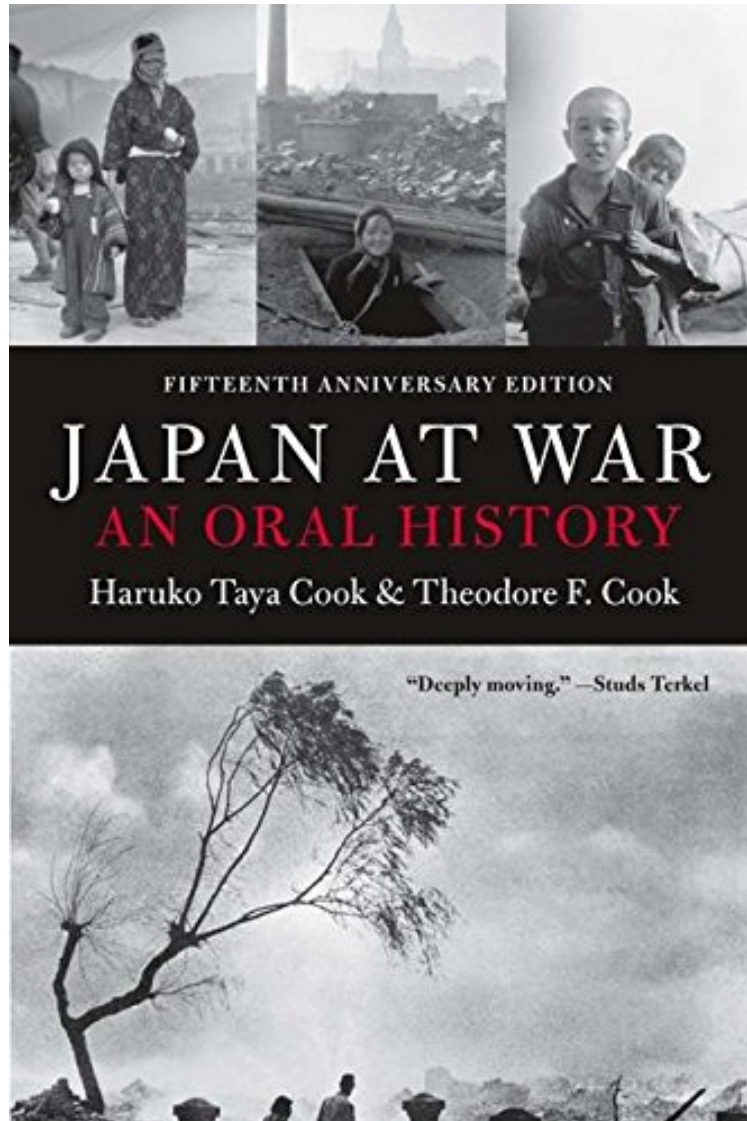


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Japan at War: An Oral History

Haruko Taya Cook, Theodore F. Cook
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Haruko Taya Cook, Theodore F. Cook : Japan at War: An Oral History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Japan at War: An Oral History:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Daniel
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 vivisectioning 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.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A definitive historical work that still manages to be readable for the lay reader

By Gromer 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.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. but possibly one of my favorite books, now

By S Raleigh 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.

Following the release of Clint Eastwood's epic film *Letters from Iwo Jima*, which was nominated for the Oscar for Best Picture, there has been a renewed fascination and interest in the Japanese perspective on World War II. This pathbreaking work of oral history is the first book ever to capture—in either Japanese or English—the experience of ordinary Japanese people during the war. In a sweeping panorama, Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook take us from the Japanese attacks on China in the 1930s to the Japanese home front during the inhuman raids on Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, offering the first glimpses of how the twentieth century's most deadly conflict affected the lives of the Japanese population. The book "seeks out the true feelings of the wartime generation [and] illuminates the contradictions between the official views of the war and living testimony" (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan). *Japan at War* is a book to which Americans and Japanese will continue to turn for decades to come. With more than 30,000 copies sold to date, this edition features an updated cover designed to appeal to a new generation of readers.

"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 Cooks'] work." #8212Marius B. Jansen, Princeton University "Oral history of a compellingly high order." #8212Kirkus s "Informed, nuanced, manysided, vivid—an impressive achievement." #8212Ezra F. Vogel, Harvard University