

# The Role of Architectural Monuments, Design, and Nature in Forgiveness and Healing in Postwar Multicultural Communities. Case Study: “Okenchashiki” – A Sacred Tea Ceremony at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 2011<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Efforts to rebuild communities after the devastation of war and disaster can benefit from implementation of design measures that foster healing and forgiveness. Recovery improves when settings and spaces provide elements that invoke hope and resilience through both tangible and intangible features, and the use of design can promote understanding among cultural groups able to identify with universal healing properties.<sup>2,3</sup>

This paper presents research on healing design practices, along with a case study illustrating the benefits of employing those practices in a multicultural setting. The research includes examples of natural and constructed elements shown to support mind-body connections to place and well-being, and the case study illustrates the benefits of public space designed to promote commemoration leading to forgiveness.

## Principal Argument

Conflict and disaster can significantly affect health and well-being and lead to long-term complications, with the primary psychological responses being shock, grief, despair, anxiety, and anger. Responses to devastation improve significantly with the ability of individuals and communities to reconnect with familiar rituals, objects, sights, and structures within the framework of a shared cultural context and spiritual space.<sup>4</sup> Reconnecting fragmented threads of cultural identity allows integrated healing and restoration of communal ties, which are fundamental for lasting well-being.<sup>5</sup> While the healing process can be difficult to maintain, the presence of restorative natural and constructed features is especially important in sustaining hope where continuity has been severely disrupted.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sen XV, Dr. Genshitsu. “OKENCHASHIKI”: a sacred tea ceremony to the spirits of the war dead for world peace, conducted without words or music, allows for all participants, regardless of language, nationality, or religious beliefs, to share in a spiritual communion together. (Pearl Harbor: HI, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Stanley-Price, Nicholas (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage in Post-War Recovery: Papers from the ICCROM FORUM held October 2-4, 2005*. International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). (Rome: ICCROM, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Pleasant, A., Scanlon, M., and Pereira-Leon, M. Literature review: Environmental design and research on the human health effects of open spaces in urban areas. *Human Ecology Review* 20.1 (2013): 36-49. Society for Human Ecology.

<sup>4</sup> Wijesuriya, Gamini. The restoration of the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka: a post-conflict cultural response to loss of identity, in N. Stanley- Price (Ed.), *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery*, pp. 87-97. (Rome: ICCROM, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Barakat, Sultan. Postwar reconstruction and the recovery of cultural heritage: critical lessons from the last fifteen years, in N. Stanley-Price (Ed.), *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery*, p.29. (Rome: ICCROM, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Sternberg, Esther M. *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being*. (pp. 193-214). (Cambridge,

### **Research Toward Recovery from Conflict and Disaster**

Significant attention was brought to the need for preservation of important cultural sites following World War II with the development and ratification of the Hague Convention in the event of armed conflict in 1954.<sup>7</sup> However, the Hague Convention did little to address postwar or post-disaster recovery following an event of conflict. Research toward recovery has benefitted from recent studies that address the issues on a variety of levels. Notably, the *Forum on Cultural Heritage and Postwar Recovery* presented by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) provides examples of physical and psychological efforts from such regions as the Balkans, Central America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Sri Lanka, and Laos.<sup>8</sup>

Additional resources within the *Proceedings of the International Training Course on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage*, conducted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites International Committee of Risk Preparedness (ICOMOS ICORP) and Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, provide examples from sites of natural disasters.<sup>9</sup> Recent studies in *Greening the Red Zone* examine the paramount importance of nature in recovery through practices of active engagement,<sup>10</sup> and studies demonstrating the effects of settings on the brain through neuroscience are leading to significant developments in healing approaches enhanced by design and access to nature.<sup>11,12</sup>

### **Environmental Design: Firmness, Commodity, and Delight**

Fundamental design characteristics that support well-being have been promoted for centuries, but when tied directly to healing and forgiveness, take on added significance. Engagement in conflict and healing is fundamentally instinctive in nature and relies on input and validation through the five physical senses. Additional information is gathered by sensing the *spirit of place* (genius loci) and the ability of the place to meet certain wants and needs (affordances).<sup>13</sup> Every design feature that supports healing and reduces dis-ease is relevant, and basic considerations of physiological life-safety needs are essential. To groups having once been on opposing sides, safe access and physical and psychological shelter are critical.<sup>14</sup> Design elements that provide context, accessibility, orientation, legibility, and security are essential.

Features of biophilic design are often the most apparent and easily available for incorporation into design of healing settings: sunlight, fresh air, views of nature, living elements (trees, plants,

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MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO (1954). *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention and the Second Protocol*, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley-Price, Nicholas (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage in Post-War Recovery: Papers from the ICCROM FORUM held October 2-4, 2005*. International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). (Rome: ICCROM, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> ICOMOS ICORP (International Committee of Risk Preparedness) and Ritsumeikan University Research Center for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage (Rits-DMUCH), (2010). *Proceedings. International Training Course on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage* (pp. 1-77). Kyoto: ICOMOS ICORP and Ritsumeikan University.

<sup>10</sup> Tidball, Keith G. and Krasny, Marianne K. (Eds.). *Greening in the Red Zone: Disaster, Resilience and Community Greening*. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Sternberg, Esther M. *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being*. (pp. 193-214). (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Nichols, Wallace J. *Blue Mind*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, forthcoming, July 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Alexander, C., Ishikana, S., Silverstein, M., Jacobsen, M., Fiksdahl-King, I., and Angel, S. *A Pattern Language*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Pleasant, A., Scanlon, M., and Pereira-Leon, M. Literature review: Environmental design and research on the human health effects of open spaces in urban areas. *Human Ecology Review* 20.1 (2013): p. 40. Society for Human Ecology.

animals, and other life forms), energy (chi), natural materials, earth-tone colors, sounds of nature, and soft materials underfoot.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond basic elements of nature, presentation of iconic beauty promotes spiritual refreshment: arches, vaulted ceilings, domes, celestial designs, spires, and pillars; gardens, mountains, oceans, birds and animals, shells, eggs, and flowers; natural patterns of branching, repetition, rhythm, flow; interplay of colors, light, shadow, and shade; fragrances of flowers, trees, incense, the ocean, and rain; harmonious sound of bells, chimes, falling water, instrumental music, and the human voice in chanting, laughter, and song. Intangible elements of the spirit of place – history, customs, traditions, and rituals infuse the space with context and connectivity across boundaries and generate reverence, reflection, and regeneration.<sup>16</sup>

### Case Study: The Sacred Tea Ceremony, USS Arizona Memorial (2011)



At the invitation of key leaders of the state of Hawai'i and the U.S. Navy, Dr. Sen Genshitsu (Soshitsu XV) conducted a *Sacred Tea Ceremony for World Peace and to Honor the War Dead at Pearl Harbor* on the USS Arizona Memorial in July, 2011.<sup>17</sup> The ceremony commemorated the attack on Pearl Harbor, which led to U.S. engagement in the war. Three surviving members of the crew of the USS Arizona were present. The ceremony provided a unique opportunity for the survivors of the attack to meet former enemies and share mutual forgiveness. Dr.

Sen, born in 1923 in Kyoto, had been a Japanese Navy pilot during World War II. Unique to the event was the ceremony that required no words to be understood.

Unique to the setting was the circumstance of the architect of the Memorial, Alfred Preis. Preis was an immigrant to America, fleeing Austria at the impending annexation by Germany in 1939. Preis was imprisoned by the U.S. government following the attack on Pearl Harbor as part of the Japanese and German internment policy and spent three months in an internment camp.

<sup>15</sup> Kellert, Stephen R. *Biophilic Design: The Theory, Science, and Practice of Bringing Buildings to Life*. (New York: Wiley, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Humphrey, Caroline and Vitebsky, Piers. *Sacred Architecture*. (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Sen is the Fifteenth Grand Tea Master of the *Chado Urasenke Tankokai*, a Japanese organization devoted to the practice of the Waay of Tea.



*US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (SW) Mars Logico/Released*

Preis' design of the USS Arizona Memorial was intended to reflect America's course during the war, "Wherein the structure sags in the center but stands strong and vigorous at the ends, [it] expresses initial defeat and ultimate victory....The overall effect is one of serenity. Overtones of sadness have been omitted to permit the individual to contemplate his own personal responses...his innermost feelings."<sup>18</sup> In designing the memorial, the Navy mandated that it be a bridge spanning the sunken ship without touching it. The structure straddles the hull of the sunken wreck and consists of three parts: a dock and entry providing the liminal experience of passing into the sacred space; an open-air assembly area where visitors can view the sunken ship and cast flowers into the ocean; and a shrine that lists the names of the men killed, including survivors who have chosen upon death to have their ashes interred in the ship. The Memorial was dedicated in 1962.

### **Outcomes**

The process of healing may be a long-term endeavor that takes not only weeks or months, but sometimes, as this case study shows, generations. While reconstruction may be accomplished quickly, the regenerative processes of multicultural engagement and spiritual celebration, combined with design, heritage and nature, promote forgiveness and healing and provide deep and lasting benefits far into the future.



*Pearl Harbor Survivors: Alfred Rodrigues, Ray Emory and Sterling Cale. AP Photo. July 11, 2011*

<http://www.nps.gov/wwii/learn/historyculture/world-war-ii-valor-in-the-pacific-national-monument.htm>

<sup>18</sup> "History and Culture – World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. nps.gov. Washington, DC: U.S. National Park Service. Retrieved 2014-05-07.

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