

Memories of War 002: Koji Hosokawa

戦争の記憶

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: Koji Hosokawa

Interviewed by

Yohei Hayakawa

The BBB: Breakthrough Bandwagon Books

Originally told in Japanese by Koji Hosokawa

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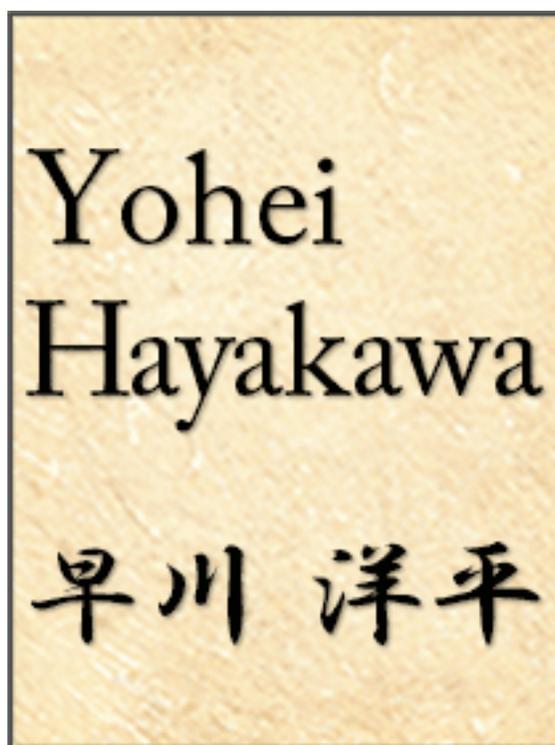
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ISBN: 978-1-329-58122-7



The BBB website

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Yohei Hayakawa Author Page

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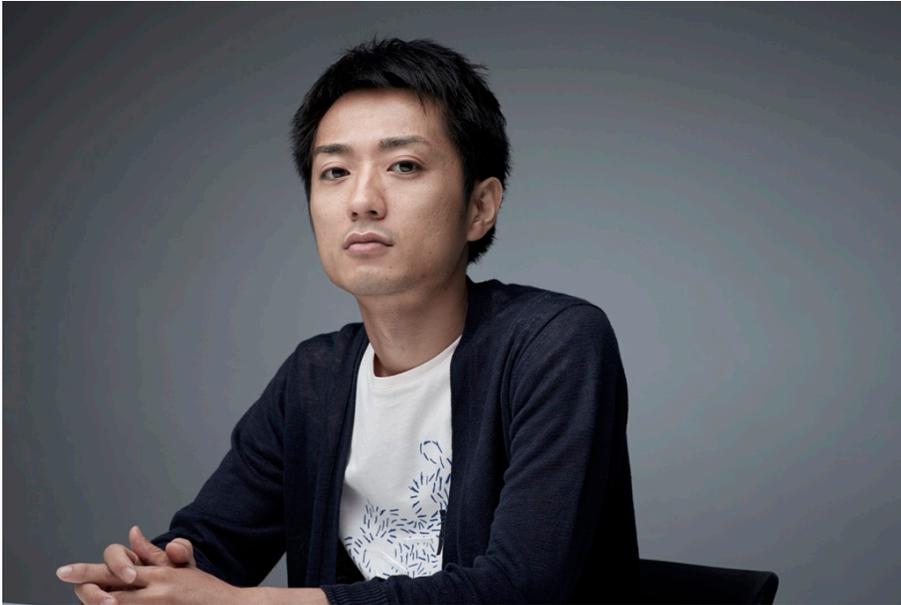
About This Project

Memories of War is a project which leaves voices of the people who survived the war. We are not supporting any specific organization, and we are not agitating any thoughts.

Also, please be consent about the following descriptions.

-The contents of the interview have left the voices and thoughts of the people who survived the war. Moreover, there might be inappropriate expressions but we have left the voices as it was spoken.

-The articles were recorded based on the knowledge and memories during the interview were taken. Therefore, there might be incorrect memories and some ambiguous points.



Every year, at the day of the end of the war watching the media, watching the movie *Grave of the Fireflies*, I decide in my heart 'Not to make a war again. War is cruel.' But another busy day starts from August 16th.

This year 2013, it is not a year of a turning point, but after 68 years from the war, is it just me who feel that we have a lot of movies about war like *The Wind Rises*, *Emperor*, and *The Eternal Zero*.

As an interviewer, living in Hiroshima where we had the first atomic bomb in the world, I had to face this theme. I have been thinking about it for a long time. But I took time in starting this project ...

While it is during this time, a few people told me; I want you to hold interviews with people who experienced the war. Podcast can leave the voices for 50years, 100years, for the future.

Almost 70 years after the war, the number of people who survived the war is decreasing every year.

That is why I have to leave their voices.

Memories of War is not a radio program and does not agitate to any specific thoughts.

I just wanted to leave the voices of the people who survived the war, carefully with this interview for our future children, and to all people in the whole world.

I hope that people will start to think what peace is.

Yohei Hayakawa (Media Journalist)

October 1st 2013

About Koji Hosokawa

Development of successors for telling about the atomic bomb to the next generation.

To think about HIROSHIMA as your own experience.



Birth 1928, Hiroshima

Volunteer guide in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Mr. Koji Hosokawa, who worked in a navy factory, was a militaristic teenage boy. He lost his younger sister to the atomic bomb and saw the terrible sight around the center of the atomic bomb's explosion first-hand. Sorrow and deep thorn still remain in his mind. He is one of the volunteer guides in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and tells people about his experience actively through participating in the program which is for training successors. The reason being is the will to train them as successors with Mr. Hosokawa's feeling that: People think about HIROSHIMA as their own experience. I, Yohei Hayakawa, interviewed him about his experiences.

Militaristic teenage boy who made ship parts in a navy factory.

Hayakawa: Could you tell us the first thing that comes to mind from your memory of those days? Of course, there are no specific answers but could you tell us one thing you want to tell to the listeners?

Well, I don't have good memories of the war. Of course, when I was a child, there was nothing but the war. I also used to be one of the "militaristic teenage boys" in a sense. The number of my friends gradually decreased. So, I have very little good memories of the war.

Hayakawa: You said that you were a militaristic teenage boy. Well, I have a frank question. During that time, TVs and radios focused on broadcasting the war. We studied His Imperial Majesty is the only one for all Japanese, as the living god, and we Japanese fought strongly to protect our country, Japan. We know those things through movies and textbooks, though. This way of thinking was regarded by people naturally, but could you tell us if you had thought something a little strange toward the situation or thought that it couldn't be helped?

Well, I said I was a militaristic teenage boy, but I didn't willingly apply for "Yoka ren". ("Yoka ren" was one of the training systems in the navy. This objective was to build up the navy's skill for the aerial war. From 14 years old to below the age of 20 men could apply for that.) I didn't have a brilliant memory at that time.

First of all, around the latter part of the war, our city was destroyed by quite a few air raids. Hiroshima was one of the most prosperous cities in Japan at that time and also strong military wise. Many soldiers in Hiroshima were sent to the battlefields. Most of them were not able to come back to Hiroshima because of the war. They were killed in the battlefields. Moreover, the number of people decreased because they were sent to the battlefields and to factories to work for the military industry. The saddest memory in my mind was "Gakuto Kinrou Douinn". (The Japanese government ordered that junior high school students and older students to engage in military industries or food factories, because of the lack of labor population. The system was called "Gakuto Kinrou Douin".) That is why I was not able to take classes at all. We had a strong will to study, but we couldn't. From early to late, we continued working. Everybody did that. My working place was a navy factory in Kure City.

Hayakawa: At that time, how old were you?

I may have been 16 years old at that time. I got special training and the factory made me get a license for electric welding techniques, and I still have the license for the navy but it is not worth using. Also my company ordered me to make naval ship parts. They were useless things. They were not important parts. It may have been around New Year Day or so, but "Senkan Yamato", which is a ship, came to the factory to take final checks on its condition because the ship was going to leave for Okinawa. I got a special opportunity. I was able to see the bottom of the ship. I think there were few people who were able to see this ship from the nearest side. That was a breathtaking experience for me. In early April, the ship made a sortie, but on the outskirts of Kyushu, the ship got struck by air raids by the US navy and finally went to the bottom of the sea. This was also an acute experience for me. Around April, the time of battles on the mainland began, so the atmosphere was tense. At that time, I worked for Hiroshima Teishin Kyoku reluctantly. Hiroshima Teishin Kyoku was a part of the telegraphic jobs. It was also a predecessor of NTT wired telegraphic department. It was located in what was known then as Motomachi but now the Hakushima area.

The Japanese government thought that Kyushu would be one of the primary targets in Japan. There was a strategy we didn't know about at that time, but it was called "Olympic Mission". It was its secret code. It is like "Manhattan Mission". We knew about it later. I was sent to the mountains around Fukuoka area. Our country had a plan to build a telecommunication base in caves. So I engaged in the work of construction to

laycables reluctantly. At that time, there were many air raids in Kyushu, so I spent my time being afraid of that. By the end of July, I was so exhausted from the work. Finally, I came back to Hiroshima.

Hayakawa: Was it just a day off or ...?

No it wasn't. I finished the job, so I came back. I stayed there for a total of 2 months. After I came back to Hiroshima, it was the end of July. I couldn't imagine at all that there was an atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. I started to work on August 6th in Hiroshima. I had a very cute younger sister. On August 6th, she said "I am off" and she went to school, but she never came back.

“I should have given them water”. Deep thorn still remains in his mind.

Hayakawa: I had many opportunities to interview many people. They said as soon as it flashed they lost their memories. How about your situation?

Well of course, I remembered. In any case, speaking of the atomic bomb, supposing we suffer from that just right now, that area is within 1.3km from the center of the bomb, many things around us, tables, chairs, everything and even human beings definitely blew up with such strong force and turned to dust. It flew us on the ground. Our bodies became severely bruised. When I suffered from the atomic bomb, I was severely bruised, but I was able to walk by myself. There was a nice general hospital there, and one more hospital affiliated with the general hospital was also there. The building remains now too as Teishin Hospital, and another building in front of the hospital remains there too. It became a museum. It was natural for the suffered people to go there and they wanted the doctors and nurses to give them medical treatment. However, the hospital filled with many people. Doctors and nurses suffered from that, and medical supplies were in a mess, short supply, and a sorry state. I also suffered from other things like terrific air raids by Grumman battle planes, so I thought that I should leave from the crowded area as early as possible.

As you know, there are many rivers in Hiroshima. "Kyobashi river", which is one of the rivers was a distance of about 400m or 500m from this place. So I decided to go there on foot. The atomic bomb exploded just around 500m from the Atomic Bomb Dome. It caused strong and heavy wind pressure from top to down. So wooden structures became flattened. The bomb pushed these structures from up to down with tremendous power. It was like crushing a matchbox with their hands. People in the dome didn't know what happened and they remained imprisoned there. A few people may have been able to escape from there, but the others must have been surprised at it I think. I felt someone's presence when I walked around there. I remembered their weak voices saying "help me". However, I didn't have the strength to take care of others and I didn't have the feeling to want to help them because I didn't know what was going on. Moreover, I didn't know where they were. It can't be helped. Hearing their voices behind me, I finally arrived at the river and found the first grade junior high school students there. They engaged in the job "Tatemono Sokai". (Tatemono Sokai means to "demolish buildings". The objective is to protect important factories and facilities. When the buildings are attacked by air raids, the hope of the air raid is to have the buildings burn so that they may destroy the important places. The Japanese government decided to make the area fireproof to protect the important places so had the buildings around the important areas demolished.) I clearly remembered them. They were students of Sotoku Junior High School. You know the name of the school don't you? This school education system is based on Buddhism and has a long history.

The first grade students were exposed to the bomb's radiation. They escaped from there by themselves. The name of the place is "Hatchobori". They worked there. The place was located at point-blank range of the bomb dropping. Some of the students died there immediately. Students who survived from the bomb asked me "give us water", "give us water", but I didn't do that. The reason was I was taught strictly if burn-injured people drank water, they would die quickly. That is why I never gave them water.

The students wanted water but they could not get it. Gradually their voices faded and they finally died there. That is to say, to drink water had nothing to do with their death. They would have died in any case. I deeply regretted not giving them water. I feel sorry for them. I didn't pass through the place where the bomb was dropped even though it was a more direct route to where I wanted to go.

Hayakawa: Still now too?

Of course, I didn't pass through that area for about 60 years. I did my best to escape the place. I thought I didn't need to pass through that area because I knew another route. However as one of my field works requires me to tell people my experiences, I was fated to go there. I brought my team members to the place.

I remembered, before the field works, I was interviewed by a reporter who belongs to Chugoku Newspaper Company and passed through that area. Surprisingly, the place was still the same scene as it was 68 years ago. It remains so now too. It is by the riverside. Nowadays, many big apartments have been built there. It was a high-ranked residential area at that time. This area was near from the center of explosion but the scene has not changed, so I think the area is the only place that remains as an unspoiled scene.

Hayakawa: 68 years have passed since then but the place has not changed in a sense?

Well, there are many buildings around the area which have turned the area to become more urban compared to before, but it is hard for me not to remember the atomic bomb flashback. The current scene overlaps with the scene as I remember before. So I remember it clearly. I spent a while there. At that time, I didn't know the bomb was the atomic bomb at all. Moreover, nobody told me and I didn't know what an atomic bomb was. Hiroshima City was blazing. Its transportation facilities were destroyed. I couldn't walk on the ground. When I was walking along the street, I saw one view then stayed at my co-worker's place that night. The area is Oshita, which is a little far from there, around Ohta Gawa upstream area. The house was near Fudo-in.

The next day, on my way home, I went to that part of the city again and was so surprised at the scene. I passed by the opposite street as I did yesterday. I found many collapsed homes at that time, but no traces of them the next day. Everything had burned up and turned to ash. What I saw there were skeletonized bodies, half-baked bodies and carbons of human-beings' shape. Also there were swollen up dead bodies around the street which were hard to distinguish between man and woman. This area was ominously silent. Through these experiences, I still didn't know what an atomic bomb was at that time.

After that, I have suffered from unknown sicknesses many times. I don't always blame the atomic bomb for my sickness, but I have two big scars in my belly. Whenever I am in bad condition, I am hospitalized. I am still scared of the after effects from the atomic bomb even now, so I really take care of myself. When I have plans like this, I concentrate on them, so I take care of myself not to be in bad condition.

Hayakawa: I interviewed you focusing on August 6th. In fact, soon after that, the war came to an end. I have one image of that and like me every person listened to the broadcast of the voice of the Imperial Majesty. Could you tell me what you did at that time?

To be honest, I was not able to hear the voice clearly.

Hayakawa: Or did someone order you to listen to the voice?

Well, I was in Hiroshima City at that time. I didn't listen to the voice directly through the radio. This voice was recorded. However, the result of Japan's surrender spread quickly. I felt something unbelievable, and one more thing, as you know I had worked in Kure as a "Gakuto Kinrou Douin", I had experience working with executive class men. I may have had gained trust from them, so if I had tried to check the top secrets, I could have done so. I felt excited to be able to know the secrets, but at the same time, I had to keep the secret strongly. So, I knew quite a few top secrets, but of course I never exposed those secrets. That is why, compared to other people, I didn't feel our country's defeat could never happen.

Hayakawa: After that, I think you heard several things.

After the defeat, for a few days, soldiers who were able to survive the war screamed "Ichioku Gyokusai" which was one of the Japanese Army's slogans, ("Death for honor by one hundred million people").

Hayakawa: After the war finished too?

Yes, I remembered one of the members of the navy screaming "Our Japanese Imperial Army, Army, Navy" I heard those meaningless and worthless words. As you know, I was one of the members of the navy before, and I knew the warships gradually ran short. They seemed to be "the members of Navy on the ground". It was no less than "Army Navy".

Hayakawa: There were no warships, weren't there?

There were no warships. I didn't believe the existence of "KAMIKAZE". I was able to analyze the situation calmly.



The most important point on training successors is to have their own heart.

Hayakawa: Though I may have interviewed you about similar things, you have kept talking to many people about your experiences related with the war, but I think you may not have pleasant feelings doing so. But what makes you do so even though you have unpleasant feelings? At first, you didn't have intentions to tell the audience about your experience. Could you tell us your turning point to that? I also think you have something in your mind while telling people your experiences. It depends on each person, but what pushed you to do that?

That is because my younger sister passed away due to the war. I gave speeches to the audience as the witness, and before that I used to be in the position to tell about HIROSHIMA as a volunteer. Everybody read the manual book seriously, but I rarely read the manual, because every exposed person knows that. I talked to them with my own words. My opinion is that nobody may not listen too seriously if we speak only through words in a manual. Not to speak but to talk to them is important I think. The heart is the most important thing when talking to people.

The members of my team are very wonderful because they know my opinion. I brought them to the place where I was exposed to the bomb's radiation at first. The place is now the wide ground of Chugoku Regional Postal Administration Office. A part of a worthy and stone-built stair as a monument stands outside. I got down the stairs with my hand covered in blood at that time. I told my members that the stairs were full of the traces of the exposed people's blood. My team members recorded my explanation, so I listened to that after. I understood what I said to them. They are the following: I climbed down the handrail. These stairs were full of traces of many people's blood. The traces of blood were left there for a long time.

Of course, they have disappeared now. The stairs were built well and were kept in use even after the war though sometimes small repairs were done to them. I want my members to take "the heart" seriously, so I brought them to the stairs. I explained to them about the place, and as I said about Kyobashi Gawa, I had escaped to the river (just a few minutes from here). The area was the same as the scene during the war. I talked to them about these things. Moreover, as my team treasures the heart, I showed them one drama and stage of "Chichito kuraseba". The writer is Mr. Hisashi Inoue. I had a copy of the drama on videotape. I think that this drama is the best for our members to get to understand the real spirits well. Of course, I have trauma. The main role of this drama is a woman whose name is Mizue. Her father passed away but he came up as a ghost. In this drama, the school she went to was the same as my younger sister's one. She was a few years older than Mizue. The date of the drama was assumed as twenty in Showa. And one more thing, the drama has comments both of Mr. Hisashi Inoue and Mr. Shizuo Yamakawa in it. I showed them the movie version. The main roles are played by Mr. Yoshio Harada and Mrs. Rie Miyazawa. When she was elected to play the role, she came to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum by herself and she spent one day there. She came here to feel the spirit. I talked to her though I didn't know about her in details. Other visitors told me that she came here, but most of them didn't notice her. I didn't notice her either. She took a close look. Almost all the visitors just looked at the displays and passed.

Hayakawa: I used to just go and look without feeling a sense of remorse, but now when I think about that, I am ashamed of myself.

I want visitors not to just look but read them. Then you can hear their voices. One of the volunteer members said they are captions. No, they are not captions! You can feel many things through the displays. For example, the binocular which the Enola Gay's pilots used is displayed there, but visitors just look and pass through. You can feel so many things! The binocular and the leather case are displayed in the same area. Moreover, the name of the owner was written on the case. 1945 August 6, Hiroshima, the owner name is CAPT Robert A Lewis. Who on earth is he? If visitors look to the displays with those kinds of questions, they can quickly notice who he was. He was a sub-pilot, and Enola Gay's bombardier is Thomas Ferebee.

As you know "Aioi Bashi" was the target, He had a great skill so he was able to hit the target. The bomb blew up 300 meters away from Aioi Bashi, but in the atomic bomb case, within 300 meters is the hit area.

In Nagasaki, the atomic bomb blew up 1.3km away from the target, but Nagasaki City was destroyed at once. These things are also the way to understand the spirits, so I sometimes tell these things to people. It depends on the people when I use them. My strong mission is that the exposed persons experiences' evidences projects are inherited from now on too.

Hayakawa: You said before that, not as copies but records or the heart.

Yes.

To think about HIROSHIMA as your own experience.

Hayakawa: 2011, The Great East Japan Earthquake happened. I didn't know there were many nuclear power plants in Japan. I am ashamed to say that.

There are many opinions to the plants. For example, we shouldn't keep the nuclear power plants anymore, but these days the situation seems to have changed. Including the nuclear power plants, there are many wars in this world. 68 years have passed since World War II ended, and Hiroshima keeps the position to which we oppose any future wars forever.

Hayakawa: Could you tell me how you feel about Japan now?

I am not the type of man who puts the world to rights, but people in power and scholars, they are in this together. Nobody takes responsibilities for that. Even if they take responsibilities, there is no solution. In fact, as a conclusion, we shouldn't have made the things we cannot control by ourselves. We must not have the things we cannot control by ourselves.

Hayakawa: Including the nuclear power plants?

Yes Certainly. Human beings as well. I respect Chancellor of Germany Merkel's philosophy as a policymaker.

Hayakawa: At the end, almost all of this program's listeners don't have the war experiences I think like you do. I have interviewed you for about 1 hour, but I would like you to give us your message again.

The first one is that I think bad people don't exist. I didn't want to visit the United States of America.

Hayakawa: You didn't want to go to America?

No, I didn't. Because I had something heavy on my mind. I went to America in 2008 for the first time.

Hayakawa: That is not so long ago.

To be honest, I was asked to become a member of "exposed people's evidence teller" many times. I was the newest member in the group. When I went to America, I got on United Airlines, but I was in a very bad mood. I imagined that the soldiers who are sent to Iraq feel like that. When I arrived in America, the place I visited was full of nice things in a sense. I arrived in California. I seemed to be able to feel the Americans themselves. There were no bad people there. All of them were so friendly. I was able to open up.

On my way to Monterrey from San Francisco, I saw the sunset through the window in my car. Around the right side of the window, I saw the big and bright sun setting down on the American continent. This is the American sunset. I felt Dvorak, who was one of the most popular composers in the world, originally from The Czech Republic, may have had the same feeling as me. (One of his greatest pieces of music is "The American Quartet".) And from the left side of the window, I saw the white and big moon. From this side, I was able to see the sunset, and from the opposite side, the moon. I saw the extensive American continent first-hand. I understood Americans who live in this tremendous land are friendly and bright. My image on America changed. In short, each person has a good personality but once they become a member of an organization and nation, they tend to act or do terrible things. To guard from such kinds of things, we have to choose the people in power by our way of thinking. Once people have power, those people tend to do stupid things. The President during World War II, who decided to bomb Hiroshima, I guess he may have not felt anything even if every Japanese people were killed.

Hayakawa: That means that we Japanese have to make decisions how we save our country.

Well, especially for our young generation, I really hope that they should take it more seriously and as in yourself when you vote.

Hayakawa: People who don't vote are out of the question, but it is a similar thing to tend to think that elections are like a "thing" or an "event". We should have our way of thinking expressed through our vote. If we keep in out-of-touch, one day if our country has changed ... It may head for an irreversible condition.

They don't face the Hiroshima atomic bomb as this happens to them. So when you understand Hiroshima, for example, imagine the atomic bomb is dropped over your head, then you can understand Hiroshima. At that time, you won't survive. It is like somebody else's problem. So when I tell my experiences to visitors, I hope they can think that this can happen to them too. I wrote some articles on paper. You may read them. I think "war" is the same meaning as state-sanctioned terrorism. Once war happens, everybody gets crazy, mad. So they don't care about other people. It seems to become one of the philosophies that we should kill who we think are our enemies. The ultimatum is the atomic bomb I think.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered from the atomic bomb, but please think about it again. This is not about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This atomic bomb's target is against people, so please think it again as like these things happen to you.

Hayakawa: I really had a precious time with you today, could you tell us your opinions which you should continue, and you must continue on?

I don't have enough time, so this may be the last or not I don't know. I need much more time so hope someone can become my successor, but the way of thinking depends on each person's philosophy. I may have my own philosophy through my experiences and my sister's death. I do volunteer as a guide in this museum, and am a member of the succession planning projects. I must study more than now. Through the study, I may have my own philosophy. I want to spend my time to train successors for a while, and I wish the successors to become professional.

Hayakawa: Thank you so much.

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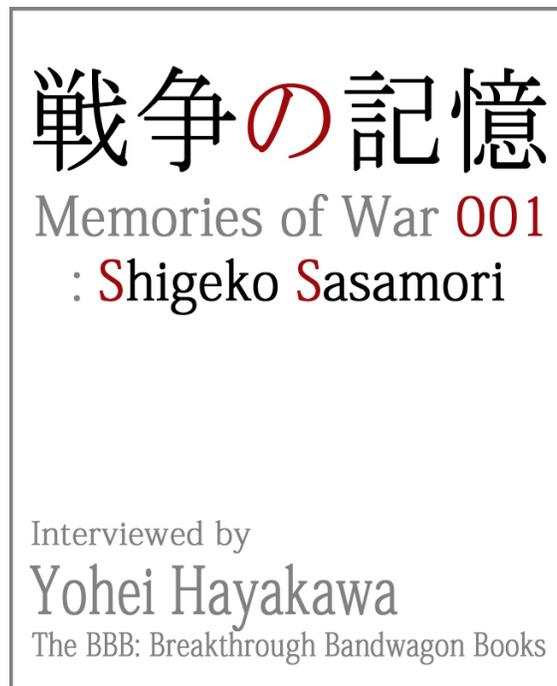
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