



Panel's title : Bringing Japan's Lost War to the World through Oral History

Coordinator : Theodore F. Cook. (William Paterson University)

Language : English

Topics : (G-History, I-Languages and literatures)

Panel presentation :

When Svetlana Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015 "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time," oral history received recognition as the powerful literary creative form it can be. This panel embraces the thought that the multiverse of war experience and memory requires engagement with those sharing their stories far beyond archiving their words. To some in the field, this is apostasy, yet this panel explores how we may uncover and bring disparate voices together for readers of many cultures to understand Japan's last war. The Asia-Pacific War, spanning least 1931-1945, lies nearly three-quarters of century behind us. Much of what was captured live in making the 1991 first edition of *Japan at War: An Oral History*, the work of two members of this panel, can no longer be attested to by many of those speakers, yet their voices, uncovered via a then unparalleled quest across Japan and drawn out in hours of close contact, illuminate universal themes that beleaguer everyone engulfed by war and its aftermath, phenomena still not yet laid to rest in our world today.

Three scholars speak here: One, Japanese, specializing in war literature and language turned oral historian to provide readers of English insight into Japan's conflict not previously available. A second, from the U.S.A. studies Japan's military institutions and war's social and cultural dimensions as attested to by individuals. The third is from France, a journalist, magazine editor, and the author and translator of many works as diverse as North Vietnam's War, Rumania in 1940, and Japan's War. They come together to debate and share how they have grappled with turning individual memories into oral history accessible to the world, inviting discussion of how memories of human trauma may best be captured and rendered understandable.

Key words : War; oral history; Japan; literature; Second World War; Asia-Pacific War; war experience; Saipan; Okinawa; China; Korea; kamikaze; comfort women; atrocity; memory; atomic bomb; Hiroshima; Nagasaki; Paris; translation; popular culture

Participants :

- 1) **Name(s) (Affiliation, University...)** : Haruko Taya Cook (William Paterson University.)

Communication's title : Capturing the "Living Memory" of a War

Language : English :

Presentation :

"How did you do it?" Since publication of *Japan at War: An Oral History*, I have been blessed by queries concerning the process and the problems inherent in making it. Many have asked me to go



beyond the simple explanations included in the volume itself, while others seemed to wish that I had devoted almost all the precious pages available to revealing techniques that made it possible to recover memories from the several hundred individuals who were the initial base for my research into Japan's war, collected over a period of about three years. Ultimately, sixty-eight individuals were included, but even how they, rather than others interviewed, were "privileged" has attracted questions, sometimes even demands, for me to expand the 'data base' for uses others might wish to make of them. On this occasion I will put aside reluctance, indeed steadfast insistence, that, as Studs Terkel once characterized it, *Japan at War* is "a memory book," where the voices are their own justification, and discuss and engage with weighty issues encountered in making the book and the lessons learned in seeking out the feelings of the wartime generation and the contradictions between official views of the war and living testimony.

Key words: War; oral history; Japan; literature; Second World War; Asia-Pacific War; war experience; Saipan; Okinawa; China; Korea; kamikaze; comfort women; atrocity; memory; atomic bomb; Hiroshima; Nagasaki; Paris; translation; popular culture

2) Name(s) (Affiliation, University...) : .Danièle Mazingarbe (Independent French Scholar)

Communication's title : Sharing *Le Japon en guerre 1931-1945* with France and the World

Language : English :

Presentation :

Through my career as a journalist, editor-in-chief of *Madame Figaro*, and author, I have encountered the theme of war many times. Indeed, in *Xuan Phuong of Ao Bai; from Dalat to the jungle with Ho Chi Minh*, I assisted a participant and victim of the Indochina wars share her story. I encountered in the Cooks' book what a master of oral history called "in essence, a portrait of the lunacy of war itself, as Goya might have painted it." Yet, intertwined were a deep humanity and even hope which led me to seek out the rights to translate it and to work with Editions de Fallois eventually to bring these voices to the francophone world. I was confident that they would contribute greatly to France's understanding of that distant conflict, long a part of French culture, but sometimes linked to romance such as *Hiroshima mon Amour*. In ways never anticipated, on 13 November 2015 Paris herself became the site of horrors that soon brought references to "*les kamikazes*" and a search for new language for human motive and trauma, leading some to turn to this book to better understand. I look forward to discussing these themes in Paris.

Key words : War; oral history; Japan; literature; Second World War; Asia-Pacific War; war experience; Saipan; Okinawa; China; Korea; Indochina; Vietnam; kamikaze; comfort women; atrocity; memory; atomic bomb; Hiroshima; Nagasaki; Paris; translation; popular culture



3) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Theodore F. Cook (William Paterson University)

Communication's title : Warscapes in Memory Frames: Japan's War Culture and Remembrance

Language : English :

Presentation :

Memory and memorialization are now central concerns for those examining the wars that shape our world. Centennial remembrances of 1914-18 acknowledge that the curtain has drawn down on those who experienced that conflict, leaving us all to explore its legacies without their living testimony. Mid-century conflicts, too, jump into sharper relief confronting temporal immediacy. The Second World War and its wake spurred some of us to reach out first to those who had been through it, and in my case moved me to seek out the Japanese perspective, since it was against Japan that my country and both parents, waged war. So little was readily knowable of the motivations of people in Japan's war, that examining military elites and common soldiers forging modern Japan, and the deep wounds inflicted on Japan's neighbors and Japanese while building of that empire, led me to embrace oral history. Diving into living history requires polyphony, and may prove a way to prime dialogue with "the generation who does not know war" and between former enemies. It acknowledges, too, a younger generation's cognizance that war, technology, and detachment threaten not only human life, but all of nature, themes emerging from Japan's now global "popular culture."

Key words : War; oral history; Japan; literature; Second World War; Asia-Pacific War; war experience; Saipan; Okinawa; China; Korea; kamikaze; comfort women; atrocity; memory; atomic bomb; Hiroshima; Nagasaki; Paris; translation; popular culture