The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
In-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

War Responsibility and the Family in Japan: Kurahashi Ayako's My Father's Dying Wish

Translated and with commentary by Philip Seaton

This essay presents extracts from the autobiography of Kurahashi Ayako, My Father's Dying Wish *(Paulownia Press 2009; original Japanese edition,* Kempei datta chichi no nokoshita mono*, Kobunken 2002). Kurahashi's father, who had been a military policeman during the war, made a dying wish in 1986 that an apology to the people of China be inscribed on his gravestone. The extracts of her testimony presented here clarify how the request forced her to confront the painful issue of taking individual responsibility for war actions, and how the decision by members of the war generation to testify must always be understood within the context of how that testimony will be received by family and friends.*

This essay is part of a three-essay series Testimony and War Memories in Japan. The other essays are 'Introduction' and 'Historiography and Japanese War Nationalism: Testimony in Sensōron*, Sensōron as Testimony'*

1986 – A hospital in Gunma Prefecture north of Tokyo

> In the hospice, father's health continued to fail. He was moved from a ward to a private room for two people. One day when I was visiting him he reached out and took out a small scrap of paper from his bedside table. His arm was covered with purple dots from the intravenous drip.
>
> 'Hey', he said, 'when I die I want you to put this on my gravestone. Do that for me, won't you?'
>
> He said it calmly. I glanced back at him and without thinking said, 'Yeah, OK.' Whether it was the innocuous way that my father said it, or whether it was because I am not the type of person to resist in such a situation, the exchange was no more than that. Father looked relieved and went back to sleep.
>
> On the paper father had written the following: 'I served in the Imperial Army for 12 years 8 months, ten of those as a Warrant Officer in the military police in China, including Tianjin, Beijing, Shanxi Province, Linfen, Yuncheng, and Dongning [in Heilongjiang province, Manchuria]. I participated in the war of aggression, am sorry for my actions against the people of China, and apologize unreservedly.' I felt no great uneasiness about the message, perhaps because I had known since my childhood that father regretted his role in the war. However, at the time I was simply unable to appreciate the implications of his request to write it on his gravestone.
>
> Kurahashi Ayako – *My Father's Dying Wish*, p. 5.

Kurahashi's father, Ōsawa Yūkichi, with his grandchildren

Thus began the heart-wrenching personal journey of Kurahashi Ayako: a doting daughter receiving a piece of paper from her dying father, with a request whose magnitude defied comprehension at the time.

Following her father's death, Kurahashi tried to raise the issue of fulfilling Ōsawa's wish with other family members. She also told people outside the family, such as her students at the school where she worked as a social science teacher. In particular, in the family deliberations over whether to erect the gravestone, one sees the practical difficulties of accepting individual responsibility in postwar Japan. Kurahashi writes:

> At school, I showed the students my father's dying wish in class and explained how the pain caused by aggression never goes away. However, I was unable to grasp fully just how much father had thought about leaving that note and I sense that my words did not have a lasting effect on the students.
>
> Then on one occasion when I was back in the countryside (at the family home) I asked my older brother about father's dying wish. I was surprised at his reply: both he and our uncle in Tokyo had been given similar pieces of paper. My brother, who had become slightly portly like our father, almost as if he was mimicking father said, 'It won't be only father going into that grave. Both me and my kids will be going in there too. We haven't done anything wrong, and it just doesn't feel right for some reason. You'll be alright because you'll be in a different grave.'[1]
>
> 'So, what'll we do?' I inquired, 'Just leave it? Is that OK? I don't think so.'
>
> 'Be quiet', he snapped. 'I asked uncle and we've agreed. It's decided. We have to keep up appearances. Other old people all keep quiet about the war, so why must only our old man do that? It's not right. You've said more than enough.'
>
> With that my brother brought the conversation to an abrupt end. He resembled our father, in both humour and obstinacy. If I had had sisters I might have been able to chat more easily with them, but I could never have long conversations with my brothers. My older brother was kind at heart, but perhaps because he felt awkward he acted curtly towards me.

The front cover of My Father's Dying Wish, showing Kurahashi's father in his military police uniform.

> After that short exchange, I felt unable to say any more. Also, my brother did have a point. When you thought about it, it was strange that father had to apologize. His commanding officers had not taken responsibility, and other former soldiers had not spoken out about what they had done. Why should only our father make a straightforward apology? It seemed unreasonable. It was also true that I would not be buried in the family grave. So, even though I had been entrusted to carry out father's dying wish, I had to take into consideration the feelings of everyone else involved.
>
> Besides, I could understand my brother's feelings. There is an uncomplicated generosity within rural villages, but old values persist. In a place where, for better or worse, others interfere in private matters, erecting that kind of gravestone would be extraordinary. My older brother, who had taken over father's clothing shop, was also probably concerned that it would affect sales. In short, this is how the situation seemed at the time.
>
> Kurahashi Ayako – *My Father's Dying Wish*, p. 7.

With her family's opposition, the erection of the gravestone was sidelined for many years. Exhausted after a number of illnesses, Kurahashi quit teaching in 1990. She started investigating her father's wartime record and was able to track down some members of his unit. But, they did not divulge details of what he might have done that would warrant such an apology. She embarked on a second career as a freelance writer, and it was some of her published short stories that led to her being interviewed by social psychologist Noda Masaaki for a television documentary. As Kurahashi describes, this encounter precipitated some crucial realizations:

> Filming took place in a park in Gunma Prefecture. The backdrop was the Jōshū mountain range, clearly set against a bright blue winter sky. Noda said that he would do it unscripted, which made me nervous. Afterwards I had no recollection of the questions or my answers, I had simply been absorbed in the experience.
>
> The documentary was broadcast in January 1998 as an ETV Special called *Discussions about a Father's War Crimes*.[2] At the beginning there was a close-up of my not so beautiful face, then I got flustered and soon blurted out, 'I have not carried out my father's dying wish because of objections by my relatives.' Even though I had resolved to say this, my heart was not in it.

After the 45-minute programme had finished, a friend called. 'It was good the way you could not seem to wait to answer the questions', and a pupil's mother said to me, 'Sensei [teacher], you think too much. You don't have to bear it all yourself. Everybody did those things together.' I was happy that they tried to comfort me, but I wished they had thought about it a little more first.

I was also contacted by a former work colleague who had been very kind to me, but whose comments came as a shock. 'When I was a child we suffered terribly when we were burnt out by the Great Tokyo Air Raid.[3] My family and I did nothing wrong. We were victims of that war, not perpetrators. There were many things Noda said which I did not understand. There is no need for you to feel a sense of guilt. It was all the responsibility of the emperor and wartime leaders. It's not our responsibility. This is why I will continue the peace activism that I have been doing up to now.' Even though I thought our views had much in common, this colleague had not thought about Japanese aggression. His peace activism, based on personal experience, was very passionate. However, the war was not a civil war but a war of aggression against other countries. I told my colleague that I wanted this to be taken into account.

I thought this exchange was another chance to confront the issue of whether one can say, as my colleague did, that the war was all the responsibility of the wartime leaders and the people have no responsibility. I watched the video of the programme over and over again and realized that Noda had raised a number of important questions. Of these, what struck home most was the use of the word 'individual/self' (*ko*) during our conversation.

For example, Noda asked, 'If you carry out your father's wish, do you think he will have become "one individual (*ikko*) who ended his life by taking responsibility?"' As I hesitated he continued, 'In other words, by writing the inscription on the gravestone, you would reject the view that he was made to do what he did and would think of him as a person who acted voluntarily.'

'If that's the case,' I responded, 'then I think father was trying to settle the issue, or at least take control of his own life.'

Noda continued: 'Now your relatives oppose his wish, but you have compromised by leaving things as they are. I think this is a common way for Japanese people to think about things and I can understand. But on the other hand, there is a big problem. When we think about deadlock in contemporary Japanese society you cannot help thinking about the issue of the "individual". Rather than your father ending his life as an "individual", he was not simply an "individual": aren't the "family" and "household" still alive?'

In response to this line of questioning, and without fully digesting it I answered, 'I think my father lived as a single human being and resolved to die as a single human being.' I answered as if I looked as if I knew what I was talking about, but when I see it now I feel embarrassed.

Later on, Noda's words struck me like a body blow. Up until then I had not thought of the meaning of father's dying wish from the perspective of the 'individual'. I felt very strongly that father really regretted his actions and all his life bore a sense of guilt. So, I wanted to carry out his final request and would feel sorry for father if I could not. But Noda's point – 'treat the war not as a war forced on him but as a war he fought himself, and let him take complete responsibility as an "individual"' – gave my father's dying wish a positive meaning. Or rather, it was Noda that had given it voice – the meaning was within father's dying wish from the beginning but I had not noticed it. Why had I not noticed? I wanted to think that father could not have helped doing what he did and so I was unable to see the reality, namely that father was not drafted but chose the path of a career soldier to escape from poverty. He clearly had the will to be a soldier. Father was apologizing for the part he voluntarily played in Japanese aggression. In the television programme I had said something similar, but the gravity of it only sunk in after the programme was broadcast.

Kurahashi Ayako – *My Father's Dying Wish*, pp. 24-26.

Ultimately, the television appearance reopened debate within the family. Kurahashi gained permission to erect a memorial stone in the family grave plot. With her father's dying wish fulfilled, Kurahashi found a measure of internal peace.

Two years later, Kurahashi had the opportunity to convey her father's apology directly to people living in the village where her father was stationed. In 2000 Kurahashi made three trips to China: to Nanjing and Beijing in March/April, to a symposium in Beijing in July, and finally to Shimenzi in September. The third of these trips was organized by Ban Zhongyi, a Chinese freelance journalist Kurahashi had met on the second trip. He was planning to visit Shimenzi in the autumn and invited her to go with him. Kurahashi immediately accepted the invitation.

September 2000 – We returned to our small, old hotel and as I looked out of my bedroom window I was at last overcome by the realization that this was the Dongning from my father's service record. My father had moved from Beijing to Dongning in March 1943 and had stayed here until just before the end of the war. My mother had been here too, and this was where my oldest brother was born. I had really made it to the place where my parents and the old couple from Nagoya [her father's unit commander] had lived.

I thought how happy I would be if I met someone who actually knew my father all those years ago. But if they spelled out all the terrible things my father had done, I wondered if I would be able to bear it. No, it was better for people to tell me the truth. I felt this would show me who my father really was, shatter my illusions and allow me to overcome my father's past once and for all. I took my father's photo out of my rucksack. My resolve was severely tested. Then it dawned on me. I was not only here for that reason. My main objective was to convey my father's apology as an individual to the people of Shimenzi village. Now was the chance to make his wish a reality, and for that I had to be grateful. With all these thoughts in my head I eventually got to sleep.

The Apology on the Memorial Stone

Map of Key Locations in My Father's Dying Wish

On the morning of 16 September it was cold and raining heavily. We left the hotel and got a taxi driven by a sincere-looking man in his mid-thirties called Yang. In the pouring rain the big man held on tightly to the steering wheel and drove west towards Daohexiang. We clattered along the unpaved road covered in muddy water. After about an hour and a half a hamlet came into view and we soon arrived at Daohexiang. The Chinese characters for old people's home on the sign outside included the character meaning 'respect', which was a nice surprise. I was surprised too when a schoolboy in his uniform came out of the home, but was told that boys whose families live a long way from the school next to the old people's home use the home as a dormitory.

Even though we had come to visit her, the old woman Ban wanted to see had returned to her home village, so we got in the car again and visited her house. As we entered the brick house, half of the room on the right had an earth floor and half had an *ondol* heated floor. It was a cold, rainy September day and two women were sitting on the heated *ondol* section, which was about three tatami mats in size.

Ri Bongwoon (left) and the lady who was looking after her

The woman who owned this house was Chinese. The other woman living there was a Korean woman called Ri Bongwoon who had been forced to be a 'comfort woman' in Shimenzi. Bongwoon had been taken from Korea to Shimenzi and put in the 'comfort station' there. When the war ended, she was abandoned by the Japanese army. She was unable to get enough food to feed herself and so married a Chinese man. Her experiences as a 'comfort woman' left her unable to bear children. For this reason her husband often flew into rages and was violent towards her. After her husband died, she had no relatives of her own, but was taken in by her husband's family. The woman of the household was about forty years old and seemed down to earth and kind. One could not say they were well off but they had taken in an old lady from another country and seemed to be leading a perfectly normal life. I had great admiration for them. I showed a photograph of my father during his military police days to Bongwoon and was disappointed when she said she did not remember him.

Afterwards, we had a lunch party with Bongwoon and staff from the old people's home at a café in the village. They kept bringing out one local dish after another. Bongwoon hardly touched the food but looked so happy. 'Come on, eat something', urged Ban as he picked up some food with his chopsticks and put it on Bongwoon's plate. It was as if he was her son and it brought a lump to my throat. A few years back when Bongwoon had been suffering with stomach pain Ban had helped arrange hospitalization. Ever since then she had looked forward to Ban's return. Ban had been employed by a Japanese grassroots activist group called the Society to Support Former Chinese 'Comfort Women' and went all over China looking after former 'comfort women'. I knew about civic activism in Japan supporting 'comfort women' in their lawsuits against the Japanese government, but I had not heard of this kind of activism.

As the lunch party was coming to a close, Bongwoon suddenly burst into tears. She wailed loudly and screwed up her ochre-coloured face. Ban translated for us: 'For a long time I was not treated as a human being. But Chinese people have looked after me and even allowed me to enter an old person's home. Even though I want to be of use, now I am old and cannot move much. This is very hard for me.' This was why she was crying. I was sitting next to Bongwoon stroking her sinewy hand and could not help putting my arm around her shoulder. Keiko [Ban's wife] was busily taking pictures of Bongwoon. As we left, Ban gave her a small amount of money.

We got back in Yang's car and drove east through the rain to Gaoan village. There we visited another woman who had been forced to be a 'comfort woman', Yi Kwanja. She had a slender face with slightly upturned eyes and was wearing a red top. She did not seem to remember who Ban was. She only spoke Korean so Ban asked a local person to translate. She did not respond when Ban explained the purpose of my visit and seemed to have no interest in my father's photograph. Kwanja's stern expression did not change and I broke out in a cold sweat. But, perhaps this was to be expected I thought. Even if she shouted at me, 'We were made to experience terrible things, and here the daughter of a military policeman shamelessly comes to visit us', I thought I would just have to take it.

After a while, perhaps recalling who Ban was, she gave the first hint of a smile. After asking about her health and how she was doing, Ban spoke again about me, and this time she nodded. As we left I hugged her, but all I was able to say was, 'Please take care.' Once again, here was a woman who lived a very difficult life after having been treated despicably by the Japanese army.

On the following day, 17 September, it rained even harder. We set out south from Dongning in Yang's car. The road continued in a straight line for miles and miles. On both sides there were beautiful rows of poplar trees. Presently the paved road disappeared and even in villages the roads were mostly streams of muddy water. Yang pushed on aggressively, even though this was the kind of place no Japanese taxi would ever go.

Eventually we reached Shimenzi. The population has increased in recent years and there were a few nice-looking houses with the characters for 'happiness' and 'wealth' carved on their gates. Ban went to the house of the village elder, Guo Qingshi. Guo was 81 and lived together with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. When Ban explained the purpose of our visit, Guo called together the villagers. When I showed the photograph of my father during his military policeman days, Guo did not seem to remember him. When the subject turned to the war years, everyone spoke up together.

The military police did not mix much with the villagers, but because the village was so close to the Soviet border people met terrible fates if they were suspected of being Soviet spies. So-and-so from this family and that family – within a few minutes the names of four people killed by the military police had been given.

'But there was one kind military policeman. Yes, Mr. B. He once let me pass when I had forgotten my identity papers.'

'Ah yes, that Mr. B sometimes came and stayed here in the village rather than in the barracks.'

'But, perhaps because of his rank, the commander was really harsh. I was hit quite a lot by him.'

Here I interjected, 'The commander is still alive. He is 91 and bedridden.' 'He's still alive?' said some people with surprise that also sounded a little like a curse.

At the house of Guo Qingshi (second from the right). Kurahashi is the third from the left.

During the war, Guo was a cook in a restaurant called The Pine, which was frequented by officers at lunchtime and soldiers during the evening.[4] Furthermore, a Shinto shrine was built and Chinese people were forced to pray there. Guo mimicked putting his hands together in prayer.

I tried once again saying the names of the military policemen, but whereas people remembered the four people other than my father, they just shook their heads when they heard my father's name.

'If we don't remember, it probably means he didn't do anything particularly bad', said Guo trying to comfort me.

I took out a picture of my father's apology memorial and began to speak. 'This was the apology my father made before he died. I apologize today to you all on behalf of my father. I am very grateful to Mr. Ban for giving me the chance to be here and I am happy to have been able to have this opportunity at long last to convey my father's apology.' I broke down in tears. Some people were blinking to hold back the tears and nodding.

People responded together, 'We are very grateful you came all the way here', 'Your father must have been happy to have had such a good daughter', 'But rather than your father it was the leaders of the war who were to blame.' Everyone was so kind. Why are Chinese people so big hearted? People were just so kind that I did not know what to do, so I gave people two or three rice crackers wrapped in dried seaweed that were in my bag. (I still do not know why I did this. One boy pulled a face as if to say he did not like it). We took a group photo together. I will never forget that day.

We said our farewells to Guo and went to the location of the old Japanese barracks. There was only a small hill that looked down upon a river. It seemed unreal that this was where a few hundred Japanese soldiers had lived. Nearby there was the large building that had housed the Daduzijiang Military Police Detachment to which my father had belonged. It was now being used as an elementary school. After that we tried to go to a fortified position built by the Japanese army, but we had to turn back because the road had become a muddy stream.

The former kempei headquarters (right).

Kurahashi standing in front of the Daduzijiang Military Police Detachment headquarters, now used as an elementary school.

After we got back to Dongning we had dinner and went to visit Kim Sukuran. It took us a while to find out where she

> was but eventually we learned she was at home just out of Dongning. She was wearing a black shirt over her generous chest, and was gentle with a chubby face. Her son, with his long hair, looked like someone from the Qing era. His wife had left them, so he drove a three-wheeled taxi and brought up his young son alone. I showed Sukuran the photograph of my father but she did not seem to remember my father either. I conveyed my father's apology, took her hand and started to cry. I just could not hold back the tears. I was heavy-hearted at the thought of how many tears Sukuran, Kwanja and Bongwoon – all women like me – had shed, and how their lives had been ruined.
>
> We left Sukuran and went back to the hotel in Dongning. There we said farewell to our driver Yang. He was down to earth and had integrity, which I liked. He took care of his 24-year-old wife and 4-year-old son and said that he enjoyed visiting his mother's house on his days off.
>
> After that we got into the car of the young man called O who had come to pick us up from Suifenhe. In the car I thought that I would probably not have the chance to visit Shimenzi again and wanted to turn back. I thought that Guo might have remembered something about my father when I was talking to him. He had remembered the other four military policemen, so I thought it a little strange that he did not know my father. After all, father had been there for two and a half years. He had probably been pretending that he did not know. If he had said he remembered, he could be sure that I would ask what my father had done.
>
> Furthermore, when somebody had said 'B was kind' I had looked dejected. Why? Even though I had not expected anyone to say that my father had done good things, as soon as I heard that there was a nice military policeman it hit home that it was not my father. He had clearly done something terrible enough to leave an apology. Even though I thought I had come to terms with this during my counselling I still felt very down. Guo had sensitively picked up on this and said that he did not remember. I wanted to check one more time and only just managed to stop myself asking if we could go back to Shimenzi again. But we had come too far along the road to Suifenhe. There was no way back.
>
> Kurahashi Ayako – *My Father's Dying Wish*, pp. 76-82.

Taking Individual Responsibility

After her three trips to China in 2000, Kurahashi spent much of the following year writing *Kempei datta chichi no nokoshita mono* (literally "The thing my military policeman father left me"), which was published in 2002. The book came out against the backdrop of the so-called "war on terror" and the Koizumi era of strained Sino-Japanese relations caused by his annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine (2001-2006) to pay his respects to Japan's military dead.

Ultimately, Kurahashi's book clarifies the enormity of the task of taking individual responsibility, a task that her father had only been able to do partially when he was alive: he left much of the work of taking responsibility to his daughter through his dying wish. The question that came to haunt Kurahashi, and which was posed by Noda Masaaki, with whom she appeared in the television documentary, was "Why did you not ask your father what he did when he was alive?" This question may equally be put the other way round, "Why could your father not say what he did when he was alive?" At the heart of the answer to both questions are the inherent risks to family relationships of raising such issues, particularly in the public sphere through oral and, especially, through published, testimony.[5] They are questions that are pertinent to entire generations of Japanese soldiers who fought in China and Southeast Asia and their children. And equally pertinent to the American soldiers who subsequently fought in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and their children. Perhaps the most moving lines of Kurahashi's book are the following:

> [B]y searching for answers the reality of father's war crimes finally sank in. I am now able to write without any hesitation that during his ten years as a military policeman, he did many inexcusable things to Chinese people, and that while he was suffering with the memories of what he did, he was unable to speak about it. There is not much to smile about when I look back over the extremely hard journey that I had to go through in order to be able to write the previous sentence. I would like to be able to laugh off the fact that war issues must still be dealt with even half a century after the war, but I cannot.
>
> Kurahashi Ayako – *My Father's Dying Wish*, p. 86.

Writing these lines took considerable courage. It was this courage, and the willingness of Kurahashi to face head on difficult individual and collective responsibility issues stemming from the war, that attracted me to her book. As I have worked with Kurahashi over the past few years to publish the English translation, I have seen the healing power of apology for her as an individual. In China, too, her efforts to convey her father's and her own apology have been gratefully received. This is clear in the responses of people she describes in her book, and also in the invitation she received from the Dongning city government to be a guest at the sixtieth anniversary commemorations of the war in August 2005.

With time, her wider family has embraced the apology memorial. Some of the family members who opposed the memorial have passed away, such as Kurahashi's brother, who chose to take his own life rather than face a long and debilitating illness. Other family members (particularly near the family home in Gunma where the memorial stands today) have taken the position that it was a good thing to respect Ōsawa Yūkichi's dying wish and are happy that the memorial stone was placed in the family grave plot.

As this essay is published (August 2010), it is almost exactly a decade since Kurahashi traveled to China to deliver her father's apology in person. We are also once again in the midst of the August commemorations season in Japan. This year is significant in a number of ways: it is the first war end anniversary presided over by the Democratic Party of Japan government, the one hundredth anniversary of Japan's annexation of the Korean peninsula on 29 August, the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the Korean War, and the first year that the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and a representative from the US, Ambassador John Roos, have attended the ceremony in Hiroshima to commemorate the victims of the A-bomb. Ten years on from Kurahashi's most sincere of personal apologies in China, the contentious issue of state apologies is once again in the news in the deliberations over the wording of a statement on the Korean annexation, on reparations for Korean and Chinese wartime victims of forced labor, and the ongoing calls from many Japanese individuals for an American apology for Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Jennifer Lind's recent book *Sorry States, Apologies in International Politics* (Cornell University Press 2008) offers many thought-provoking arguments on such themes. In particular, she argues that sincere apologies are not necessarily a prerequisite for a reconciliation process between states. This is largely premised on the problem of apology backlash. Official apologies that provoke backlash from a significant section of the society can nullify the apology, or even be counterproductive. One only needs to read the other article in this series about Kobayashi Yoshinori's manga *Sensōron*, "Historiography and Japanese War Nationalism", to recognize the potential for backlash in Japan against more sincere or explicit apologies at a state level. Consequently, the DPJ

government has trodden cautiously and indicated on numerous occasions that it does not intend to deviate significantly from the 1995 Maruyama communiqué, the most forthright and official Japanese apology, and a statement that remains anathema to Japanese rightwing groups.

Kurahashi's story demonstrates how difficult the process of gaining collective agreement for a sincere apology can be, even within a single family. With Japanese views as far apart as Kurahashi's and Kobayashi's, and with the government itself divided on the issues, Japan has a long way to go before a sincere official apology backed up by the feelings of the vast majority of the population can be issued. Indeed, that day may never come. But for Kurahashi, her long journey to convey her father's apology and the therapeutic effect of expressing her experiences and feelings in her book have brought her a feeling of peace that had so long been elusive in her family.

Kurahashi Ayako is a former schoolteacher and freelance writer. As well as the autobiographical My Father's Dying Wish*, she has written numerous works of fiction that consider the nature of Japanese war responsibility. She lives in Saitama, just north of Tokyo.*

Philip Seaton is an associate professor in the Research Faculty of Media and Communication, Hokkaido University. An Asia-Pacific Journal Associate, he is the author of Japan's Contested War Memories *and translator of Ayako Kurahashi's* My Father's Dying Wish*. Legacies of War Guilt in a Japanese Family. His webpage is* *www.philipseaton.net* *He wrote this article for The Asia-Pacific Journal.*

Recommended citation: Kurahashi Ayako and Philip Seaton, "War Responsibility and the Family in Japan: Kurahashi Ayako's My Father's Dying Wish," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 32-2-10, August 9, 2010.

Notes

[1] When getting married, women typically leave their parents' family register and join the family register of their husbands. Similarly, they are buried in their husband's family grave plot. People are not typically buried alone in single graves.

[2] *Bunka seishin igakusha Noda Masaaki – senjo no chichi no tsumi o meguru taiwa* (NHK Educational, 20 January 1998). This programme is described in Sakurai Hitoshi (2005) *Terebi wa sensō wo dō egaite kita ka* (*How has the War been Depicted on Television?*), Tokyo: Iwanami, pp. 354-358.

[3] On the night of 9-10 March 1945, a US Air Force incendiary bombing raid destroyed seventeen square miles of downtown Tokyo and killed around 100,000 people.

[4] Kurahashi later discovered that this 'restaurant' had a more sinister function. See the Afterword to the English Edition.

[5] These are issues explored in much more detail in Philip Seaton, "Family, Friends, Furusato: 'Home' in the Formation of Japanese War Memories" and "Do you really want to know what your uncle did? Coming to terms with relatives' war actions in Japan" in *Oral History* 43.1 (2006), pp. 53-60.

Created by Datamomentum