

## BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

## JAPAN IN WAR AND PEACE

the conclusion Ienaga Saburō reached thirty-eight years earlier, in his *The Pacific War*: Japan was responsible for the war (Ienaga did not attempt to assign individual responsibility). Both that volume and now this are available in English. The danger in each case is that American readers, not knowing that important questions exist about US policy, read *The Pacific War* and *Who Was Responsible?* and conclude that US wartime propaganda and the American master-narrative were right after all, that the Japanese leaders—and they alone—were responsible. Both books have an important and laudable role to play in the thinking of their primary—Japanese—readers; they function differently for American readers, not their primary intended audience.

Is *Who Was Responsible?* useful in our classrooms? It depends entirely on how we use it. If we use it as an example of conscientious Japanese trying to come to terms with Japan's role in the Asia-Pacific War, yes. If we use it to show how the historical questions we ask are as important as the answers we arrive at, yes. If we use it as gospel, if we use it to reinforce the American master-narrative, no. ■

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## LEAVES FROM AN AUTUMN OF EMERGENCIES

### *Selections from the Wartime Diaries of Ordinary Japanese*

SAMUEL HIDEO YAMASHITA, EDITOR

HONOLULU: THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS, 2005  
334 PAGES, ISBN 13: 978-0-8248-2977-3, PAPERBACK

REVIEWED BY THEODORE F. COOK



**W**hat is war like? How can we view war through the eyes of those experiencing it without knowing its certain outcome? Samuel H. Yamashita brings us major excerpts from eight extraordinary diaries, left by what he calls “ordinary Japanese,” that give us access to the inner lives of individuals in the midst of the great catastrophe of the Asian and Pacific War. All writing during the war in widely dispersed parts of Japan, these people tell us of their concerns and their experiences in deeply personal ways.

All is not misery for these people, since their diaries are records of lives in process, not lives viewed in retrospect, except, ultimately by their editor and, perhaps, by us, the readers of this outstanding book.

The art of diary writing has long been a skill to which Japanese have applied themselves with dedication and patience in the face of extraordinary difficulties. One needs only to consult Donald Keene's fine study of famous diaries and diarists to document the value of that form of personal recollection for anyone wishing to grapple with how individuals in Japanese society see their own lives.<sup>1</sup> The wartime diary of a renowned literary critic like Kiyosawa Kiyoshi,<sup>2</sup> or the daily record of a professional military man, such as the diary of Admiral Ugaki Matome, both made available in English a number of years ago,<sup>3</sup> provide invaluable insights into Japan's experiences during the long years of war.

There can never be a perfect window into the war, but Yamashita's skillful selection of diaries and his faithful and humane translation brings to life a range of Japanese experiences that will both broaden and complicate any discussion of what it meant to live through the Second World War in Japan. Among the characters we come to know through their diaries are Itabashi Yasuo, a Navy Special Attack pilot, whose last entry was written on April 8, 1945; Tamura Tsunejirō, erstwhile billiard parlor owner whose diary, when published in Japan, was given the title, *Bittersweet: The Wartime and Postwar Diary of an Ordinary Kyoto Person*; and Nomura Seiki, in



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## JAPAN IN WAR AND PEACE

an entry subtitled by Yamashita, "A Defeated Japanese Soldier," confides to his diary his fight on Okinawa, from the American landings through his miraculous survival. We meet Takahashi Aiko, a woman who, after education in Japan, emigrated with her family to America about 1916 and lived in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, where she married and had children before she and her husband returned to Japan in 1932. He opened a medical practice in Tokyo. Christians, they spent the war in Tokyo, and her diary tells us of their lives in the Hiroo district of Tokyo throughout the conflict.

Bringing the literary diary of Yoshikawa Hisako, *Until the War Ended*, to the English reading public here is a great service, for her extraordinary work, first published in 1947 under the name of her husband, Furiya Tsunetake, paints an intimate portrait of the 1944–45 experience of Tokyo residents. Her expressions of sentiments forbidden by police and society—fear at an air raid, certainty of defeat, dealing on the Black Market—were captured in her words in the diary her husband had asked her to keep when he was away; we are treated with amazing moments of clarity. On March 10, 1945, the day following the firestorm that swept across most of Tokyo, she recorded, "We're already way beyond not believing in our rulers or being dissatisfied with them. Now that these feelings are widely held by my countrymen, *I must be ready for the next thing and survive* [emphasis in the original] (201). Yoshikawa Hisako's words prepare us all for "the next thing" by her expression of the will to survive, since the three final diaries in the book are of youths: a young girl, Maeda Shōko, about fifteen years of age, mobilized for labor service near Chiran, one of the key bases for the Special Attack planes that flew off on their one-way missions to the seas around Okinawa in April 1945, and, a schoolboy, Manabe Ichirō, born in 1933, evacuated with his classmates from his home in central Tokyo to rural Fukushima in the summer of 1944, only to return to Tokyo for their graduation in late February 1945, just as much of the heart of the capital was devoured in flames. While her diary reveals the relationship that grew up between the girls and the young men who were to die in the South, his diary ends abruptly. The last diary is of a girl, also from Tokyo, who was evacuated to Fukumitsu in Toyama prefecture in April 1945, after the great raids on Tokyo. She takes us through the last days of the war right down to how she, at ten years old, learned of the Emperor's message ending the war and her sentiments upon hearing the news from her teachers.

Throughout these pages we come to see the war as people living in it felt its pace and pulse. Often barely noticed, sometimes overwhelming, the war was the constant but barely understood reality within which life was lived. We do not find passionate discussions of war aims or miseries, campaigns or politics, and usually we feel the pain of loss and shock more indirectly in these pages than as formed opinion or argument.

The glossary at the end is most useful to those looking at the war years as a kind of quick check on the bubble of vocabulary in which everyday life was lived, from the names of simple foods and daily appliances, to the activities that the grandiose wartime phrases that crept into daily discourse would seem to have forced aside. A fine bibliography provides a compendium of must-read books for any serious student of the Asian Pacific War.

## FRANKLIN R. BUCHANAN PRIZE

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Association for Asian Studies (AAS) invites submissions for the Franklin R. Buchanan Prize. Established in 1995 by the AAS Committee on Educational Issues and Policy and the Committee on Teaching about Asia, the prize is awarded annually to recognize an outstanding curriculum publication on Asia designed for any educational level, elementary through university.

The winning submission will reflect current scholarship, present innovative teaching strategies, and make a significant impact on the intended audience. Submissions must have been published after January 1, 2006, and include extensive teaching strategies in order to be considered. Various formats are acceptable, including print, CD, video, and online formats. Submissions that address underrepresented regions of Asia are encouraged.

The 2008 Buchanan prize will be awarded to the author of the work at the AAS Annual Meeting in Atlanta, April 3-6, 2008. The prize includes a \$1,000 monetary award and a one-year membership to AAS.

#### **Submissions are due November 1, 2007.**

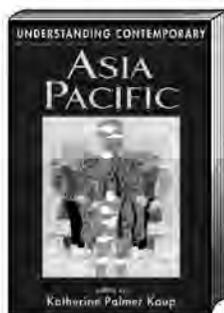
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I believe this new addition to our bookshelf will make it possible for those teaching the Pacific and Asian War to have a vital new source upon which to base both conclusions and questions. Suitable for university and secondary classrooms, use of the diaries can certainly include comparing them with standard narrative sources, particularly ones from the Allied nations; comparing remembered experiences against contemporary documents such as these is another welcome option, for in many ways these diaries confirm many of the remembered experiences that we can locate. Indeed, even the possibility of role-play or skits arises here, since several of these selections allow us to watch the transformation of some of these “ordinary Japanese” over the course of their war.

At the very start of his Acknowledgements, Samuel Yamashita referred to his first reading of *Kike Wadatsumi no Koe* [*Listen to the Voices from the Sea*], now available at long last in translation.<sup>4</sup>

If I may be permitted a personal remembrance, that book was one of the first two I ever read in Japanese.<sup>5</sup> My encounter with the moving stories of the final days of the young students, termed “Special Attack,” or *Kamikaze* (Divine Wind) pilots, as they wrote their farewell letters before embarking on suicide missions, was intense. Indeed, the insights these materials gave me into the world of Japanese young people in the Pacific War have haunted me ever since. They certainly played a major part in leading me to examine the war and Japan’s military institutions and compelled me to seek out living memories of that war, allowing Haruko Taya Cook and I to make our book *Japan at War: An Oral History*.<sup>6</sup> The mundane can be profound when one makes the effort to look at what the diarists at the time thought most important. We may learn much about the mindset of wartime Japan from reading these outstanding selections against remembered experiences and those set down and analyzed by historians decades removed from the events. ■

### NOTES

1. Donald Keene. *Modern Japanese Diaries: The Japanese at Home and Abroad as Revealed through Their Diaries* (New York: Holt, 1998) and his *Travelers of a Hundred Ages: The Japanese as Revealed Through 1,000 Years of Diaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
2. Kiyoshi Kiyosawa. *A Diary of Darkness: The Wartime Diary of Kiyosawa Kiyoshi*. Forward by Marius Jansen; edited with introduction by Eugene Soviak; translated by Eugene Soviak and Kamiyama Tamie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
3. Ugaki Matome. *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941–1945*. Masataka Chihaya, translator, forward by Gordon Prange; edited by Donald M. Goldstein and Catherine V. Dillon (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).
4. Nihon Senbetsu Gakusei Kinenkai, ed. *Listen to the Voices from the Sea [Kike Wadatsumi no Koe]*. Translated by Midori Yamanouchi and Joseph L. Quinn, S.J. (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2000).
5. The other was also published initially by Iwanami press. *Senbetsu nōmin heishi no tegami* [*Letters from Peasant Soldiers Who Died in Action*], drawn from soldiers from Iwate prefecture; still has no English translation.
6. Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook. *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

THEODORE F. COOK is Professor of History and Director of Asian Studies at the William Paterson University of New Jersey.

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