



Casualties of History: Wounded Japanese Servicemen and the Second World War by Lee K. Pennington.

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Lee Pennington's new monograph, *Casualties of History*, is a nuanced and sensitive study of the Japanese men left physically scarred by their experiences as servicemen during Japan's period of total war (1937-45). While fully recognizing the "dark days" of Japan's imperialist aggression (13), Pennington (US Naval Academy) takes pains to humanize his subjects in an apolitical fashion, describing them as "casualties of history because of their war injuries and ongoing absence from ... the history of mid-twentieth-century Japan" (16). Simultaneously informed by disability studies and the principles of the new military history, his well balanced account makes a valuable contribution to the social history of transwar Japan.¹

The book begins with a detailed chapter on the shifting social views of veterans, as they shaped and were shaped by policies of the Japanese state. Pennington notes that the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) forced the state to work openly with non-government relief organizations but reiterates² that the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) was critical for formal state intervention in the lives of wounded veterans. He finds, however, that, despite entities like the "Crippled Soldiers Institute" (*Haiheiin*), government and public sympathy for wounded veterans was ephemeral. The mass media sometimes actually disparaged these men as "indolent" dependents of the state. Still, this was a matter of perception: government relief was mostly a response to poverty, not injury alone. In any case, it set an important precedent: if the state imposed conscription, it should show benevolence to the injured. After the 1917 Military Relief Law, recipients of state support increased an astonishing eighteenfold by 1936 (40). Most importantly, during the escalation of Japan's militarism in the 1930s, the state began to treat wounded veterans less as "cripples" with no role in society, and more as "disabled" persons to be revered for their service and assisted in rejoining their communities. Pennington exposes a crucial development here: military leaders understood that "relief does more than simply raise the economic livelihood of military men and their dependents; it heightens the morale of military men in the field and pushes them toward victory" (48). In other words, as the *Haiheiin* became the Wounded Soldiers Institute (*Shōheiin*), the state was preparing the way for total war (50).

Chapters 2 and 3 are a moving examination of the physical traumas inflicted by the war in the Asia-Pacific Theater from 1937 to 1945. The author begins with an analysis of battlefield medicine through a very close reading of *The Fighting Artificial Arm*,³ a memoir of a soldier's experience of am-

1. "The term 'transwar' is now widely used in the study of various aspects of Japanese history, including cultural life, social policy and bureaucratic planning, to describe historical currents that transcended the conventional divide between 'pre' and 'post' war"—Tessa Morris Suzuki, "Democracy's Porous Borders: Espionage, Smuggling and the Making of Japan's Transwar Regime (Part I)," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 12.40.4 (2014).

2. Citing Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2009).

3. Kawahara Kaiichirō, *Tatakau gishu* (Tokyo: Yūkōsha, 1941).

putation and a model wartime narrative that passed the censorship regime.⁴ He also describes the new infrastructure developed to treat wounds and the inevitable decline of this system as the war situation deteriorated—both in China and the Pacific. He makes good use of a published wartime text to convey the grinding torture many soldiers endured as medics and doctors strove to save their lives.

None of this will be news to specialists in the wartime period, but the thorough investigation of Japanese rehabilitation efforts (chapter 3) is unprecedented. From physical therapy to prosthetics, and much in between, Pennington explains how the Japanese state and society mobilized to care for wounded veterans at home, even as it fed more and more men into the fighting overseas. He argues that the Shōhei Hogoin and contemporary “grassroots” groups that aided wounded vets ultimately strengthened mobilization efforts by showing active duty soldiers that they would be cared for (162).

Wounded veterans’ physical limitations made them oddities in the Japanese wartime landscape: people unable to partake fully in the working and social lives of their fellow citizens, but whom society continued to celebrate nonetheless. Pennington treats this theme much too briefly in chapter 5. He does pose penetrating questions throughout, however. Why, for instance, did Japanese mass media disseminate such contradictory images of wounded veterans as both heroes and “real people” with real problems, as both ordinary men and supermen (174–75)? So, too, the final chapter (the book has no “conclusion”) sketches the postwar period by analysing the media and government documents during the US occupation.

Casualties of History and other fine recent studies of the social experience of transwar Japan⁵ share a concern with the interactions of distinct socio-cultural groups—*hikiagesha* (repatriated Japanese), veterans, children, and youth, on the one hand—and the government policies that affected their lives, on the other. This is now the emerging orthodox methodology in the field of modern Japanese history. Lee Pennington is most effective in blending analyses of government documents with accounts of boots-on-the-ground soldiers and veterans. His book is now the best investigation of Japanese wartime medicine, physical trauma, and social mobilization in support of rehabilitation. It deserves a place on the must-read list of every student of Japan in and after the Second World War.

4. Well aware of the complexities of wartime representation, Pennington might have discussed in more detail the issue of literary censorship, on which, see Jonathan E. Abel’s excellent *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan* (Berkeley: U Cal Pr, 2012).

5. E.g., Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2009), and Mark A. Jones, *Children As Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2010).