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## Review of Senso: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War, by F. Gibney

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that has been produced by American academics about Japanese women, but the individual authors often fail to take into account the works listed in the bibliography.

For American readers who do read Japanese, one of the most useful aspects of the volume will be the references, most of them Japanese, listed at the end of each chapter. Regrettably, the editors have provided no comprehensive bibliography of Japanese works. Finally, take careful notes. If, as is likely, you find something of fascinating interest, there is no index to assist you in retrieving the information.

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*Sensō: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War.* Edited by FRANK GIBNEY. Translated by BETH CARY. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995. xii, 327 pp. \$59.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

As the world approached the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, it seemed to many non-Japanese that at times Japan's attitude toward the war was not merely odd, but as if Japan were remembering an almost completely different war. A number of incidents—Justice Minister Nagano's 1994 statement disputing the reality of the Nanking Massacre, the reluctant acknowledgment of the forced prostitution of East Asian women, and the opposition to the apology that finally passed through the Diet by Prime Minister Murayama—reveal that, at least at the upper echelons of Japan, a gap exists between how Japan and other countries recall the Pacific War.

*Sensō: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War*, a collection of letters to the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* edited by Frank Gibney and translated by Beth Cary, provides a glimpse into current Japanese attitudes toward the Pacific War. The letters recount a wide range of subjects, from a former soldier's recollection of the torture and execution of a Chinese interpreter accused of spying on the China front (pp. 65–66) to an account of a Japanese sailor nursed to health after being found by the natives of Truk (pp. 137–38). One woman credits the war for making her war-widow mother a stronger person (p. 107). Another former soldier reveals that his father, a village elder, prohibited him from returning home because he had been defeated in battle (p. 287). While only a select group may actually write letters to the editor, these letters span a broad segment of Japanese society and offer a representative view of how the Japanese recall the war and their experiences.

The letters first ran as a series in the *Asahi Shinbun* from July 1986 to August 1987 and were later published as a two-volume work. The English edition by Gibney contains some 200 of the original 1,100 published letters, dating from the Manchurian Incident to the Occupation. They are arranged by topic, such as "Life in the Military," "War in China," and "The Home Front," with Gibney providing a brief historical introduction for each section. The authors of the letters are identified by name, occupation, age, and sex. Most of the writers were in their twenties during the war, although several letters were written by Japanese born after the war who seek answers about the war, and their elders' participation and involvement. If there is a common sentiment toward the war among the varied recollections of the letters' authors, it is perhaps a feeling of resignation—*shikataganai*—about the toll the war took on their lives.

The paperback edition will undoubtedly find its way into university classrooms: this reviewer recently assigned it for a course on modern Japan. What students least expected and found most interesting were the personal accounts of Japanese wartime experiences: a bathhouse operator writes that his mother purchased a Kannon statue in memory of the suicide squad that frequented the family's bathhouse in the last year of the war (pp. 45–46), a former teacher and librarian asks if the tragedy of the Philippines could have been averted had the Japanese soldiers received the same language training and education that apparently was given the Americans (pp. 151–52), a fifty-two-year-old company employee recalls wondering if, on August 15, 1945, the Emperor also missed lunch when he delivered his surrender address at noon (pp. 254–55). The section on Japanese experience as POWs, especially those captured by the Russians, presented the students with an episode of the war that is missing from most other accounts.

The letters in *Sensō*, produced a half-century after the war, were not written as objective, academic analysis of the Japanese past. “The past,” notes Harold Pinter, “is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend to remember.” These letters are samples of how the Japanese, both personal and collective, remember the Pacific War. *Sensō* is also an example of how the public memory of the Pacific War varies from nation to nation. Even the letters that acknowledge Japanese cruelty often are written as if the author were also a victim of the war.

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*Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan.*  
By JANET R. GOODWIN. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994. viii,  
181 pp. \$27.00.

In this slim and elegant volume, Janet R. Goodwin addresses a long-neglected problem: the formation of (religious) community in early medieval Japan. During the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, new religious communities were established by old monastic institutions and new sects through fundraising (*kanjin*) campaigns directed at the emerging controllers of real wealth in the country, the landholders in the provinces. The most famous of these campaigns was for the rebuilding of the Tōdaiji in Nara, burned down in 1180.

Goodwin's analysis demonstrates the range of goals encompassed in the fundraising campaigns. The religious goals were preeminent; for the Buddhist institutions of Nara, especially, they included building, rebuilding, and maintaining the physical edifice of Buddhism in an age of the decline of Buddhism, which had been calculated to begin in 1052. Moreover, they sought to extend the benefits of Buddhism to larger numbers of ordinary people through participation in the physical construction of Buddhism.

These fundraising campaigns also had their political uses. The Cloistered Emperor Go Shirakawa hoped to use what at least looked like a popular, nationwide fundraising campaign to rebuild the Tōdaiji in order to assert imperial prestige and “to unite the people around the throne to rebuild a monument to imperial glory” (p. 80). His rival for national authority and real political power, Minamoto Yoritomo, saw the rebuilding of the temple as a demonstration of his victory over the Taira family who