

COMPLETION REPORT

The Stories They Tell, 1941-1975: Remembering and Interpreting War in Contemporary Popular Stories for Children in Japan and Southeast Asia(Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia)

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- 1. Activities.** The objectives of my research plan were all met, despite COVID-19 crisis. The primary goal of collecting relevant materials in Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia were fulfilled as expected. I could also meet with several experts on WWII and children's literature with whom I exchanged information and established networks for my research. Secondary data gathering has also gotten background knowledge on Pacific War, Cold War, Vietnam War, and Cambodian Civil War. I also made analytical notes on most of these materials. Writing one manuscript arises from this research is undertaken now.
- 2. Research Overseas.** I went to Japan twice. I secured all materials and got advice from my former adviser Prof. Nakano, Hitotsubashi Univ. how to best manage my research. As for Vietnamese and Cambodian texts for the research, my colleagues bought for me.
- 3. Research Results.** I collected around a hundred Japanese literary texts clearly published for the youth that can be categorized into 4 forms: popular manga, storybooks, historical texts, and novellas. Popular manga is primarily represented by Mizuki Shigeru and Takeda Kazuyoshi. Mizuki's work was unique because he was sent to War and thus offer a very compelling retelling of it. Takeda belongs to the younger generation of artists who offer a secondary view of the War. Storybooks, often also referred to as picture books, resemble their western counterparts having shorter literature and colorful images. This type of literature is best represented by Tahara Soichiro who incorporated the Wartime generation in retelling the War. Historical texts can also be referred to as academic manga because such manga are informative and historical facts replace fictional storyline. An example is the *Manga de wakaru* series that are obviously used in schools as additional historical reader. Most novellas, are remarkably published outside of Japan and written in English, like that by Yoko Kawashima Watkins. In addition, I also collected literary texts that portray the Japanese experience in Wartime Philippines by Ishikawa Kinichi. These primarily reflects his experience in post-War Philippines but nonetheless illustrate his Wartime circumstance as a journalist. Since manga at present is still an emerging form of literature in the Philippines, similar literary texts that I could gather are limited to novelettes written by Barbara-Ann Lewis and Tess Holthe, and a storybook by Augie Rivera.
The same predomination of novelettes and storybooks is observed in those that tackle Vietnam War and Cambodian Civil War. Among the authors for Vietnam, most notable are Cynthia Kadohata who authored at least two novelettes about War and collaborators Bao Phi and Thi Bui whose storybook *A Different Pond* received multiple awards. Notably, those that tackle Cambodian Civil War are all novelettes, best represented by Loung Ung whose *First They Killed My Father* was adapted into film by Netflix. Storybooks that tackle the same are usually published outside Cambodia, thus offering very different standpoint. Notable examples are Chinese-American Minfong Ho who tackled the refugee problem in *The Marble Clay* and Patricia McCormick whose *Never Fall Down* retells the real-life travails of Arn Chorn-Pond. Manga is still limited only to the Japanese audience, unless for a few that were translated into English or other languages.
- 4. Recommendations/Advice.** The most significant characteristic of Japanese War-related texts for the youth is a sense of clear rejection of War, both as fact and as concept. The former can be best illustrated by Mizuki's portrayal of so many events during War that would sound absurd if read now. In his *Showashi* or Showa History, Mizuki's weaved into the historical manga an important fictional character Nezumi Otoko and in doing so sheds new light to how the War is can be perceived. The latter rejection of War as a concept is clearly a by-product of Japan's post-War Constitution, particularly its Article 9 wherein peace is considered as the consummate antithesis of War. This idea is best illustrated by Nakagawa Rieko and Yamawaki Yuriko's *Takara Sagashi* (Treasure Hunt). Its message clearly resonates with the limpid pacifism of

animation legend Miyazaki Hayao who translated it into a short animation.

Stories for children about War in Philippines differ in content and purpose primarily because the Philippines can be considered as non-belligerent for having been an American colony. Thus, storybooks in the Philippines have unmistakably become more anti-Japanese than anti-War, and effectively not anti-colonialism. Anti-Japanese stance can easily be explained by two factors. First, Japan lost the War and in effect all cultural and literary interpretations about it too especially in affected countries like Philippines. Second, the very positive interpretations toward US can be gleaned for example in Barbara-Ann Lewis's *Barefoot in Fire*. The main character's dealings with Japanese and later American soldiers show very contrasting emotions, ultimately viewing the latter as liberator.

Stories of Vietnam and Cambodia are different as these conflicts are mainly considered domestic. Main protagonists in stories primarily fall under just two categories: first, those who experienced the War, and second, those who experience it through stories of those who survived or sought refuge to avoid further suffering. Portrayal of Wartime life in the first category can be likened to how the movie industry in recent decades have portrayed the War: instead of drawing a clear line between who is wrong and who is right, the storyline focuses on a rather personalized level. This can be clearly observed in films such as *Saving Private Ryan*. Loung Ung's novelette demonstrates the same by assigning the protagonist role to a young girl whose eyes offer a totally unique and innocent perspective on War. What makes it more powerful is that the same innocence is subjected to the most peccant atrocities during the Cambodian Civil War. Anti-War sentiment in such stories is unmistakable. But stories that focus on this unique perspective, while offering the most basic idea of universal peace, often misses out in discussing perhaps the more crucial root causes of the conflict.

5. Future Plans. I expect several manuscript productions from this research. Also, it may be possible to extend the research on how contemporary literary works intended for youngsters about War is being presented and discussed in other regions aside from Southeast Asia using the same parameters, objectives, and methodology used in this research.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Will look for possible journal titles

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Will explore the possibility