Introduction

Since 1995, two sides of Japan's cultural landscape have grabbed international attention. The first is tension with neighbors China and Korea over the history and legacies of World War II in the Pacific, Japan's "Asia-Pacific War." The second is the explosion in popularity and international reach of Japanese pop culture products including anime, manga, J-pop, and TV dramas. This reader brings together eight articles that describe the diverse, and often divergent, ways in which Japanese popular culture has represented the country's wars of the 1930s and 1940s.

Background: Modern Japan and the Asia-Pacific War

Between 1600 and 1868 (the Edo Period), the Japanese archipelago was home to an advanced early modern society. From the beginning of the 17th century the Shoguns of the ruling Tokugawa family launched a slate of reforms designed to promote stability after more than a century of civil war. Society was divided into four hereditary classes—samurai (the ruling warrior class), peasants, artisans, and merchants—and a draconian legal system put into place to control the populace. Hundreds of feudal lords continued to rule over semi-autonomous domains, but the Tokugawa had the final say in areas like taxation and law. From the 1630s, the Tokugawa also enacted the *sakoku* (closed country) policy which prevented outsiders, apart from a small number of officially sanctioned Korean, Chinese, and Dutch traders, from visiting Japan. Japanese were also barred from venturing overseas. For nearly 250 years, Japan had limited contact with the outside world. Tokugawa leaders believed that these reforms would ensure their continued hegemony.

In 1853, American Commodore Matthew Perry sailed to Japan with a fleet of warships and a mandate to open the country by negotiation or by force. American politicians, eyeing increased trade with China and lucrative Pacific whaling, and with the settlement of California in mind, wished to use Japanese ports as a trans-Pacific base to expand the country's influence overseas. Edo Period Japan had developed a complex economy, sophisticated urban planning, and had literacy rates which arguably exceeded those of Europe or America. During its isolation, however, Japanese military technology stagnated, and the Tokugawa had no choice but to sign "unequal treaties" with America and other world powers such as Britain and France. Foreign powers gained access to ports, control over tariffs, and extraterritoriality, meaning that their nationals would not be subject to Japanese law. These concessions were considered an insult by many samurai and capitulation to outside demands eroded confidence in Tokugawa rule. Samurai from the feudal domains of Satsuma and Choshu used the emperor Meiji, head of a line that had not held real political power for about 1000 years, as a rallying point and defeated the Tokugawa in the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The Meiji government was an oligarchy made up mostly of the samurai who had played key roles in overthrowing the Tokugawa. Emperor Meiji reigned as a figurehead and new nationalist symbol. Leaders immediately launched a series of reforms designed to strengthen Japan and control the population. The class system was abolished and a conscription system became the backbone of modern military forces in 1873. Meiji policy was guided by two broad goals—protecting Japan from Western imperialism and pressing for revision of the "unequal treaties." To accomplish these goals, technology and systems of

governmentality were imported in an ambitious reform program that "modernized" Japanese society while crushing local autonomy and diversity.

As Japanese leaders were becoming more aware of the community of nations and international system of the 1870s, European powers controlled virtually the entire globe. India was a British colony considered "the brightest jewel in the crown." The so-called "scramble for Africa" saw the continent (save Liberia and Ethopia) divided up under European rulers. China was subjected to treaty arrangements even more humiliating than Japan's "unequal treaties." Japanese leaders decided that the best way to prevent Japan from becoming a victim of imperialism was to become an imperialist power.

Japanese leaders expanded their sphere of influence, first forcibly assimilating the Ainu and Okinawan people in the north and south of the Japanese islands, and then fighting wars with neighbors China and Russia in a drive for expansion. After defeating China in 1894-95, Japan took Taiwan as a colonial possession and established political and economic hegemony over Korea. Japan then defeated Russia in 1904-05, secured its power over the Korean peninsula, which it annexed in 1910, and gained control over railway lines and other concessions in the northern Chinese region of Manchuria. In all areas, colonial police and the Imperial Japanese Army crushed local resistance. The United States, Great Britain, and France had overseas colonies during this time and they saw Japan's moves as legitimate. Having improved its power position in East Asia, Japan was welcomed into the international alliance system hitherto dominated by Europe and America. The "unequal treaties" of the 1850s were finally done away with, Japan entered into an equal alliance with England in 1902, and went on to side with England, France, and eventually the United States in World War I, seizing German territories in the Far East and sending material aid and naval support to Europe.

During the 1919 Paris Peace Conference which followed the end of World War I, contradictions in Japan's global position and role as a colonizer became clear. Japan attempted to have a "racial equality clause" written into the Covenant of the League of Nations, a new international body much like the later United Nations. The proposal was strongly opposed by Australia. American President Woodrow Wilson was also opposed because he relied on the support of pro-segregation Southerners. At the same time that Japan was pushing for equality on the international stage, however, Japanese colonial forces responded to the March First Movement for independence in Korea with a brutal crackdown. In addition, through the 1910s, Japanese elites moved to increase their power in China, pushing for more "unequal treaty" privileges of their own.

During Japan's version of the "Roaring 20s," liberal reforms saw the introduction of universal male suffrage at home and Japan's entry into arms limitation treaties abroad. In addition, a cosmopolitan consumer culture took root in Japanese cities. In 1931, however, the national direction changed dramatically after Japanese forces based in the northern Chinese region of Manchuria bombed the railway lines that they were ostensibly there to protect. Acting without the knowledge of the civilian government in Tokyo, the troops, known as the Kantogun or Kwantung Army, placed the blame on "terrorists" and used this as an excuse to seize control of Manchuria. The Japanese government supported these moves after the fact and from this point on, the Japanese military greatly increased its influence on the country's direction.

In 1932, Japan turned Manchuria into a puppet state called Manchukuo. This move was condemned by the League of Nations, and Japan responded by withdrawing from the

League in 1933. Japan became increasingly isolated internationally. At home, authorities relied on the "Special Higher Police," a network of thought police, to enforce ideological orthodoxy. Communists, social democrats, union organizers, feminists, pacifists, and others who resisted the shift in national direction were arrested and held without charge. Many were tortured; this state violence meant that resistance to militarism in Japan was all but silenced.

More and more, Japanese elites viewed Britain and the United States as imperial rivals. They believed that the Monroe Doctrine—which stipulated that any attempt by a European or Asian power to encroach on the US sphere of economic and political influence in Latin America would be considered an act of aggression—was hypocritical, given that America insisted on an "Open Door" policy in China, meaning equal exploitation by all powers. Japanese politicians, military leaders, and ideologues believed that Japan had special interests in neighboring East Asian regions and resented the imperial presence of distant Euro-American powers. In addition, racist immigration policies enacted in English-speaking countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia, combined with rhetoric by populists in areas like California and British Columbia that attacked Japanese immigrants in racist terms as dirty, disease-ridden, and dishonest, made Japan's leaders feel that the country was being singled out and had little hope of being treated as an equal in international affairs.

These feelings of discontent with the prevailing international order were heightened by the Great Depression. The New York stock market crash in 1929 initially had little effect on Japan, but economic hardship in America and other countries eroded consumer economies and with them, markets for Japanese exports such as silk and tea. Japanese farmers relied on this trade for their livelihoods, and the decline caused a considerable increase in rural poverty.

Japanese leaders took from the Great Depression two ideas that—to them—justified imperial expansion. The first was that Japan needed more overseas territory where poor farmers could settle. The second was that international trade was no guarantee of Japanese prosperity and that stable growth could only be achieved if Japan had its own sphere of influence—exclusive access to massive markets like China's to sell Japanese manufactured goods and unfettered access to raw materials like Manchurian coal and steel to power industry. These ideas were often couched in terms of salvation for impoverished Japanese and mutually beneficial development across Asia, but while these feelings may have been genuine in some cases, the military elites saw an opportunity to increase their power, prestige, and share of the national budget, while big business, particularly the big industrial combines, called zaibatsu, supported imperialist expansion as a way to increase profits. Liberals who favored a more conciliatory approach in international affairs were sidelined.

Japan increased its troop presence on the continent through the 1930s, and things came to a head when Japanese and Chinese troops exchanged fire near Beijing in July 1937. Called the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, this clash sparked the beginning of what historians refer to as the Japan-China War. War was never formally declared and Japanese leaders referred to the conflict as "The China Incident," even as they poured millions of troops into the fighting.

Japan's forces conquered China's coastal regions in rapid succession but were forced into a stalemate in the interior. The United States and Great Britain condemned Japan's actions in China, and these tensions led Japan to sign the Axis Pact with Nazi Germany and

fascist Italy in 1940. Japan's attack on China was poorly planned. Not only were there no clear war aims and thus no way to secure victory save a total domination of the huge expanse of Chinese territory and its massive population, but Japan also relied on imports of strategic material such as oil and steel from the United States, one of the sternest critics of Japanese aggression. Tensions soared through 1940 and 1941 as America launched a trade embargo against Japan and issued an ultimatum, demanding that Japan withdraw its troops from China. Seeing war as inevitable, the Japanese leadership launched a surprise attack against the American Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor and coordinated strikes on American, British, and Dutch territories across the Asia-Pacific region in December 1941. By mid-1942, Japan had captured the Philippines, an American colony; British-held Malaysia, Singapore, and Burma; the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia); and innumerable Pacific islands. Japan organized its empire into the so-called "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

By mid-1943, the Japanese advance had been turned back by a string of American victories, and the American Navy's "island hopping campaign" began in earnest. The Philippines was invaded in 1944 and Japanese surface and air forces were all but wiped out. In the first part of 1945, American troops took Okinawa, the southernmost of the Japanese islands, and began an intense campaign of aerial bombardment of Japanese cities. An atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on August 6. On August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and America's Soviet allies invaded Manchuria, breaking Japan's last defensive bulwark on the continent. Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 15 and was occupied by multinational forces dominated by the United States.

Violence and War Experience

A basic account of the events leading up to a conflict on the scale of the Asia-Pacific War cannot do justice to the experiences of violence, terror, and loss of millions of victims. In the following four sections **victimizers**, **victims**, **varied positions**, and **heroes**, I will outline the basic thematic categories through which Japanese have understood wartime violence. Each of these has played a significant role in Japanese representations of the Asia-Pacific War in postwar popular culture.

Victimizers

Since the 1990s, Japanese war crimes of the 1930s and 1940s have garnered increasing global attention. Japanese atrocities against American POWs had been well known since early in the war, but it is only in recent decades that there has emerged a broader awareness of the extent of Japanese military and imperial violence against Asian victims.

The Nanking Massacre took place in late 1937, in the early months of the Japan-China War. After the fall of the Chinese capital of Nanking and the flight of Chiang Kai-shek's government to the interior, Japanese soldiers looted towns and burned buildings, raped women and girls, and killed tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of unarmed prisoners of war and civilians in a series of atrocities that have become emblematic of Japanese wartime violence.

While the Nanking Massacre has been the major focus, bloodshed did not stop after the fall of the Chinese capital. Japanese armies on the continent were always poorly supplied and expected to find food as they marched. This meant attacks on Chinese

peasant villages, innumerable killings, and forced dislocations. Similar acts of violence against civilians characterised Japanese military behavior through the entire war. In 1944 and 1945, for example, Japanese forces in the Philippines killed tens of thousands of civilians during the American invasion to retake the islands.

Japanese military and imperial brutality extended to the management of the war economy. In many cases, populations in territories captured by Japan and existing colonies like Korea were treated as expendable resources. Hundreds of thousands were kidnapped and forced to labor in mines or construct roads and railways. Many did not survive. Late in the war, Japanese troops seized the entire rice harvest in Vietnam, leading to the starvation of hundreds of thousands.

"Comfort Women" was the name given to women, mostly from Korea, who were forcibly kept in Japanese military brothels. Survivors have described horrific conditions. Girls in their early teens were raped dozens of times in a single day. Any resistance or attempt to escape could be met with violence by soldiers or the Korean and Japanese gangsters who organized many of the camps. Ostensibly a means of directing the sexual energy of Japanese soldiers away from civilians like the women victimized after the fall of Nanking, the Comfort Women system stands out as one of the most notorious examples of the Japanese military's official disregard for human rights and the dignity of civilians under empire.

Medical unit 731 is notorious for its terrible callousness toward human life, although the death toll is low compared to other patterns of Japanese military violence. Japanese military doctors in Manchuria and northern China carried out a program of biological warfare and human experimentation. Plague infected fleas were used to spread disease through strongholds of Chinese resistance. Prisoners were injected with plague, and doctors studied the progress of the disease as they wasted and died. Unnecessary, fatal surgeries were performed on healthy patients to gather medical research data. Scholars now believe that Unit 731 doctors gained immunity from prosecution by the United States after the war in exchange for their research results.

For many, these and other atrocities have defined Japan's Asia-Pacific War.

Victims

Until late 1944, most of the hardship suffered by Japanese civilians came in the form of material shortages as well as the deaths of sons, husbands, and fathers killed in the fighting overseas. All of this changed when the United States captured island bases that put the Japanese home islands within bombing range.

American air raids took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, many of them women and children. On the night of March 9-10, 1945 alone, over 100,000 civilians were killed in the firebombing of Tokyo. Millions more across Japan saw their houses burned and were thrown into homelessness and poverty. In the article "A Forgotten Holocaust: US Bombing Strategy, the Destruction of Japanese Cities and the American Way of War from World War II to Iraq," Mark Selden describes the ideological shift in America from harshly condemning Japanese bombing of Chinese civilians in the late 1930s to embracing the practice in America's own war against Japan. Selden argues that through the Korean and Vietnam Wars and beyond, aerial bombardment of cities became the representative "American way of war" beginning in 1945.

In *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, John Dower has described actions by American soldiers identical to acts for which Japanese were tried as war criminals, including the mistreatment and executions of prisoners of war. In addition, during the fighting in 1945 and the occupation of Japan, many women were raped by American soldiers. In *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*, Yuki Tanaka describes in detail some of these atrocities, seldom discussed in postwar America. Many rapes took place throughout the occupation, but two mass attacks happened in a single week: On April 4, 1946 fifty GIs broke into a hospital and raped seventy-seven women. One victim had just given birth and soldiers killed her two-day-old baby by tossing it to the floor. On April 11, forty U.S. soldiers cut the phone lines of one of Nagoya's city blocks and stormed houses, "raping many girls and woman between the ages of 10 and 55 years." In Okinawa, which remained under American control after Japan regained its independence in 1952, activists stress that thousands of women were raped and brutalized by American troops, while few perpetrators were ever brought to justice.

Indeed, few parts of Japan's civilian population suffered as much as the people of Okinawa. American forces indiscriminately shelled and bombed the Okinawan islands in what locals have come to call the "Typhoon of Steel." One third of the Okinawan population of 300,000 lost their lives in the fighting.

The atomic bombs remain the most forceful images of the wartime victimization of Japanese civilians. More than 250,000 are believed to have died in the bombings within the first few months after detonation alone, with cancer and radiation-related symptoms plaguing survivors for the rest of their lives. Japanese leaders had made several surrender overtures before the bombs were dropped. In *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, Herbert Bix outlines how the only major surrender condition sought by Japan, that Emperor Hirohito be spared prosecution and allowed to remain on the throne, became the official US occupation position anyway.

Varied Positions

ODA Makoto (1932-2007), one of the leading Japanese anti-war activists of the postwar era, was a staunch critic of American actions in the Vietnam War. Despite his hard anti-war stance, however, he was hesitant to condemn ordinary American soldiers or pilots engaged in bombing raids like the one he survived as a youngster in Osaka in 1945, "I had enormous sympathy with American soldiers who got drafted against their own will. They had to go to Vietnam to shoot people. This was the same situation as Japanese soldiers fighting in China [in WWII]. They were drafted, so they had to go there to fight with and to shoot Chinese. We have to get rid of this kind of vicious cycle…."[1]

For Oda, the direct acts by perpetrators of military violence needs to be placed in the context of draft systems, propaganda, and military indoctrination. Militarism meant that the victimizers in war were themselves victims.

Not all Japanese troops were involved in war crimes but all were subjected to brutal totalitarian military discipline. Beatings for trivial offenses were common. To hesitate when ordered to take a civilian's life made one a target. To refuse an order could mean

[1] http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/03/14/18076761.php

death. Conscientious objectors existed, but most were jailed and tortured as peace activism was criminalized. "Cowards" on the battlefield or resisters at home knew that their families could be targeted, ostracized, or denied rations. Likewise, civilians who had doubts about Japan's wars of aggression were bullied or brutalized into silence. Japanese on the home front were never given a realistic account of the war situation. Atrocities were covered up and Japanese at home were told that Asians welcomed them with open arms. Retreats became "strategic repositioning." After the war, many Japanese were shocked by the extent of misinformation used to win support for the war effort and to this day, *Daihonei happyo* (Imperial General Headquarters Report) is an idiom meaning "propaganda and lies."

The environment of casual violence that typified the Japanese military only became worse as the war against America and its allies turned against Japan. Mass starvation took the lives of countless Japanese soldiers across the Asia-Pacific region. Instead of medicine or treatment, sick or wounded soldiers were given hand grenades to take their own lives. Poorly equipped troops were ordered to charge at American machine gun positions or clutch powder charges and throw themselves under the treads of approaching tanks. Even on hopeless battlefields, Japanese soldiers were ordered to die to the last man. The *kamikaze* suicide attacks—which included not only the piloting of explosive-laden aircraft at American ships but such desperate measures as manned "suicide torpedoes" and divers armed with mines—were born from this milieu.

The Okinawan people were "Japanese" by nationality, but were often treated as ethnic or cultural others. During the Battle of Okinawa, Japanese officers executed some civilians simply for speaking their local dialect, accused of spying for the United States. Since 1945, Okinawans have asserted that the Japanese army, far from defending the civilian population, simply became another enemy. Okinawan civilians were pressed at gunpoint into hopeless suicide attacks against American troops. Others were driven to take their own lives by an Imperial Army ideologically drilled to consider surrender to be a traitorous act. Nevertheless, many Okinawans, like mainland Japanese, voiced passionate support for Japanese empire and militarism, and Okinawans drafted into the Japanese military participated in bloodshed elsewhere. Did they, like many others in Japan, have any choice given the surveillance state and violent controls in place? Okinawans cannot be easily categorized as "victims" or "victimizers" in war, and their historical experience shows us the fundamental ambiguity of those types of absolute categories.

Heroes

Alongside representations of Japanese as victims, victimizers, or occupying a grey zone between those categories, are more controversial postwar images of military men as tragic or even glorious heroes. While most Japanese welcomed peace after the country's 1945 surrender, the old discourses of military valor persisted and were incorporated into entertainment culture. Japanese fighter aces like Sakai Saburo (1916-2000) published bestselling autobiographies which skirted larger questions of war responsibility and violence in favor of simple stories of exciting sky battles against American pilots and paeans for the shattered Japanese air forces. Films like *Taiheiyo no arashi* (Storm over the Pacific, 1960) and *Daikusen* (Great Battle in the Sky, 1966) took up this narrative of a heroic struggle to defend the Japanese homeland, coupling special effects with the teary

melodrama of military sacrifice. While now less common, Japanese war films featuring pilots and sailors as tragic heroes have appeared periodically over the years. Famous boy band SMAP even starred in an air war film of their own, the sappy *Kimi wo wasurenai* (I'll Never Forget You) in 1995. These popular works typically do not demonize the United States and are similar in tone to America-Japan co-productions like *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and the later *Letters from Iwo-jima* (2006). War is decried, peace praised, but there is also a soft spot—a mix of melodrama and nostalgia—for the men who gave their lives defending Japan. From other viewpoints, however, these individuals can be seen as either a part of Japan's brutal military machine or helpless draftees sent to their deaths by unfeeling planners. Each of these positions has had an important place in Japanese popular culture.

Far more problematic than "tragic heroes" is a trend that began in earnest in the 1990s to redeem Japan's wars of the 1930s and 1940s. This mode of representation is typically referred to as **neo-nationalism** or **historical revisionism**. Proponents of this view of history, which include some prominent conservative politicians, have argued that Japan's wars were part self-defence against aggression by America and its allies and part righteous quest to free Asia from Western colonial rule. This framing borrows directly from the rhetoric of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" of the war period. Japan's wartime violence is denied, whitewashed, or simply explained away as chastisement of guerillas who contravened the laws of war. Right-wing pundits have written a string of books on these themes, and revisionists have attempted to introduce their "positive" story of Japanese history into middle schools in the form of the *Atarashii rekishi kyokasho* (New History Textbook). Japanese school boards can choose from a number of government approved books, and the revisionist one has only been adopted by a tiny number, but its description of empire in more positive terms and the fact that it has received official certification sparked controversy in Japan and neighboring countries several times since the first version of the book appeared in 2001.

While it is true that Japanese Empire did bring industrialization and population growth to areas like Taiwan and Korea, neo-nationalists and revisionists ignore the violence of empire, even going so far as to claim that events like the Nanking Massacre and the suffering of Comfort Women were fabricated as part of an "anti-Japanese conspiracy." Using extreme rhetoric, these ideologues condemn Japanese who research or write about Japanese war crimes as "anti-Japanese Japanese." These viewpoints are tied very closely to political conservatives who wish to overturn Article 9 of the Japanese constitution which declares that "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." The desire for a more glorious, heroic story of the Asia-Pacific War is tied closely to a wish to expand Japan's military role at present and shed what are seen as the fetters of postwar pacifism. While neo-nationalists and revisionists have been extremely vocal and produced some notable works of popular culture, a majority of Japanese support Article 9 and express contrition for past war crimes and atrocities. The "culture war" between neo-nationalist deniers and progressive writers and educators, however, continues unabated.

War Memory and Popular Culture

Since the 1980s, "memory" has evolved into a key academic topic. Between 1984 and 1992, French historian Pierre Nora headed the "Realms of Memory" (Les Lieux de Mémoire) project. He wished to tell "a history in multiple voices… less interested in causes than in effects… less interested in 'what actually happened' than in its perpetual re-use and misuse, its influence on successive presents; less interested in traditions than in the way in which traditions are constituted and passed on."[2]

"History" is understood in diverse ways and studies of memory seek to elucidate the ways in which events have come to be remembered and represented and the stakes that they can have in society sometimes long after those involved have passed from the scene. The history of slavery has a different set of meanings in the United States today than it did in 1950 or 1850. Likewise, the "War on Terror" will mean something very different in fifty or a hundred years than it does at present.

Pierre Nora's work focused largely on government projects. When we consider monuments, museums, approved textbooks, and presentations by presidents and heads of state, it is evident that governments often set the tone for national memory cultures. In the 1990s, however, other scholars helped to introduce a very different approach. John Bodnar's *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (1992) and Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (1994), along with other contemporary works, opened up discussion of what can be referred to as "vernacular" or "popular" memory. Large groups of people obviously do not "remember" events as one. What they do, however, is discuss, consume, commemorate, debate, form narratives and counter-narratives in fiction, non-fiction, and hybrid media, and in doing so, establish widely shared notions of why certain events are important and how they are relevant to the present. It is crucial to note that which historical events are considered to be important and why change dramatically over time. For example, in *The Holocaust in American Life* (2000), historian Peter Novick argues that the Holocaust, something now considered an essential part of history education, was all but ignored in the United States for decades. Novick's arguments about the political uses of the Holocaust are controversial, but his assertions about a lack of public discussion or representation of the Holocaust in the United States is supported by other scholars such as Henry Greenspan, a psychologist who was one of the first to conduct in-depth interviews with Holocaust survivors who later moved to the United States.

Since the mid-1990s, the study of memory in academia has further diversified. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg argues that focusing on memories surrounding a single event or series of events is too limited and that memory is in fact "multi-directional"—understandings of a past conflict can be radically shaped by a present one, other subsequent historical events, or dialogues between different groups. This is true even when a country, group, or subculture is not directly involved. For example, Japanese memories of WWII were influenced by the subsequent American war in Vietnam in a number of ways—America's bombing campaign evoked memories of the bombings of Japanese cities and violence against Vietnamese civilians sparked debate about Japanese war crimes in China decades earlier. Honda

[2] (Nora, Realms of Memory, 1: xxiv)

Katsuichi, the Japanese journalist who travelled to China to collect testimony about Japanese violence against civilian populations in Nanking and elsewhere, was inspired to do so by the bloody quagmire in Vietnam. Rather than referring to "Japanese memory" as if it is a single, homogeneous thing, it is best to consider "cultures" of memory in Japan, taking up different Japanese understandings of war in complex dialogue with understandings prevalent elsewhere.

Popular culture can be one of the best resources for gauging the tone of public memory as well as shifts in what is valued or controversial. The eight articles that make up this collection show the diversity of points of view on the wars of the 1930s and 1940s that exist in Japanese popular culture, as well as problems and prospects for reconciliation.