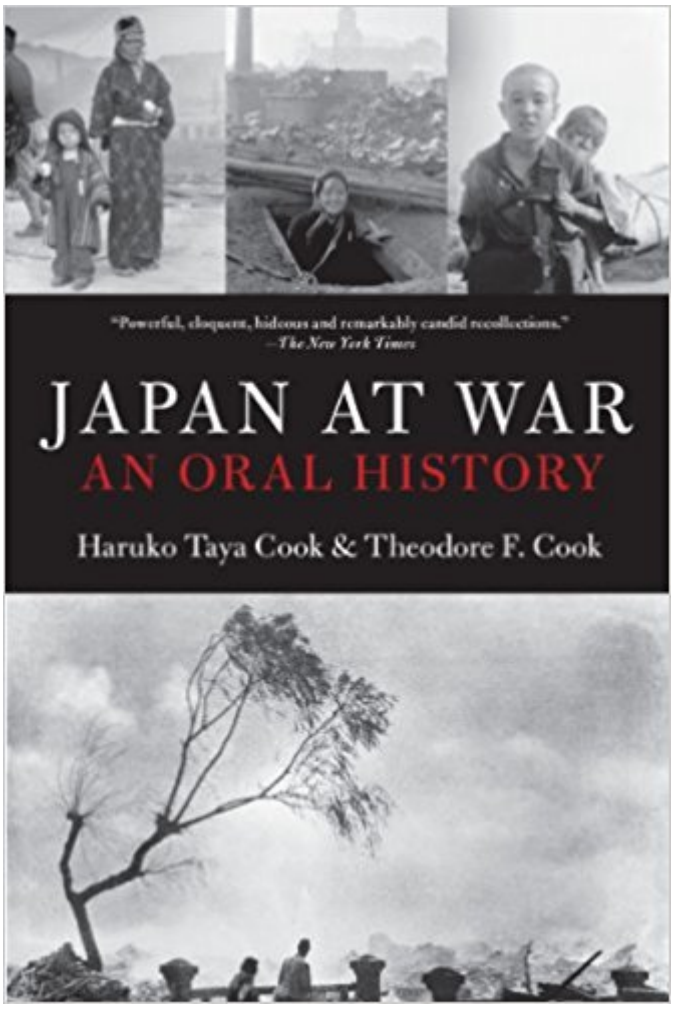
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Japan At War: An Oral History



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Synopsis

An oral history of Japan during World War II recounts this terrible conflict through the eyes of the Japanese--soldiers, laborers, newspapermen, artists, musicians, women--who lived through it. 20,000 first printing.

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Customer Reviews

"One of the essential books about World War II." &#8212The Philadelphia Inquirer"The stories recorded in Japan at War provide insight into the confounding complexity of extreme human behavior during the war." &#8212San Francisco Chronicle"Hereafter no one will be able to think, write, or teach about the Pacific War without reference to [the CooksÃ¢â ¬â„¢] work." &#8212Marius B. Jansen, Princeton University"Oral history of a compellingly high order." &#8212Kirkus Reviews"Informed, nuanced, manysided, vividÃ¢â ¬â •an impressive achievement." &#8212Ezra F. Vogel, Harvard University --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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I had to rate this book as a whole, trying to encompass everything in here, and that was a bit

challenging as there’s so much. These are personal accounts of people involved in WWII on the Japanese side. Men, women, and children in Japan, China, Korea, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, Okinawa, etc. from the very beginning of the war to the occupation.These stories in particular really stayed with me:-"Manchurian Days" and "Flight": I had never read about a Japanese immigrant in Manchuria before. Fukushima’s stories were fascinating. "Flight" was especially sad.-"As long as I don’t fight, I’ll make it home.": I want to read more of Suzuki’s haiku. His story was surprisingly entertaining, almost comedic.-"Army Doctor": This was the story that made me sick.-"Spies and Bandits": The end of this story is chilling.-"Bride of a Kamikaze": This was probably one of the saddest stories I’ve ever read. Fascinating too.Chapter 17/ THE WAR COMES TO OKINAWA was all new information to me and totally shocking. I’ll have to look up more. Probably some of the most horrifying civilian accounts I’ve ever read. I had not heard about the mass suicides before.-"Death Row at Changi Prison": It was interesting to hear the other side to the Allied POW accounts, but I don’t feel that Abe was as innocent as he liked to believe himself to be."The Emperor’s Retreat": This was another new, strange, and sad topic for me. I also want to research more into this, but as Yamane stated there’s not much information available, sadly.Overall, many sad and/or horrifying personal accounts of war. I recommend to anyone who wants to know more about the Japanese view on WWII.

Without a doubt one of the finest books I have ever read.There are, of course, more objective accounts of this period, and those should be read, but this is not that book, and it does not pretend to be that book.The biases of this book are those of its interviewees - the widows, war criminals, and veterans. This book is one-sided because it deals exclusively with Japanese subjects, and in this respect I found it wholly unique. I became physically ill as the Japanese army doctor described vivisecting Chinese; the same with the account of Unit 731. Far from shifting blame, this book focuses blame on the people who ordered and perpetrated ghastly crimes.Ordinary Japanese - both those in the field and those at home - suffered during the war. This suffering, however, is not the focus of the book. The focus of Japan At War are the experiences of the interviewees, both for good and ill. Who would not be moved by the account of a family whose infant son was burned to death during the Tokyo firebombing? But does that mean this bombing was unjustified - of course not.There are hundreds of accounts of the Pacific War and I found this one to be most illuminating because it focused on a non-Allied perspective. In this respect it enabled me to understand the whole much better than before. War is never a singular act, even less world wars. And learning what the enemy experienced does not justify their crimes. In the West this moral outrage - the fixation

upon Japan’s brutality - has itself been used to excuse actions that, had the Allies lost, would have been deemed war crimes, such as attempts to starve the home islands and the intentional bombing of civilian targets. In contrast to the reviewer, I do not think it is only the Japanese who have yet to come to terms with the Pacific War, I think it is the Allies as well who have erected their own national myths. These myths will not be demolished until both sides speak.

This is a well-written, balanced, and readable book. In fact, since it consists of storytelling by people from all backgrounds, it isn’t boring like most WWII history books. It’s also very well edited and organized, so it’s not just a hodge-podge" anthology".The authors had a mission: they sought out and recorded Japanese survivor stories in the 1980s before all these people passed on and we lose their memories. This book has been cited many times by other books on this subject, testifying to the enduring significance and depth of this one-of-a-kind oral history project.You think you know about this subject, but you really don’t until you read these contrasting eyewitness accounts of the Japanese experience of the Pacific War.Japanese right wing nationalists will tell you this book is all made-up, and that all these painstakingly-recorded oral testimonies are all "fiction". Unless you are one of them, you would find this book a valuable addition to your library and a reference you would return to again and again. Read it, visit the Yakusuni Shrine war museum, and be prepared to be blown away by the complex narratives of the war.People outside of Asia make fun of the current news headlines about the continuing feud within East Asia among neighboring countries. If Europe has healed from WWII, why can’t the East Asians move on? Well, these people simply aren’t well-read and well-educated. If you read this book, you would know a lot more about an important era that continues to shape Asia today.

Purchased for a college class, but possibly one of my favorite books, now. This is not for the faint of heart. It is a serious collection of interviews on the Japanese perspective of World War II. The authors had the daunting task of collecting these interviews from those who lived through the war, in the 1980’s when Japan was trying to bury the war behind them. This collection is harrowing and fascinating. There were times I could not put it down.

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