through, not because they are displayed in the dim lighting, but because each of them tells you inescapable facts of the past, and speaks to you, implicitly, "How should you live up with these facts?"

The academically-examined artefacts and illustrations displayed are all well-organised to depict each of the themes such as *The Origin of Transatlantic Slavery*, *Growth of European Slaving and the European Traders*, and *Scale of Transatlantic Slavery*, and so on. And these exhibits create a good chance for visitors to face more facts behind the transatlantic slavery and to think about them. For instance, the fact that the African people, before they had been enslaved, lived their own way of life as farmers, merchants, priests, soldiers, goldsmiths, musicians, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters will make visitors think that the Africans' right to live peacefully should not have been deprived of. And the fact that the transatlantic slavery trade was a cause of the African Diaspora will certainly make them understand that that is why the descendants of the Africans live together with them in many parts of the world including Liverpool.

Liverpool visitors, and white visitors in particular, might feel it painful to face such facts that, as Ramsey Muir points out in his *A History of Liverpool* (1907), "Beyond doubt it was the slave trade which raised Liverpool from a struggling port to one of the most richest and prosperous trading centres in the world", and that, in the 18th century, a slave trader was elected as the mayor of the city and was respected as a pious Christian. These painful feelings might be amplified by the Slavery History Trail, a two-hour guided walk organised by the Gallery, which takes in streets and buildings of Liverpool with connections to the slave trade. However, they must acknowledge that these are the facts they can not escape from.

The transatlantic Slavery Gallery is a fruit of the combined efforts of Peter Moores, founder

of the Peter Moores Foundation, and Anthony Tibbles, chief curator of Maritime History. Peter Moores approached Anthony Tibbles with the suggestion of creating a display about the slave trade and financed nearly £550,000 for it. And Anthony Tibbles directed practical matters such as the academic examination of the history of the transatlantic slave trade, the collection of exhibits, the hearing of voices from the black community in Liverpool, and even the choice of the wordings on the plaques at the display rooms. Anthony Tibbles says in his paper: “I hope the Gallery will continue to encourage debate and discussion and encourage others to take on similar challenges.” (Anthony Tibbles, *Against Human Dignity : The development of the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery at Merseyside Maritime, Liverpool, in PROCEEDINGS of IVth International Congress of Maritime Museums*, 1996)

2 . HANAOKA

“On the night of July 30 (1945) , more than 800 Chinese slave workers in a small town in the northeast of Japan had escaped into the hills. The local militia, mostly farmers and shopkeepers armed with bamboo spears and clubs, helped the police to hunt them down. Rabbit hunting they called it. The Chinese were marched into a yard in front of the village community hall and forced to sit on their knees, hands tied behind their backs, naked from the waist up, for three days and nights, without food or drink. It was the hottest time of the year. Yachida later heard that some Chinese had tried to drink their own urine. About fifty men were tortured to death inside the hall. Some were suspended from the ceiling by their thumbs and beaten. Others had water forced down their throats, after which men would stamp on their stomachs. Schoolboys were told by their teachers to spit on the Chinks. And they were handed sticks to beat them with. In one village, not far from where Yachida saw the prisoners, teenage boys of the local youth association clubbed several Chinese to death.” — from Ian Burma, *The Wages of Guilt*, 1994, pp.275-276.

This Japanese brutality had killed about 100 Chinese slave-workers, and was later called the ‘HANAOKA Incident’. And it is indeed the HANAOKA Incident that pushed Yachida Tsuneo, who was only five years old at the time of the Incident, and others in HANAOKA to start a movement to help the surviving victims and the bereaved families, with remorse and apologies. They have helped them to come to the memorial service held every year at HANAOKA and, helped them to go on to lawsuits for demanding official apologies and compensations from the mine companies at the time.

In 2002, they formed an NPO named HANAOKA Peace Memorial Association with the first aim of building a museum at HANAOKA. In the museum, if it was realised, they would display exhibits such as the history of the aggression caused by the people of HANAOKA, the history of the resistance of the Chinese slave-workers, and the history of the forced labour as a whole implemented by the Japanese government and companies of the war-time. Also they would hope that the museum be a place to play a bridge-making role in communications between Chinese and Japanese living in the present time. “The HANAOKA Incident is not only a minus assets for us, but also an important starting point for our peace message,” says one of their NPO News (No.6, 2005) .

HANAOKA Peace Memorial Association started a fund-raising campaign with the target amount of money for 50,000,000 yen (equivalent to £250,000) , and, as of November 2004, they collected 16,500,000 yen (equivalent to £82,500) , far lower than the target. But, as the estate price is very low in HANAOKA, they were gifted with a chance to buy a good place for the museum with that amount of money. The size of the building is about 150 square metres, and the surrounding land space is about 1600 square metres, large enough to make a parking lot for visitors. The result was that they failed, because they were blown back by a latent resistance remaining in the hearts of the people of HANAOKA : “We acknowledge the fact of the history, but, why should we go far to show in public the shameful acts we committed in the past?”

Comparison

Learning from the two cases of Liverpool and HANAOKA, one can safely say that it is not all too difficult to build a museum of reconciliation, or, at least a museum which plays a prelude to reconciliation, under the following three conditions; i.e., ① if there is the existence of an individual who has a heart and spirit, the energy and the dedication which propels other people, and ② if there is enough money to build a museum, and lastly, ③ if there is a strong support from the local inhabitants.

In the case of Liverpool, all three requirements are met. There were two such individuals: Peter Moores and Anthony Tibbles. According to Tibbles’ paper (*ditto*) , Peter Moores first motioned Anthony Tibbles by sending him the following words:

During forty years of work and travel in Europe and America, it became increasingly clear to me that slavery was a taboo subject, both to white and to black

people. Forty years ago, most Europeans had managed to suppress any acknowledgement of their connections with the slave trade. In the United States, where it was impossible to ignore the results of the slave trade, there was segregation, later bussing and recently something like integration, but never any mention of how black people came to be in America in the first place. We can come to terms with our past only by accepting it, and in order to be able to accept it we need knowledge of what actually happened. We need to make sense of our history.

It seemed to me that the taboo should be exorcised, and black friends agreed with me.

And then Anthony Tibbles who seconded the motion moved his fellow curators and academics to go for it. As regards the second requirement, Liverpool was lucky enough to have such a philanthropist as Peter Moores who offered as much as £550,000. And the city council as a representing body of the inhabitants of Liverpool supported the museum by passing a resolution which expressed its shame and remorse for the city's role in the slave trade and made an "unreserved apology". (from *Liverpool City Council Resolution* of 29 November 1999)

In the case of HANAOKA, the first requirement is met. There are individuals such as Yachida Tsuneo, who is the instigator, and two local solicitors, a local council member, a local dentist, a local Buddhist monk, and so on. What is lacking in Hanaoka are the second and third requirements. In their fund-raising campaign they have not experienced to meet such philanthropists as Peter Moores so far. A very rare experience they have had is to meet a famous translator living in a different part of Japan who funded 500,000 yen (equivalent to £2,500) at a time. I wish a rich Japanese would come up to exorcise the taboo and offer financial aid for the museum. Lastly, as regards the third requirement, which is the most difficult to meet, there would be no other way to continue to persuade the local people of HANAOKA with patience, and with a belief that, if their museum is realised, it can contribute to a reconciliation between Chinese and Japanese.

Postscript :

In October, 5 months after my presentation at the International Conference, a news from HANAOKA came in that they at last obtained a land for their prospective museum, with the size of 870 square metres and with the price of 8,000,000 yen (equivalent to £40,000), located alongside the HANAOKA river.

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