

***The Cultural Memory of Scientists in the First, Second, and Third Worlds:  
Remembering Dorothy Hodgkin (1910-94) in Europe, China, and India.***

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This paper explores the variation in the cultural memory of scientists across major geopolitical spheres, such as Europe, China, and India, by comparing the spectrum of memories generated in these spheres by Dorothy Hodgkin, (1910-1994) a Nobel Laureate chemist & Pugwash President, who was based at Oxford University throughout her entire career. (1928-32 & 1934-94)

Memories of Hodgkin are retrieved from commemorations held both during her lifetime (e.g. on the occasions of her 70th and 80th anniversaries; as well as at the 50th anniversary of her co-discovery of the first protein X-ray photo; see Abir-Am 1992c) as well as after her death in 1994. This paper seeks to clarify the social forces that shape the cultural memory of scientists, most notably scientific accomplishments, political activism, gender, race, and spirituality. The paper documents and explains why memories generated by Hodgkin differ across Europe, China, and India.

For example, the cultural memory of Hodgkin among European male scientists focused on her “gentle” demeanor and supposed “happily married” status, as if conformity to social expectation from her gender position was the most important aspect of her scientific career. (Hodgkin was a sole Nobel Laureate in chemistry) By contrast, Chinese scientists remember Hodgkin primarily as a scientific ambassador, who visited China several times since the 1950s and brought the scientific work done in China to the attention of international science organizations, at a time Chinese scientists could not travel overseas. Along these lines, Indian scientists remember mainly Hodgkin’s spiritual qualities, likening her to a combination of Gandhi & Mother Theresa. But the most interesting challenge is to explain why women scientists seem to be the only ones who recall Hodgkin primarily as a scientist. They, thus, remain the main source of detailed subtleties on Hodgkin’s scientific accomplishments.