

# Pacific Islanders Experience the Pacific War: Informants as Historians and Story Tellers

Ryota Nishino

**Abstract:** This article demonstrates how travel writers take on the roles of historians during and after their journeys. The manner in which they exercise their roles varies in their understanding of the past, the articulation of personal values, and aspirations for the present and the future. To highlight both the commonalities and the variations, consider three commercially published Japanese travelogues to southwestern Pacific Islands. The article shows how the travellers' diverse motivations and approaches are reflected in their historical consciousness. The journeys also shaped their perspectives on the relations between Japan and the Pacific Islands, and their *raison d'être*.

**Keywords:** Japan, the Pacific War (1941-1945), Solomon Islands, New Guinea, travel writing, journalism, oral history, historical consciousness.

## Introduction

The vast majority of contemporary Japanese was born after the Asia-Pacific War. Intergenerational memories and historical representations in various media play vital roles in historical understanding and shaping the representation of history. What motivates people to learn about the war, how people learn about it, and what they do with their historical knowledge can tell us much about individual historical consciousness. This process is important for gauging the nature of amnesia in relation to traumatic memories. Japan is a prime example: the contestation over how to commemorate different aspects of the wartime past has long generated heated

debates both inside and outside Japan. This article explores the impact of travel on the ways in which travellers related to wartime history and their orientation towards life after their journeys. The article examines how commercially published travelogues can afford valuable insights into the ways travel can inform the travellers and shape their vision of the past, the present and the future.<sup>1</sup> This article then asks how travel writers answer these questions about history, and what meanings readers and scholars interested in history and its contemporary application can draw from travelogues. To probe these questions further, this article analyses the impact of the different reasons for undertaking the journeys on their crafting of history. What becomes apparent beyond the commonalities is that the histories they collect and research reflect the styles and motivations of their journeys.

This article considers three Japanese travelogues to southwestern Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands.<sup>2</sup> Few contemporary Japanese readily associate these islands with major Pacific War battles or think of them as popular travel destinations—with the possible exception of military enthusiasts, war veterans and families of deceased soldiers.<sup>3</sup> This marginal status in the mainstream Japanese consciousness provides one compelling reason for analysing travelogues to the region. Travel to battle sites is one possible means of stimulating historical memories. Travellers without lived memory or first-hand experience can gain vicarious senses of war in ways other second-hand sources of information may not provide. Analysed here are

three Japanese travelogues to southwestern Pacific Islands. The profiles of the travel writers vary in personal background and professions, and the purposes and styles of their journeys: nun Shimizu Yasuko (female); television documentary producer Watanabe Kō (male), and sarariiman (office-worker) Kawaguchi Kizuki (male).<sup>4</sup>



**Oceania**  
(Source)



**Papua New Guinea**  
(Source)



**Solomon Islands**  
(Source)

The three travelogues, though neither commercially successful nor critically acclaimed, illuminate how these differences may affect historical accounts they present, and the lessons from history the writers draw on. The three travelogues share vital commonalities that distinguish them from other postwar Japanese travelogues to the same destinations. First, they make efforts to introduce readers to Pacific Islanders’ wartime memory. Second, they reveal how their journeys influenced their historical consciousness. Subsequent sections examine the histories and post-journey reflections the travellers record and interpret. The subsequent discussion shows how the travel writers ‘do’ history and how they seek to actualise themselves in the light of historical consciousness drawn from their journeys.<sup>5</sup>

**Travellers as historians; Islanders as storytellers**

The first travelogue is *Mori to sakana to gekisenchi* (Forest, fish and battlefields, hereafter *Gekisenchi*) (1997) by Catholic nun Shimizu Yasuko (b. 1937).<sup>6</sup> *Gekisenchi* is a bricolage of her travelogue, history of the Pacific War on the Islands, and reportage on the local activists whom she met. She has been a long-standing environmental activist who has challenged the impact of Japanese development in the Pacific on the forest and marine environment. Indeed, as the title suggests, *Gekisenchi* documents the Islanders' response to Japanese firms' exploitation of marine and fishery resources. While her environmental activism initially motivated Shimizu to visit PNG and Solomon Islands from 1990, during repeated visits the Islanders began telling her about their wartime experiences. For instance, Shimizu first heard about the wartime experience of nuns on New Britain Island four years after she began visiting. These were the nuns she spent time with every time she visited the island in the course of her environmental activism work.<sup>7</sup> The Islanders commonly related frequent and brutal treatment by the Japanese officers for any form of complaint, disobedience and refusal, and worst of all, for providing information to the Allied forces. For Shimizu, collecting oral histories grew into a 'spin off' project that compelled her to become a historian. *Gekisenchi* employs oral evidence she collected from the Islanders and the Japanese veterans, and secondary sources—both in Japanese and English.<sup>8</sup> She feels personal guilt and responsibility, and apologizes repeatedly to the Islanders while wondering what evoked such cruelty in the Japanese troops.<sup>9</sup>

A prominent feature of *Gekisenchi* is Shimizu's unequivocal and consistent articulation of her historical perspective, which frames her inquiry and record of her travels. She identifies a neo-colonial mechanism in which the male-dominated local political clique pursued its self-interest and neglected the welfare of the majority.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the book she expresses

and revisits her point about the continuity between Japanese wartime behaviour in the Pacific and subsequent economic exploitation.<sup>11</sup> She asserts, "Before tanks; now bulldozers. We the Japanese keep on invading their forests. This is very embarrassing."<sup>12</sup> How she arrived at this understanding says much about her historical perspective. Early in *Gekisenchi*, Shimizu recalls a New Britain Islander asking her: "Why are there so many Komatsu bulldozers? Japanese and Malaysian logging companies use Komatsu".<sup>13</sup> Though she was unable to answer immediately, the question prompted her to find out the reason. She learns that wartime manufacturers of military vehicles and ammunitions made construction vehicles in the postwar era. She notices the common technological feature of the caterpillar chassis in military vehicles and bulldozers. For her, these similarities signify continuing Japanese violence and exploitation on the Islands in wartime and the postwar era. Her historical narrative interweaves the ideological perspective which shaped her travelogue. To support her perspective she alternates her roles as a traveller, an activist and an historian.

### **Travelling and collecting oral history**

Shimizu's *Gekisenchi* provides a rich archive of Islanders' wartime oral history that testifies to the violent treatment and exploitation by the Japanese. She uses oral history to establish what she perceives to be the continual exploitation of the Islanders by the Japanese. As with any oral history, the historical accounts that Shimizu introduces highlight the way interpersonal dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee shape the narrative. This is a phenomenon anthropologists Marty Zelenietz and Masafumi Saito raise. In the 1980s they collected wartime stories from the residents of Kilege Village on New Britain Island—whose culture and customs share much with mainland PNG and the Solomon Islands. Zelenietz and Saito find that the interviewees study the interviewer and tailor the narrative to the

interviewer's nationality and sentiments about the war. The outcome thus "reflects a dialectical process between the storyteller and the listener".<sup>14</sup> Zelenietz and Saito further note that the role of the storyteller thus extends to historian and educator, conveying didactic messages from war memories.<sup>15</sup> Put differently, interviews are not unilateral story-telling to the interviewer, but involve a mutual process of story-making. Gekisenchi makes it apparent that Shimizu has a strong command of English, and has conducted interviews in English without an interpreter. Her interactions seem more personal than those mediated by an interpreter.<sup>16</sup>

A central encounter in Shimizu's travelogue is with Bruno Nana. In June 1994, Shimizu meets Nana and his wife, Sera, through the introduction of a local environmental activist. Bruno, who was then 63 years old, lived with his family in a village five kilometres west of the capital Honiara. Nana's tale focuses on Japanese brutality and inhumanity with the exception of one possible moment of compassion. Shimizu introduces it as a tale that he has only told to his family, and he insists that "It's all true".<sup>17</sup> His wife joins in to provide an exposition to Bruno's story. According to their narrative, in July 1942 the Japanese made the young Nana and other villagers construct an airfield. Bruno recalls that whipping was a common method of enforcing discipline, and the Japanese had little regard for his welfare. He injured his foot in an accident while working, but persevered for a month. Finally he requested medical treatment but the Japanese denied it.<sup>18</sup> He relates how in August 1942 the Japanese captured Nana and his friends on the way to their village after the villagers had rescued an American pilot. The Japanese tied the hands and feet of Nana and his friends and left them on the ground without food or water. On the fourth day, Nana said that he was at his wits' end and shouted "Water!" A Japanese officer gave Nana an empty tin filled with urine. Nana drank the urine and offered it to

his two friends, who also drank the urine. Later at night, Nana found the ropes on his and his friends' wrists loosened. He does not know who loosened the ropes but believes that the Japanese officer might have acted out of sympathy for Nana and the other captives. Nana then loosened the ropes on his friends' wrists and feet and fled. The local activist found Nana's story astounding and asked why he had not told him this before. Shimizu ends the chapter by stating that Nana only smiled in reply.<sup>19</sup>

Nana's tale to Shimizu highlights seminal dilemmas in oral history. The perspectives that both interviewer and interviewee bring to the occasion can create an interpersonal bond, which can influence the nature of the tale that emerges from the interaction. Shimizu comes to the interview with her own values and perspective about Japanese involvement in the Pacific, as does Nana. The ways they interpret each other's positions and purposes of listening and telling add to Nana's tale. The narrative focus of Nana's first tale was Japanese brutality to the men of Guadalcanal; his second tale of compassion by a Japanese officer making possible his escape. He therefore adds themes such as courage and an apparent rare display of humanity by the Japanese officer.

In keeping with the observation of Zelenietz and Saito, there may have been a number of dynamics at work in the interaction between Shimizu and Nana. Each influences the dynamics between Shimizu and Nana and the story he told her. First, it is likely that Nana decided to open his heart to Shimizu because she came with the introduction of a mutual acquaintance in environmental activism. Second, what may also have affected Nana's storytelling was Shimizu's status as a nun. In a strongly Christian region such as the Pacific Islands, Nana may not only have accorded her special respect he would not have given to another foreigner—especially a Japanese—but also motivated him to craft his story in a way

that would resonate with Shimizu. Third, Nana's story has a strong Biblical allusion and provides a striking example of a mutually constructed story. Shimizu records Nana stating that the moment he tasted the urine, he recalled Jesus on the cross and followed his action of drinking his own urine.<sup>20</sup> In his own ways, Nana places himself in the narrative scheme of a Biblical episode in which Jesus, in his last hours on the cross, received vinegar to drink.<sup>21</sup> Nana told his story of drinking the urine to present his experience in a paradigm familiar to Shimizu and to appeal to her religious sensibilities. Nonetheless, Nana's storyline deviates from the Bible. Jesus died on the cross; Nana survived his ordeal. While the biblical interpretations make it ambiguous whether Jesus drank the vinegar, Nana did drink the urine.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the act of the Japanese military officer saved him from the same fate as Jesus. Here, Nana adds a new dimension to his memory. We do not know which aspects of Nana's testimony are factual, embellished or even fabricated. The officer may have chosen to save Shimizu from a deadening sense of guilt out of his concern for her. What seems to matter, however, is the collaborative story-making between Nana and Shimizu—with occasional help from Nana's wife. The rapport the three build creates a parallel narrative for the Japanese officer's gesture of humanity towards Nana. Nana's story comes with a heart-warming end that lends itself to possible interpretations. It may signal his restored faith in humanity or a warning against the Japanese not to commit any further infractions of his human dignity.

The impact of different personal histories and a corresponding shift in the dynamic between interviewer and storyteller is evident when comparing Shimizu's collection of testimonies with the narratives recorded by a television documentary producer Watanabe Kō (b. 1965), in the second travelogue analysed here. His book, *Saigo no kotoba: senjō ni nokosareta nijūyonmanji no todokanakatta tegami* [Last

Words: Letters that did not reach home] (2004) describes, among other things, the making of documentaries featuring novelist Shigematsu Kiyoshi between 2002 and 2003. The documentaries feature Shigematsu visiting various Pacific Islands, and his reading soldiers' diaries aloud at battle sites where the soldiers died. The book records Watanabe's research in the US, Australia and Japan to identify the diaries, his interviews with Japanese veterans and bereaved families, and his impressions of the journeys to Pacific Islands. The histories of the Solomon Islands campaign that the book relates centre on the stories of Japanese soldiers and bereaved families. The stories from Solomon Islanders are rare, but present notable counterpoints.<sup>23</sup> In Guadalcanal, Watanabe meets two local residents through the arrangement of a long-term expatriate Japanese, who also acted as his interpreter. The first is Michael Bain, the 45-year-old chief of a village near Honiara. Bain grew up listening to his father frequently recounting his wartime experiences. Watanabe depicts Bain himself as the torchbearer of wartime history. Bain spoke about the cruel treatment the Japanese meted out to local men when they built airfields for the Japanese, and added that some died of starvation because the Japanese did not give them enough food. Watanabe conveys Bain's forceful tone of voice and his demand that the Japanese government pay proper compensation.<sup>24</sup>

Particularly telling is the record that Watanabe gives of his meeting with Bruno Nana who Shimizu met nine years before. Nana, now 77 years old, tells Watanabe about working under the Japanese and recalls his involvement in building an airfield for them.<sup>25</sup> He recollects receiving cigarette rations and three regular meals and Watanabe finds that Nana held no bitter feelings towards the Japanese: "The Japanese are our friends. I never had any bad experience. The Japanese treated us very well."<sup>26</sup> Nana's recollection to Watanabe contrasts to the resentment Bain inherited from

his father. For his part, Bain may have regarded the interview as an opportunity to air the grievances of his father's generation to the Japanese public. Watanabe's reflection on the contrasting accounts is that both accounts were "probably true" and revealed "the two sides of war." He suggests that the discrepancy between the accounts reflects how the Japanese treatment alternated between benevolence and cruelty, leaving the Islanders with contrasting sentiments towards them.<sup>27</sup> Watanabe has portrayed Bain as resentful and Nana as amiable. The stories each told Watanabe can reflect how Bain and Nana perceived Watanabe, and his subsequent story-making. Even though Watanabe is not a veteran or a family member of a Japanese soldier, he still is a Japanese who represented the occupying nation. At the same time, however, Watanabe is no ordinary tourist. He is a television producer whose programme can convey the Solomon Islanders' wartime experience to viewers in Japan, and project certain images of the Solomon Islanders. To Bain and Nana, speaking to Watanabe necessitated adjustment to the framing of and emotional tones of their stories.

The travelogues by Shimizu and Watanabe show differences between Bain and Nana, and between Nana in 1994 and in 2003. The observations of Zelenietz and Saito may help to explain this variance. Nana may have perceived Shimizu and Watanabe differently, and opened up to Shimizu more readily than to Watanabe. Shimizu's vocation as a nun and her continual involvement in environmental activism garnered great respect from the Islanders. Her activism and introduction through a friend could well have reduced Nana's feelings of inhibition towards strangers. In contrast, Nana's interview with Watanabe took place under different circumstances. Watanabe travelled with a Japanese television crew and a Japanese interpreter. Even with the possibility of Nana reconciling his grievance in the intervening nine years, it is still plausible that

he chose to present a more diplomatic 'on camera' persona to Watanabe. Nana may have spoken out of caution in case his candid recollection made him appear hostile to Watanabe, his interpreter and viewers in Japan. The contextual considerations in these examples underline the kaleidoscopic nature of oral history, and demand a nuanced reading of the 'dialectic process' between the traveller and local informants. The identities, the styles and the purposes of the travellers can influence the responses they elicit from local people and affect the resultant historical accounts they relate in their travelogues.

### Ignorance and learning

The types of history the travellers collect and present also appear to be connected with the different purposes of their journeys. Not all the travellers intended to collect oral history or had a high level of interest in war history before the journeys. The travelogue by the third travel writer sarariiman Kawaguchi Kizuki (b. 1958) provides a different affective and intellectual trajectory from the other two. Unlike Shimizu and Watanabe, Kawaguchi travelled solo to PNG in January 1993 to satisfy his curiosity for the exotic. Kawaguchi's initial plan was to travel with a friend. But his family circumstances resulted in his last-minute cancellation. Undeterred, Kawaguchi proceeded alone. In PNG, he travelled without the assistance of interpreters. His descriptions of communication suggest his proficiency in English, an official language of PNG, sufficient to conduct everyday transactions, but only rudimentary Tok Pisin, the official language, learnt during his journey.

Notwithstanding the spontaneous beginning of his journey, his narrative of historical awareness offers an accidental bildungsroman 'coming of age' undertone. Kawaguchi claims to have known little about PNG and the Japanese military campaign before departure. Once in PNG memories of the Japanese

occupation among New Guineans stimulated and captivated his historical imagination. Kawaguchi visited former Japanese bunkers, and saw open-air war museums that displayed discarded military vehicles and ordnances on village greens. At these sites and elsewhere in PNG, he met elders who spoke broken Japanese they learnt while working under the Japanese. Kawaguchi quickly realised that PNG had more to teach him than the exotic culture, which was what had originally lured him there. He then saw that the memories of the war had made a profound imprint on the people of PNG. The history Kawaguchi features in his travelogue intersperses his impressions and record of casual conversations with the local people with research into secondary sources that he carried out after returning to Japan. Parts of his travelogue unravel history that caught him unawares and inspired him to convince the reader of the enormity of the historical legacy the Japanese left on the people of PNG.

A moment that crystallized Kawaguchi's historical consciousness came when he visited Rabaul on New Britain Island—the site of a major regional headquarters that the Japanese military had established in 1942. There, he visited a Japanese memorial, built by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 1980, which commands a view overlooking Simpson Harbour.<sup>28</sup> Lingered at the memorial at twilight, he casts his eyes down at the ocean. He finds himself putting his hands together to pay respect to the dead. He elaborates on the mixed response he formed at the memorial. He finds the scenery both beautiful and confounding, and imagines how this foreign climate and scenery might have made soldiers feel alienated, anxious, scared and averse to fighting in a war.<sup>29</sup> His thoughts stretched beyond the Japanese soldiers and he urges the reader to imagine how local residents might have felt toward the succession of foreigners: the German and Australian colonialists, and the Japanese troops.<sup>30</sup> He quotes the Japanese memorial inscription that

reads: “We commemorate the deaths of those who died in battles on Southern Pacific Islands and the adjacent seas in the Second World War. We erect this monument with the hope for peace.”<sup>31</sup> Kawaguchi finds the memorial text lacking in sensitivity to the suffering inflicted on the local population. Such disregard, to him, represents “the imperialist tradition that does not care for others”.<sup>32</sup>

Kawaguchi's intellectual awakening moves from initial ignorance to a gradual increase of empathy towards the New Guineans at having played unwitting hosts to occupying troops. He goes through an epiphany at the Japanese memorial. The fact that he does not reveal exactly how he arrived at this perspective suggests an inchoate realisation that has yet to develop. Nonetheless, towards the end of his travelogue Kawaguchi laments how little modern history, especially war history, Japanese schools teach. He stresses that the Japanese should learn more about their wartime aggression inflicted on the peoples of the Asia-Pacific, not only about the victimhood of Japanese falling prey to the oppressive measures of the military regime and Allied attacks.<sup>33</sup>

It is worth reflecting on the intellectual backdrop of the early to mid-1990s when he visited PNG and wrote his travelogue. At that time, hitherto muted questions of Japanese atrocities during the Asia-Pacific War resurfaced. The ensuing controversies grew into not only debates about wartime history, but also generated new ways the Japanese government and people could remember their wartime experience as perpetrators of violence and domination, in addition to decades-old perceptions as victims of the oppressive military regime and as sacrificial heroes for the good of the nation. These questions elicited heated responses and counter-responses from critics and defendants of Japanese nationalists—both inside and outside Japan.<sup>34</sup>

The history of PNG that Kawaguchi presents offers a personal stand against imperialist amnesia. He introduces the reader to the little-known life of a New Guinean chief, Karao based on sources including a Japanese veteran's memoir and a journalist's reportage. Kawaguchi writes that Karao saw many Japanese soldiers suffering from starvation and illness and found the sight intolerable. Karao acted on his sympathetic feelings to help the Japanese soldiers until the end of their lives or their departure. After the war, the Australians, who resumed civil administration of PNG, put local chiefs suspected of collaborating with the Japanese on trial. The Australians sentenced Karao to death for assisting enemy combatants, and executed his wife and two sons. However, the Australians released Karao after three years' imprisonment, and left him to live with his third son until his death in 1972. Karao's fate seems to have struck so powerful a chord in Kawaguchi that he featured Karao's postwar life in his travelogue.<sup>35</sup> Here, Kawaguchi seems to express a different critique of the Japanese from Shimizu's. Both empathise with the Islanders' experiences and do not exonerate the Japanese of their wartime responsibility. Nonetheless, Kawaguchi reminds the reader that for the Islanders the question that mattered most was not who ruled, but how the ruler treated the Islanders during and after the war. Here, Kawaguchi uses Karao as the symbol of the continual vulnerability that brought unexpected and tragic consequences to him and his family. Kawaguchi does not deploy what John Dower terms "Evocations of moral (or immoral) equivalence" to excuse the Japanese.<sup>36</sup> That is, the Japanese were 'bad' but the Australians were just as 'bad' if not worse, so we should not single out and pontificate about the Japanese as the sole perpetrators. For professional historians of the Pacific War, Karao's story exemplifies the well-known consequences of New Guineans suspected of collaborating with the Japanese.<sup>37</sup> For Kawaguchi, however, Karao's life story was a revelation that compelled him to adopt the role

of an amateur historian. His research and writing of Karao's story formed an extension of his journey that informed his new intellectual vision. His acts make a personal statement against historical amnesia about Japanese soldiers' violence committed against the people in a part of the world that mainstream Japanese people may have forgotten.

### **Travel and historical consciousness: bringing the past into the present**

The impact of travel on the three travel writers shaped their historical consciousness. What was once a distant memory of a remote land became a pressing personal matter. The most articulate writer is Shimizu. She expresses her well-formed political and historiographical position at the outset and uses her impressions from journeys and oral history to bolster her claims. Her empathy towards the Islanders and criticism of Japanese corporations and government, prompted criticism among nationalists who deny wrongdoing by the Japanese—in wartime and in the postwar era. The histories that Watanabe and Kawaguchi collect and present pose questions of moral ambiguity that Shimizu may have downplayed. Wartime memories of Bain and Nana that Watanabe introduced suggest that Japanese treatment was not universally harsh although they positioned the Islanders as subordinates. Likewise, Kawaguchi's example of Karao further provokes questions not only about Japanese but also about Australian attitudes towards the Islanders.

The trajectories of historical consciousness for each author differed. Just as each journey can be unique to the individual, so can the attendant process of intellectual awakening and subsequent impact on the travellers' perceptions. Kawaguchi's joined a non-governmental organisation, 'Friends of PNG in Japan.' The group developed out of an association to support the efforts of a Japanese veteran of the PNG campaign, Nishimura

Kōkichi, to locate and repatriate the bones and the remains of his deceased comrades. The group now focuses on voluntary work to foster greater connections with and understanding of PNG. His second visit to PNG in August 1997 with 'Friends of PNG in Japan' to assist in a housing project resulted in his second travelogue.<sup>38</sup> Kawaguchi's second book like Shimizu's *Gekisenchi* uses history as a springboard for raising concerns about the contemporary relationship between Japan and PNG. Kawaguchi criticizes postwar Japanese businesses for viewing PNG as a territory whose natural resources exist for Japanese to exploit. He contends that this attitude stemmed from the wartime occupation of PNG, and political and economic ties Japan cultivated with PNG in the postwar era. He feels it is a "duty" for the Japanese to learn about their wartime actions in PNG in order to think about it differently.<sup>39</sup>

Compared to Shimizu and Kawaguchi, Watanabe's historical consciousness appears to be more inward-looking. He forges a new attitude towards journalism as a vocation, as opposed to an occupation. He now identifies the mutual influence between his journalism and personal life. His second travelogue, *Gatō junrei* [Pilgrimage to Guadalcanal—the Island of Starvation] (2005), relates his trips to Guadalcanal in 2004 and 2005. On these occasions he follows a Japanese association of bereaved families and veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign, and makes documentaries about their journeys to commemorate the spirits of the dead soldiers. The book documents not only his journeys, but also records biographical accounts of the soldiers and the remaining veterans and families. In the epilogue of *Gatō junrei* Watanabe recalls how he felt about visiting the battlefields. In his first trip in 2003, he saw them "only as scenic places", and could only vaguely speculate about Japanese soldiers dying there.<sup>40</sup> On his second visit in 2004, he was initially unable to grasp the human

significance of the battles taking place nearly 60 years earlier. But during this trip, after seeing the bones of Japanese soldiers in the jungle and reflecting on their deaths far from home, his "vague sense turned into a sharp horror" of war.<sup>41</sup> He observed and conveyed the perceptions of local residents as well as the Japanese. Seeing the bones up close made him think personally about how loath he would be to serve as a soldier. What above all galvanised his aversion to war, however, was the sight of his three-year old daughter at play, leading him to conclude that "no matter how difficult it is, we must keep on saying 'no' to war".<sup>42</sup> The horror he felt grew into a pacifist desire that he developed after returning to Japan and that underpins his subsequent war-related work. His latest book, published in 2015, deals with Japanese soldiers' private diaries. There he notes that many soldiers did not accept the militaristic ideology that the regime sought to instil in soldiers during the Asia-Pacific War. He states that his journalistic work derives from his perspective as "an individual who hopes Japan will be a good country".<sup>43</sup> By this he means one that listens to and values the individual desire to avoid war at all cost. Thus, his notion of a 'good country' challenges nationalist rhetoric.

Taken together, however, Watanabe's historical consciousness, while ultimately critical of Japanese militarism, develops within the confines of Japanese experience and sorrow. It can only reify and privilege Japanese victim consciousness, which prevents him from seeing the war from the Islanders' perspectives or recognizing the Japanese as perpetrators of oppression and violence against the islanders. Watanabe's journalistic work spanning over a decade nevertheless shows his gradual development of historical consciousness. Watanabe's vision may not please those who regard the soldiers as making patriotic sacrifices for Japan or inflicting violence on enemy combatants and non-combatants in foreign lands. Unlike Shimizu and Kawaguchi,

Watanabe’s travelogue does not give the impression of meeting many Islanders or seeking such opportunities. Indeed, he travelled to film the experience of Japanese soldiers and their bereaved families outside Japan, and travelled exclusively with Japanese companions. It is plausible that the nature of and the companions of his journeys shaped his historical consciousness within the dominant framework of the Japanese experience. In this, his journeys charted different trajectories from those of the other two travellers.

### Three travel writers’ purposes, styles and reflections.

Table: Three travel writers’ purposes, styles and reflections.

	Prior journeys or exposure to Pacific Islands	Purposes of travel to the South West Pacific	Styles of travel and exposure to local people	Pre-journey awareness of wartime history in the Pacific Islands	Historical sources collected and used	Post-journey effects on historical consciousness
Shimizu	Mission work and environmental activism in Guam.	Environmental activism	Solo.  Meets with local people, e.g. environmental activists and nuns.	Strong: aware of the Japanese role as perpetrators during the war, and saw a continuity in Japanese exploitation between the wartime and the postwar era.	Oral history. Mainly from local people.  Secondary sources	Reinforced prior identification of the Japanese as perpetrators of violence on the Pacific Islanders.
Watanabe	None	To film TV documentaries about Japanese soldiers’ wartime experiences	In groups, with Japanese TV crew and associations of Japanese veterans and bereaved families.  Limited interaction with local people.	Weak: treated his TV work as a job.	Oral history. Mainly from Japanese veterans and bereaved families.  Secondary sources	Introspective: regards his work as vocation.  Journey galvanised his social conscience.
Kawaguchi	None	To satisfy his curiosity about exotic places	Solo.  Meets and speaks with local people.	Weak: knew little about Japanese involvement in the South West Pacific.	Mainly secondary sources.  Personal impressions and conversations with local people.	Gradual realisation and articulation of the Japanese as the perpetrator, and Japan as an imperial power.

### Conclusions

These three travelogues afford detailed analyses into the common and distinct paths of the travel writers’ processes of becoming historians in the making. This article has shown that their journeys had a profound impact on the travellers’ attitudes and intellect. The influence of travel extends to shaping their historical consciousness in diverse ways that may guide future actions. Yet, the article has stressed the diversity in pre- and post-journey thought processes and the histories they collect

and present. The travel writers’ impressions and interviews inform us not just of the Islanders’ experience, but also the dynamic of collaborative story-making. Shimizu and Kawaguchi came to appreciate the historical roots of the iniquitous relationship between Japan and the southwestern Pacific Islands, and engage in civic organisations that sought to redress the present-day relationship. Although Watanabe’s responses focused on the Japanese experiences, his commitment to pacifism led him to think of his journalistic work as a vocation, similar to Shimizu’s environmental activism and Kawaguchi’s NGO work. To return to the question—what can travelogues reveal to readers and scholars interested in history?—travelogues can afford insights into the travellers’ development and practise of historical scholarship. Just as we travel with different motives and approaches, travel writers show varied ways of moving between time and space, and looking into the past, the present, and the future.

This is a substantially revised version of a conference proceedings paper published in the 23rd Nichibunken International Symposium: Japanese Studies Down Under: History, Politics, Literature and Art 南太平洋から見る日本研究: 歴史、政治、文学、芸術, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand (2016). I am grateful to anonymous readers for their comments on my manuscript, and to four institutions that enabled me to conduct research and writing of this article between February and June 2016: The University of the South Pacific for a sabbatical; Visiting Fellowships offered by the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University, Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo.

**Ryota Nishino** is a lecturer in history at The University of the South Pacific. He has worked on a comparative history of history textbooks (*Changing Histories: Japanese and South*

*African history textbooks in comparison* (2011)), and travel writing (*Studies in Travel Writing, Japanese Studies, Journal of Pacific History, and Pacific Historical Review*). He is currently working on cross-media representations of trauma and masculinity of the Pacific War.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While veterans' memoirs constitute a genre in their own right, pilgrims tend not to publish their travelogues commercially. In the late 1990s historian Iwamoto Hiromitsu counted over 1,100 commercially available accounts by Japanese veterans on the New Guinea campaign. Iwamoto Hiromitsu, "Japanese perceptions on the Pacific War in Papua New Guinea: Views from publications" in Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson (eds.) *The Pacific War in Papua New Guinea: Memories and Realities* (Tokyo: Rikkyo University Centre for Asian Area Studies, 2006), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Here I use the term 'travelogue' to refer to travel writing. For the finer distinction between travel writing, travelogue and the other synonymous term, travel book, see Carl Thompson's introductory text. Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed analyses of pilgrimage to Pacific Islands see Shinji Yamashita, "The Japanese Encounter with the South: Japanese Tourists in Palau," in Sylvie Guichard-Anguis and Okpyo Moon (eds.), *Japanese Tourism and Travel Culture* (Abingdon, U.K: Routledge, 2009), 172-93.

<sup>4</sup> Until 1949 Papua New Guinea comprised two separate foreign-administered territories of Papua and New Guinea. Here I refer to Papua New Guinea as a collective term for both territories, but distinguish Papua and New Guinea where appropriate.

<sup>5</sup> Travel writing scholars seek to pin down the defining characteristic of the travelogue. Emerging consensus appears to be that the travelogue is a first-person prose narrative which the main subject is the author's journey. Travel writers adopt conventions from fictions and non-fictions such as literature, diary, journalism, history and ethnography. These varieties make the travelogue a hybrid genre which warrants multiple analytical strategies. Thompson, *Travel Writing*, Chapter 2, "Defining the Genre", esp., 15-17, and 26; Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter 1, esp., 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> I indicate the years in which the authors were born, as shown in the books. When they were born and socialised can affect the ways they remember the wartime years.

<sup>7</sup> Shimizu Yasuko, *Mori to sakana to gekisenchi* (Tokyo: Hokuto Shuppan, 1997), 48.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 160. Although she does not always give the details of her visits and interviews, we can surmise that she visited PNG and Solomon Islands at least four times between 1990, the year she began travelling to the region, and 1997, the year *Gekisenchi* was published. The dates she lists are: August 1990, October 1992, June 1994 and August 1995.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. I use the term 'Islander' as an umbrella term for both Papua New Guineans and Solomon Islanders.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 156. Shimizu has supported the causes of Islander women, and dedicated herself to a non-governmental organisation that calls for the conservation of the forest in PNG and Solomon Islands. PNG to Solomon Shotō no mori o mamoru kai ([Association to Protect Forests of PNG and the Solomon Islands](#)), accessed 6 August, 2017. Shimizu's name appears

as a committee member.

<sup>11</sup> Shimizu, *Gekisenchi*, 15, 48, 141, 246, 257.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Marty Zelenietz and Hisafumi Saito. “The Kilenge and the War: Observer Effect on Stories from the Past”, in Geoffrey M. White and Lamont Lindstrom (eds.), *The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989), 181.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Shimizu taught at local high schools in Guam and Saipain for a total of six years. for three years in the early 1980s. Shimizu, *Gekisenchi*, 160 and n.p., author biography at the end of the book.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>19</sup> Shimizu, *Mori to sakana to gekisenchi*, 114-19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew, 27:34 and Mark, 15:23.

<sup>22</sup> See for instance, John 19:29-30. It states that while Jesus was on the cross, the drank was offered to Him: “Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, it is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (*English Standard Version*)

<sup>23</sup> Shigematsu Kiyoshi and Watanabe Kō. *Saigo no kotoba: senjō ni nokosareta nijūyonmanji no todokanakatta tegami*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007 [2004]). Shigematsu wrote the prologue and epilogue. Watanabe wrote all other chapters. Subsequent citations to this book come from the chapters by Watanabe, and therefore cite his name only.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>25</sup> Nana’s age as given by Watanabe does not match the age Shimizu gives. She says Nana’s age is 63 years when she meets him in 1994; Watanabe says Nana was 77 in 2003. I defer to the age each author gives.

<sup>26</sup> Watanabe, *Saigo no kotoba*, 151.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Kōsei Rōdōshō (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan), “[Senbotsusha irei jigyō: minami-taiheiyō senbotsusha no hi](#)”, 戦没者慰霊事業：南太平洋戦没者の碑 (8 August 2017).

<sup>29</sup> Kawaguchi Kizuki, *PNG tanbōki: tabō na bijinesuman no jikokeihatsu ryokō* (Tokyo: Kadensha, 1996), 134. We do not know Kawaguchi’s spiritual or religious faith. What faith his gesture symbolised remains uncertain.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 133. This is my translation of the Japanese text. Kawaguchi noted that the inscription was written in two other languages: English and Pidgin, but did not offer translations. さきの大戦において南太平洋諸島及び海戦で戦没した人々をしのび平和への思いをこめてこの碑を建立する。The text Kawaguchi quoted matches that published on the Kōsei Rōdōshō website.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>34</sup> A plethora of works, both in English and Japanese, follow the debates over historical

memories in the 1990s. For a concise summary of the issues, see, Philip Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories: The 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II* (Abingdon, Oxen: Routledge, 2007), Chapter 1, esp. 18-25.

<sup>35</sup> Work by professional historian, Iwamoto Hiromitsu, notes Karao assisted the Japanese on request by Lieutenant General Adachi Hatazō. Iwamoto Hiromitsu, “Memories and Realities of the Japanese Occupation of Mainland New Guinea,” in Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson (eds.), *The Pacific War in Papua New Guinea: Memories and Realities: RU-CASS International Symposium*, (Tokyo: Rikkyo University Centre for Asian Area Studies, 2006), 291.

<sup>36</sup> John W. Dower, “An Aptitude for Being Unloved: War and Memory in Japan”, in John W. Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World* (New York: The New Press, 2012), eBook, Chapter 4, Section 2, 119-121.

<sup>37</sup> See for instance, Hank Nelson, “The Swinging Index: Capital Punishment and British and Australian Administrations in Papua and New Guinea, 1888-1945”, *The Journal of Pacific History* 13:3, 1978, 130-52, esp. 149-51, n. 78. Iwamoto “Memories and Realities,” esp., 285-292.

<sup>38</sup> Kawaguchi Kizuki, *PNG: seirei no ie, NGO, ningen moyō ni au tabi* (Tokyo: Kadensha, 2000), 7-8. The group maintains a website, see [here](#). On Nishimura Kōkichi, see David McNeill, “Magnificent Obsession: Japan’s Bone Man and the World War II Dead in the Pacific”, in *The Asia-Pacific Journal: JapanFocus* (July 17, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Kawaguchi, *PNG tanbōki*, 201. His second travelogue appeared after the publication of Shimizu’s. Although he does not cite Shimizu’s book, it remains unclear whether he has read or consulted it.

<sup>40</sup> Watanabe Kō, *Gatō Junrei: Gadarukanaru de senshishita otto ya chichi, ani o otte* [Pilgrimage to Guadalcanal: Tracing the footprints of husbands, fathers and brothers on the Island of Starvation] (Fukuoka: Kaichōsha, 2005), 262.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Watanabe Kō, *Senjō de kaku: Hino Ashihei to jūgun sakka* [Writing on battlefields: Hino Ashihei and Embedded Novelists] (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2015), 338.