

“Oral” Is No Less Important than “Written”

Oral History Is Opening a New Door to the Broadcasting History¹

April 2014

HIROTANI Kyoko

NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute
Media Research & Studies

¹This paper is based on articles previously published by the author in *Hōsō kenkyū to chōsa* [NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research]. The original texts in Japanese are available below:

“*Kōjutsu*” < “*bunsho*” de wanai: *Ōraru hisutorī ga hiraku, hōsō-shi no aratana tobira* [“Oral” Is No Less Important than “Written”: Oral History Is Opening a New Door to the Broadcasting History] (November 2012)

[http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2012_11/20121103.pdf]

Shirīzu; hōsō no ōraru hisutorī “nama dorama” jidai no hōsō genba [Series: Oral History of Broadcasting: Broadcasting Frontline in the Age of “Live Broadcasts of Dramas”] (January 2013)

[http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2013_01/20130103.pdf]

Abstract

Studies on broadcasting history have been dependent on “written material” to describe the facts. However official histories such as *The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century* did employ interviews with those involved in broadcasting in the compilation process to supplement the lack in written data, and a number of oral records are archived in the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute. This article presents the direction of reviving those treasurable “oral material,” using the methodology of “oral history” research.

Seven hundred testimonies were considered as eligible material. Three themes, broadcasting frontline in the age of live broadcasts of dramas, women’s history in broadcasting, and internationalization of broadcasting were highlighted by the characteristics of testimonies. With that, the author reviewed the descriptions in the official history and those in past studies before making analyses.

In the analyses, research questions were put in place for the comparison with the official history and for the consideration of “place” and “speech act” of the testimonies. The author also touched on the “credibility” of “oral material” by referring to literatures. The author hopes the research will open a new perspective to the broadcasting history.

Objectives

Since 2003, we have been conducting interviews with individuals who worked in the early days of television broadcasting, referring to them as “testimonials to the history of broadcasting,” and publishing them in this journal as they take place. The testimonies we have thus accumulated, along with previously recorded testimonies, amount to more than 700 recorded statements. Using an oral history research methodology to analyze these oral materials, this paper presents a new direction for the study of broadcasting history.

Previous broadcasting history studies have included many factual descriptions based almost exclusively on documentary materials; however, there are surprisingly few cases in

which the documentary materials that support historical facts remain extant. This is likely because of the youth of broadcasting as a media format as well as the fact that it has yet to be sufficiently investigated. To supplement the lack of documentary materials identified during the compilation of *50 Years of Japanese Broadcasting* (NHK Radio & TV Culture Research Institute, 1977, hereafter FYJB) [10] and *The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century* (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2001, hereafter HBJ20) [9], two indispensable volumes in the study of broadcasting history, we conducted interviews with broadcasting personnel. This was because, in understanding broadcasting history and its background, the outcomes of broadcasting practice, recorded after the fact, did not provide detailed knowledge of the intentions, contexts, and processes that produced them. Although the oral materials archived in our institute were recorded onto media such as reel-to-reel and cassette tape, there is a field-related bias in these testimonies, and therefore, they cannot be regarded as sufficient research materials.

Thus, in addition to offering something of value to the study of broadcasting history from these testimonials, there is an urgent need to collect new testimonies from people who were involved in areas that represent gaps in the existing materials. In doing so, and by effectively using oral history as a research methodology, we introduce broadcasting history that goes beyond simply supplementing documentary history.

Materials

The testimonies by broadcasting personnel currently archived with the institute are as follows:

- (1) Testimonies recorded for use with *50 Years of Japanese Broadcasting*
- (2) Testimonies recorded for use with *The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century*
- (3) Anecdotes from broadcasting history
- (4) Compiled testimonies of individuals from the early days of broadcasting
- (5) Testimonies about the history of broadcasting

- (6) Testimonies by broadcasters (archived with the Broadcasting Creators Association of Japan (BCAJ) [Hōsō jin no kai])

Testimonies in category (6) were recorded by an external organization but are available for use.

I discuss the features of each of the above.

1. Testimonies recorded for *50 Years of Japanese Broadcasting* (FYJB)

The publication of FYJB in 1977 commemorated the 50th year since the beginning of national broadcasting in Japan. Compiling materials began in earnest in 1973, under the direction of an editorial committee chaired by an NHK vice president. While only a part of the materials were used, “Interview Logs” were recorded in audio format between 1960 and 1977. These recordings amounted to 163 reel-to-reel and 138 cassette tapes containing a total of 277 testimonies. To prevent deterioration, the tapes have been digitized and partially transcribed to text.

Edited “to report to the nation’s citizens on half a century of broadcasting history,” the work spanned the 50 years from the beginning of broadcasting in Japan and was divided into six chapters that covered the following: the era of growth following the invention of radio, the beginning of Japan’s wartime footing and the subsequent Sino-Japanese war, the duration of the Pacific War, the period of economic growth after the war, and the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Furthermore, this work explored how broadcasting was transformed owing to the social phenomena of these periods. Therefore, along with testimonies from people involved in broadcasting, the collected recordings also included lectures by university professors on Japan’s economic, political, and cultural history. The older interviews included testimonies collected in 1961 from former intelligence agency personnel who were involved, for example, in the events on the eve of the Pacific War or the formulation of occupation policies of the General Headquarters of the American-led Allied Occupation. In addition, there are testimonies from announcers as well as broadcasting, technical, and management personnel discussing the disposition of Japan’s occupied territories. Aspects of the beginning of

broadcasting by NHK's regional stations and of preparations for overseas broadcasting during the pre-war period (in places such as Karafuto, Toyohara [Sakhalin], and Palau) were covered in detail using individual testimonies and round table discussions by those in positions of responsibility at the time (and their families).

2. Testimonies recorded for *The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century* (HBJ20)

HBJ20 was published in 2001, a quarter century after the FYJB was published. The HBJ20 Editorial Committee, also chaired by an NHK vice president, established the HBJ20 editorial department in our institute, where editing began in 1996. To support the publication, interviews were conducted with individuals who were involved in important aspects of broadcasting history. In addition, study sessions with panels of invited experts were organized. A total of 158 oral testimonies were recorded in 202 cassette tapes between 1993 and 2000, which have been digitized and partially transcribed to text.

Recognizing the historical significance of the turn of the century for Japanese broadcasting, the project presented a history that demonstrated the human aspect of broadcasting, which positioned broadcasting within an overarching history of media—a broadcasting history seen by the viewer, including not only private broadcasting but also subjects on the periphery of broadcasting. This intention was reflected in those who were interviewed, and the titles of the recorded tapes indicated a preference for interviews conducted with subjects *in situ*.

Many interviews involved individuals not only from NHK but also from private broadcasting and other media, with titles such as “Producer of *Kyō no ryōri* [Today's Cuisine],” “17-year Announcer of *Nodo jiman* [Proud of My Voice],” “The Start of the CBC [Chubu-Nippon Broadcasting Company],” “The Day of the First Private Broadcast,” “*Zūm in!! Asa!* [Zoom-in Morning!],” “Kaoru Kanetaka, Journalist,” and “Fuji Television's Editorial Strategy.” A series of testimonies from various interviewees provided material to fill factual gaps. These included testimonies from broadcasting critic Nobuo Shiga; author and essayist Yoshikazu Fujimoto; columnist Yukichi Amano; a study group organized by

Yoshimi Uchikawa, Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University; and a “History of Broadcasting Study Group Tape” created by literary critic Jun Etō. While the testimonies appear to focus on the period following the history presented in FYJB, they include titles such as “The Deputy News Director in Charge of the ‘Jewel Voice Broadcast’” and “BK Engineering Department, 1940 to 1946.”

3. Anecdotes from broadcasting history

Testimonies from broadcasting personnel were published in this journal as “Anecdotes from Broadcasting History” (April 1985–December 1986). Fifty testimonies were recorded between 1980 and 1989 on 76 cassette tapes, which have been digitized and partially transcribed to text.

Broadcasting personnel were invited to discuss their personal associations with the initial days of the industry and the historical events that they witnessed. The first recorded discussion, “The Day We Broadcast the Letter ‘イ’²,” featuring Kenjirō Takayanagi, the scientist who performed the world’s first successful experimental television broadcast, is striking. It is merely one of several remarkable testimonies in this category, which includes “Testimony of a Technician who Improvised a Recording Device Used on the Battlefield during the War,” “The NHK Employee Studying in America who Recorded Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko Stating ‘No Comment’ at the San Francisco Peace Conference” (a statement that entered popular usage thereafter), “The Radio Music Programmer who Asked Yoshinao Nakada to Compose *Natsu no omoide* [Summer Memories],” “The Sports Announcer who Stepped In for Leading Announcer Nobukata Wada to Cover the Student War Mobilization Rally,” and “Former NHK Chairman Tomokazu Sakamoto, who Oversaw Japan’s First Television Drama, *Yūgemae* (Before Supper).”

² “イ” pronounced[i], is the first character in traditional Japanese syllabery poem.

4. Compiled testimonies of individuals from the early days of television

Unpublished materials including testimonies from individuals familiar with the initial days of television broadcasting were compiled into seven volumes. Members of our institute conducted these interviews between 1976 and 1977, preserving them by binding simple prints of the handwritten manuscripts. These have now been transcribed to text. A total of 27 testimonies were divided into seven volumes: Policy Makers, Experiment Personnel, Camera and Film Personnel, Directors (News), Directors (Social Programming), and other internal personnel (e.g., announcers and accountants) and external participants (e.g., critics and documentary film writers). These materials, collected and edited by researchers as a source of information about the history of television, provide a well-balanced coverage of the activities of personnel and other parties active from the pre-war era of experimental television research until 1957 (cf. the July 2011 issue of this journal on *Hōsō shiryō tanbō* [Exploring the Annals of Broadcasting]). Testimonies include those from Yoshizo Kasuga, former Executive Director of NHK, who undertook a fact-finding tour of the American television industry as the Chief of Program Production in the year preceding the start of television broadcasts; Masa Tabata, who was in charge of training and developing camera personnel at the time of NHK's founding; Yoshida³, who was in charge of accounting when television broadcasts began; and Kōji Kata, a critic who developed a distinct theory of visual representation, comparing television to the traditional Japanese art of “paper theatre” (*kami shibai*).

5. Testimonies about broadcasting history

Since the publication of HBJ20, testimonies of individuals involved in broadcasting history have been published in this journal as they are recorded. This makes them available as a basis for subsequent broadcasting history (24 testimonies have been collected since the October 2003 issue). With certain exceptions, these have been digitally stored as audio data, and all of them have been transcribed to text. Testimonies include those from broadcasting

³ Mr. Yoshida's first name is “信,” pronunciation unconfirmed.

personnel about the role of the Broadcasting Commission under the Occupation of Japan; from NHK director Naoya Yoshida on the magazine-driven “Real Faces Controversy,” in which he was involved with the film director Susumu Hani; and from broadcast researcher Akiko Takeyama and colleagues. The selection of interviewees reflects a slight bias, perhaps due to the influence of the writer’s disciplinary interests; the author herself was in charge of soliciting a number of these testimonies.

6. Testimonies by broadcasters

Since 1999, 164 testimonies have been collected by the BCAJ, an organization established to promote interaction among broadcasters. These testimonies have been partially transcribed to text.

As suggested by the project’s claim “to call on broadcasters directly involved in the innovations of twentieth-century broadcast programming to discuss the historical background and trends in broadcasting at the time, and to record and preserve these testimonies for posterity” (from the Association’s website), most interviewees have been involved in broadcast program production. A break up according to profession indicates that among the 164 testimonies, 89 are from directors and producers, 12 are from announcers and newscasters, 16 are from technicians, 10 are from artists, 6 are from camera operators, 5 are from effects artists, and 6 are from journalists.

These include testimonies from Frank Baba, who arrived in Japan after the Pacific War against the Allies and left an indelible mark on broadcasting in Japan; Hideo Den, renowned as a pioneering newscaster in Japan; producer Takeshi Yokozawa, who revolutionized variety programming; and Yasuko Isono, who has continued to film documentaries on the themes of war and peace for private regional stations.

As the interviews are with members of the BCAJ, there are instances in which younger members of the same broadcasting station visit their predecessors’ homes for the interview, and this relaxed atmosphere is reflected in the testimonies. It should be noted that such an

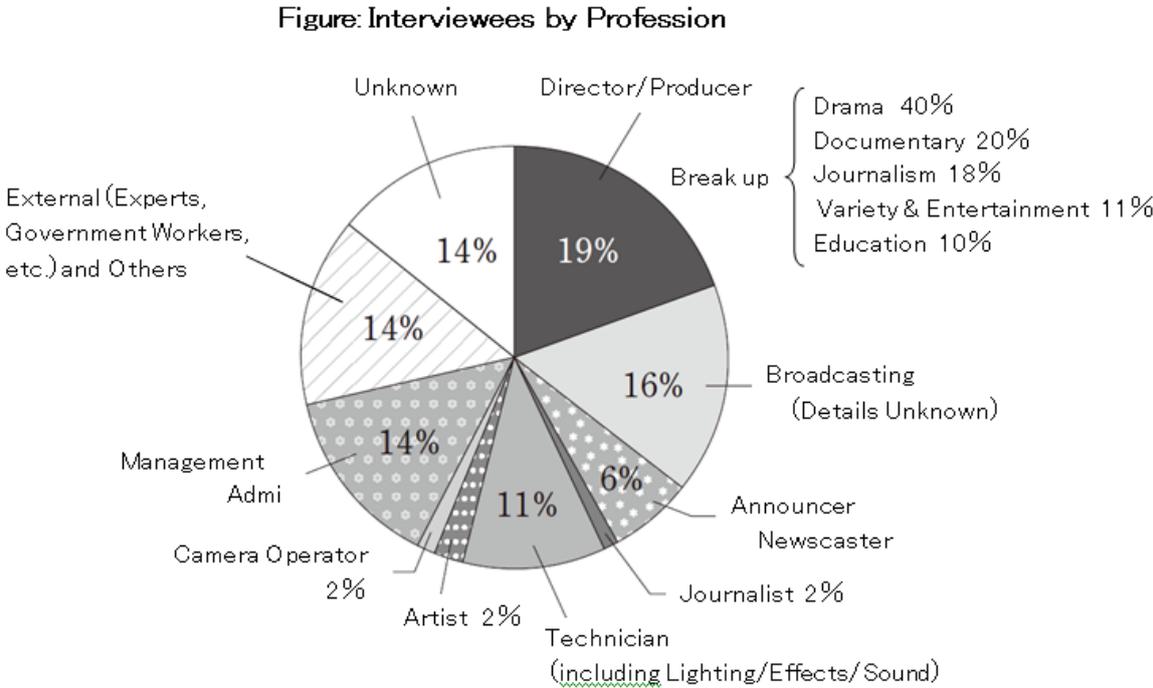
atmosphere may induce inadvertent statements about events, which might be avoided in more formal settings, as well as that the interviewees may embellish the facts when speaking to their juniors.

Methods

Establishing the aforementioned oral materials as primary research data, I examine the study itself, which was conducted using the following methodologies.

Establishing themes

While the interviews thus far have not been assigned any guiding themes, they have leaned toward specific themes and genres, enabling the identification of certain trends. The figure below divides the oral materials into six categories according to the profession of the interviewees. This overall perspective reveals the following.



Note: Percentages are based on 700 testimonies archived as oral materials. In some cases, however, these include multiple interviews with the same individual.

First, there is a bias by profession. There are 700 testimonies, of which the category “Director/Producer” constitutes the greatest proportion, with 136 testimonies (19 percent). This is followed by “Management/Admin” (14 percent), “Technician (including Lighting/Effects/Sound)” (11 percent), and “Announcer/Newscaster” (6 percent). If we include the broad category of “Broadcasting (Details Unknown)” (16 percent), 50 percent of the total interviewees appear to be directly involved in broadcasting. Furthermore, a detailed break up of directors and producers according to genre reveals that 54 cases (40 percent) are testimonies from personnel involved in dramas, followed by documentaries (20 percent) and journalism (18 percent). Because the majority of directors are involved in dramas, in addition to testimonies from artists, effects artists, and camera operators, “drama” would be a rich theme for existing testimonies. Moreover, while not represented in the figure, most people became involved in broadcasting around the beginning of television broadcasting in 1953. Accordingly, if we focus on that period, we can identify many testimonies. The early days of television and the era of creating “live” television drama are appropriate themes.

The second point relates to the number of testimonies by women. According to the Cabinet Office “White Paper on Gender Equality,” the percentage of women among all employees in broadcast media in 2011 was 21.1 percent for private media and 14.2 percent for NHK. These percentages were 20.7 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively, in 1999. Currently, although the proportion of women hired by NHK through regular recruitment has risen to 33.1 percent (in 2011), it is undeniable that broadcasting is and always has been a “male-dominated industry.” Among the 700 testimonies, 42 are from women, comprising 6 percent of the total. Considering that when those interviewed were in service, broadcasting was even more of a “man’s workplace” than it is today, 6 percent might be regarded as a large percentage (as an aside, the proportion of women at NHK was 6 percent in 1983, when the author joined the service). However, could anything else cause such meagre numbers?

While one can cite relatively frequent instances of women playing active roles on center stage (although primarily in such qualified terms as “first woman...” and “despite being a woman...”), and not only in the broadcasting industry, the voices of the women who

supported broadcasting from behind the scenes do not endure in any form. In the future, by recording testimonies from women from a broad professional spectrum while inspecting the testimonies of women who were “one of a kind” in their time, it may be possible to establish a theme of “history of women in broadcasting.”

Third, when we examine the tables, themes that have been regarded as negligible in existing studies of broadcasting history begin to emerge. I previously noted that there are a considerable number of testimonies from directors, while less than 2 percent come from journalists. When special correspondents are included among journalists, there are few testimonies from individuals whose activities are based overseas (although some of these may be included in the newscaster category). In addition, since many of the testimonies studied were recorded to preserve a record of the early days of radio and television, while compiling broadcasting history, the interviewees almost invariably come across as reflecting on the past. It is perhaps only natural, then, that few testimonies concern the “internationalization” that was stimulated and that finally began to develop from the 1970s onward.

Therefore, we now collect testimonies concerning the recent past since the 1970s is a poorly documented period in broadcasting history. When we narrow the focus of broadcasting history to developments since the 1970s, “internationalization of broadcasting” emerges as a key theme.

Review of themes in “official history”

Having established our themes, I now examine how these themes are accounted for in “official history,” thus summarizing our background knowledge. I regard official history as records and journals that have been edited or published by broadcasters from NHK or other well-known commercial broadcasters as well as by groups affiliated with broadcasting. The following documents, for example, belong to this category:

- *The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century* (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2001) [9]

- *50 Years of Japanese Broadcasting* (NHK Radio & TV Culture Research Institute, 1977) [10]
- *Television: Art of Japan* (Japan Stage and Television Design, 1978) [8]
 - A large-format book that examines television programs from the perspective of “the televisual arts” and offers a photographic introduction to the history and characteristics of televisual art.

Currently, a description of early television dramas in HBJ20, which offers the most extensive historical coverage, is found in “Part 2: The Age of Television, Section 3: In Search of Televised Representation.” Descriptions of television dramas across chapters appear as “1. Documentaries: The Path-breaking *Nihon no sugao* [True Face of Japan],” “2. A New Quiz Show: *Watashi no himitsu* [My Secret],” and “3. The Shocking *Watashi wa kai ni naritai* [I Want to Become a Shellfish].”

In 1958, when memories of the war were still fresh, the background of a highly acclaimed drama that portrayed a Class C war criminal, and its scenario, was explained in detail. Subsequently, however, under the headline “Popular Dramas One after the Other,” only brief introductions were afforded to a number of other dramas. This is the extent to which the dramas in television’s early days are described.

The televisual arts, which appeared at the beginning of television and were essential to dramas, do not even feature in the index of HBJ20. While one might expect this topic to be included in a book devoted to the subject, it is given only cursory treatment, as in this passage by Takami Nakajima from *Television: Art of Japan*, from which it is difficult to precisely infer who performed what type of work:

Investigation of period customs; seasons and local color; character personalities, upbringing, living standards, socioeconomic position, mentality, etc., the art of producing dramas crafted on the basis of these many elements is supported by the work of artistic staff over many departments, including Sets (building and operation), Props (scenery and hand props), Florist Department, Backdrop,

Lighting, Costumes, and Styling (cosmetics and wigs), to realize the situation of the visual space of the drama.



Still from the television drama *Furyōki* [Non-fishing Season] from the era of live broadcasting (NHK, 1953)

Next, we investigate women. We find only two entries under “Women” in the index of HBJ20: “Women Technicians” and “Women Announcers.” Both were supplementary columns of approximately 250 words (500 characters). While women are listed in other entries, including “A New Workplace for Women” and “Active Women on the Job,” these entries, too, are columns. Furthermore, summary references are made to few people (women do not even feature in the index of FYJB). There is no mention of, for example, Ayuko Kaneko, Japan’s first “female camera operator,” who was responsible for filming female athletes during the Tokyo Olympics (relevant oral materials can be found in “Testimonies about the history of broadcasting” and “Testimonies by broadcasters”).

What about the theme of internationalization? Several pages at the beginning of “Sympathy across the Ocean,” Section 3 of HBJ20’s treatment of the Age of Television, are devoted to portraying Japan’s first large-scale international collaborative production, *Silk Road*, as a groundbreaking program. Moreover, there is a detailed account of how the popular drama *Oshin* became a worldwide sensation, being “watched in 57 countries” and achieving a record viewership rating of 62.9 percent. Nevertheless, the answer to the practical question of “how” such overseas collaborations and delivery/sales programs were conducted appears to be missing from this account. A column on the page for *Oshin* offers a brief description of the overseas delivery and sales, noting that they were “carried out by Media International Corporation (MICO) and NHK International.” However, in contrast to the amount of space

provided for discussions by program creators, such as directors and producers, we are unable to hear the voices of the officials who were involved—the people “behind the scenes.”

From these examples, we can glean that although official history lists certain events in broadcasting history in minute detail, regarding them as “objective facts,” various people involved in such events, along with the manner of their involvement, remain concealed.

Review of these themes in existing research and related materials

Here, I review the existing research and related materials relevant to these themes. In this paper, in addition to research articles regarding broadcasting history, I examine reminiscences by contemporary personnel and other parties involved in broadcasting as well as articles written by interpretively engaged specialists. In the theme of “The Era of Live Drama Production,” we find the following items:

- *A Complete History of Television Drama: 1953–1994* (Tokyo News Service, 1994) [6]
 - A specialist “mook” (magazine/book) issued by Tokyo News Service (publisher of *TV Guide*) with the editorial assistance of NHK and private broadcasting stations. It spans prehistory to 1994, describing each era by effectively employing contemporary photographs and newspaper articles. Furthermore, it includes interviews with assorted parties and lists of dramas in production for each year.
- *The History of Japanese Television Drama* (Hiromu Toriyama, 1986) [7]
 - A history of television drama written by a broadcast screenwriter and critic. It offers the author’s commentary and occasional critique from the era of experimental drama to 1985.
- *The Evolution of Television Drama: Thoughts on its Role and Transformation* (Katsumi Ōyama, August 1985) [1]
 - A critical essay on television programming by a TBS producer. It relates the history and characteristics of Japanese television drama along with the author’s theory about television drama.

- *Studies in Television (3) The Art of the Televised Roundtable Talk (Broadcast Culture, May 1958)*
 - The third essay in a series on “Studies in Television.” Staff from NHK’s Art Division, including Ōkōchi⁴ (Fixtures, Styling), Sugiko Tanabe (Styling), Kei’ichi Shibata (Design), and Makoto Tsuda (Production Progress) discuss work in the televisual arts, moderated by Shigetaka Sakuma (art manager).

Consulting previous research and related materials, such as those listed above, we perceive tangibility, perhaps because these objective facts are conveyed by identifiable individuals.

For example, in his critical magazine article, the drama producer Katsumi Ōyama uses the term “*denki kami-shibai* (electric paper theatre)” as follows:

Televised drama, which started out by feeling its way forward by imitation, at first seemed to be a disaster waiting to happen. The equipment was crude, and the staff weren’t used to it. When the actors got giddy on live television, their bloopers were broadcast live. “Television Drama” was rejected as “Electric Paper Theatre” [1].

What about things that remain unmentioned in official history, or those which, when mentioned, are too difficult for non-specialists to understand, such as televisual art?

In the “Roundtable on Work in the Televisual Arts,” artistic work is extensively discussed:

Moderator: Could you put an approximate number to how many props you’ve got reserved for television?

Ōkōchi: Probably around 7,000. [...]

Moderator: There are unit pieces over in Shibata-san’s department too, right? It must be a lot of work to get results. [...]

⁴ Mr. Ōkōchi’s first name is “叡衡”, pronunciation unconfirmed.

Ōkōchi: There are quite a few over there. I'd say over 5,000 pieces.

Shibata: You know, for most programs, we never get a unit piece that doesn't get used. I think we've got to put some more effort into that area. [...]

Ōkōchi: In terms of expanding our unit pieces even further, I think we've got to re-examine the way they are currently built.

Such an exchange features quantitative values worth recording as data about the way things were in 1958; furthermore, it reveals the challenges that were faced. At the same time, because all those involved were in charge of artistic departments, including the moderator, regular readers will not be aware of what a “unit piece” is⁵; therefore, they will be unable to frame a mental image of the discussion. Since art room jargon such as *shigi* (brace), *hikiwaku* (pull frame), and *dōguchō* (prop log) frequently appears without additional elaboration, the conversation is sometimes difficult to understand (nevertheless, explanations can be added during the editing process).

Speaking from personal experience, magazines have physical as well as content constraints when it comes to roundtable and interview articles, and it is impossible to publish these stories in their original form. In certain cases, the narrative also requires editing. I often think that the edited portions are precisely those that might include what I, as a researcher, most want to know.

⁵ Standalone set pieces constructed according to standardized dimensions are known as “unit pieces.” These pieces can be configured in various ways, giving them a wide range of uses (*NHK Television Art Reader*, NHK, 1981).

Analysis

By examining each of these themes from official histories, existing research, and related materials, several research questions oriented to our analysis of the oral materials emerge. For example, in “live drama,” we can consider the following:

Set design, one of the duties of television artists

(Photography © NHK, 1962)



- A) What were the realities and moods at the drama production sites under the technical and physical constraints of the time?
- B) What is the specific nature of the televisual arts, which came into existence with television?

Having established these research questions, I now conduct a detailed analysis of the oral materials. In doing so, I draw attention to the following points:

- (1) Awareness of the contrast with official history presented in textual materials.

For example, in the testimonies pertaining to Research Question A, we find statements such as the following:

What always troubled me was that we never had a good script. Basically, from *Himana-shi* onward, I never once looked at a script and thought “This is a good one.” Basically, I figured there was nothing to be done about it, right? The scripts were boring, you know? At least we had to change settings—and to do that, we had no choice but to shoot on location. And that’s why we started shooting on location... (Tai’ichirō Takahashi, former TBS producer, 1999, “Testimonies by broadcasters”).

The following statement is a part of official history: “For the first time, we incorporated a method for inserting a film shot on location part-way through live broadcasting at the studio” (HBJ20). It is part of an anecdote related by the producer in charge of the pioneering mystery–detective program *Himana-shi tobidasu* (Mr. Himana Jumps Out) (1955–1962, KRT [now TBS]). Previous studies of this program explain the reasons for taking the leap into location shooting, which was regarded as a taboo at the time, in such terms as “he also pioneered film inserts shot on location, with the aim of ‘rapid exposition, with a more comfortable tempo than in the movies’” [7]. Moreover, Takahashi himself stated, “In addition to an entertaining plot, action dramas need a good tempo” [6].

This example demonstrates a visible discrepancy. While official history records that “location filming was introduced with an eye on pacing,” the individual actually responsible relates that “we were forced into it because the scripts were boring.” Furthermore, there are inconsistencies between the testimony and the written interview. This is one of the reasons why oral history is appealing. However, my intent is neither to arrive at a conflicting conclusion through my analysis nor to rewrite official history. Rather than simply retracing official history, we can uncover the multi-faceted aspects of its themes by establishing a contrasting approach. This is significant as it allows us to perceive the compound aspects of history itself.

- (2) Awareness of the setting in which the testimonies took place and the “speech acts” of the interviewer and speaker (about whom they are speaking, in what state, etc.)

With reference to Research Question B, the testimonies of individuals involved in the televisual arts between 1950 and 1960 have been elicited in interviews with broadcasting personnel since 2000. These individuals have comprehensively recounted the events of their work from forty years ago as though they had happened recently.

I was working as a florist in Azabu Juban, when the old NET (Nihon Educational Television, now TV Asahi) opened its station in Roppongi, and they asked us to arrange some flowers for one of the programs. I went along with my elder brother,

who arranged the flowers while I watched from the wings. Then, since they preferred that a young lady perform the task, I went the next time.... At the time, it was all live broadcasting, but I'd arrange the flowers.... Then it became "Go buy us some potatoes," and "Go buy us some drinks"... and I started to go along with them to the shops—basically, for what they used to call *kiemono* (consumables)⁶... Making these assorted arrangements in the studio gave me my start (Emiko Ishibashi, TV Asahi, Provisioner, 2006, "Testimonies by broadcasters").

This was in the old days, before they started TV broadcasting.... There was a police box next to the stop where I got off the streetcar. Once, I was carrying a parcel wrapped in a *furoshiki*, and an officer, who thought I was suspicious, stopped me for questioning. The thing I had wrapped in the parcel was a policeman's uniform! (*laughs*) By chance, the uniform was about the same size as Enoken (a reference to the actor, singer, and comedian Ken'ichi Enomoto, known as Japan's "King of Comedy").... He demanded that I open the parcel, and would you believe it? A policeman's uniform. He told me, "Go and try that on," and the uniform fit me perfectly! (*laughs*) The uniform was small, so it was a good fit (*laughs*)... (Hajime Tochiginoki, Tokyo Costumes, TV Asahi, 2007, "Testimonies by broadcasters").

In the field of history, for a long time, oral materials were often considered subordinate as compared to documentary evidence. This is likely based on a "gut instinct" that oral testimonies lacked "objectivity," since they were often based on memory and hearsay. With regard to the "reliability" of oral materials, this study assumes that neither documentary nor oral materials can be regarded as "better" than the other, following the detailed discussion in *From History to Memory* by Paul R. Thompson [12], a leading figure in oral history research. The reliability of spoken testimony increases not only depending on its content but also

⁶ A term referring to anything consumed (eaten, drunk, broken, or burned) on set, as per the needs of the program. This also includes beer or tobacco (*NHK Television Art Reader*, NHK, 1981).

through a review of its various frames (*ba*) and speech acts, including when and how it was collected and the relationship between the speaker and interviewer. Moreover, we must be equally aware of this caveat in the case of documentary evidence⁷.

If the testimonies cited above are found wanting in terms of objectivity, when we consider the frames and speech acts (interviews conducted in a relaxed atmosphere by colleagues who were involved in broadcasting during the same period), I believe that a certain degree of reliability can be attributed to them. From their testimonies, we can concretely consider the work of televisual art, which emerged with the beginning of television broadcasting.

Future Challenges

When using these recorded testimonies, one can expect a sense of frustration. In many cases, the interviewees are deceased, and it is challenging to determine how much credibility to afford to a given testimony when its constituent frames and speech acts are unclear. Nevertheless, it is indeed great to have sampled the valuable words of those who created broadcasting history, even if we are unable to directly see them or listen to their voices. Furthermore, if it can advance our pursuit of better methodologies to find more useful terminology as well as help our interpretations, then so much the better.

If we regard oral history as “research that portrays the dynamism of the interaction between the individual, society, and history by attending carefully to the voices of those who have little opportunity to leave their voices for posterity” [2], we might be able to address the question of whether a history of broadcasting can be constructed using only the testimonies of those on the production side of “mass” media broadcasting. The perspective for which we must aim appears to transcend official history. Moreover, by collecting an oral history from

⁷ For additional discussion of oral history methodology, cf. Sakurai (2002) [3] and Sakurai and Kobayashi (2005) [4].

those on the receiving side of broadcasting, the viewers, the broadcasting history will become even more substantial. Moreover, by augmenting our collection with testimonies from people with jobs that have not become widely known, as with the televisual arts, we might be able to provide even greater detail.

While exploring ways to resolve these challenges, we will continue to collect testimonies with a variety of themes, including those dealing with the recent past. If oral history successfully encourages a resurgence of interest in broadcasting history, study in this field certainly has limitless possibilities.

I would like to conclude by quoting the moving and encouraging words of a teacher from a themed panel at the 10th Annual Conference of the Japan Oral History Association, in which I participated:

If we believe that research is worth doing, we have no choice but to take up the challenge of our materials, be they oral or be they textual. Those who hesitate cannot be called true researchers (Yasuko Itō, Aichi Women's History Study Group, Former Professor at Chukyo Women's University).

Oral materials have presented us that challenge.

HIROTANI Kyoko

References

- [1] Ōyama, Katsumi. 1985. "Terebi drama" wa dō kawatte kita ka: sono hensen to yakuwari o meguru kōsatsu [The Evolution of Television Drama: Thoughts on its Role and Transformation]. *Bungaku* [Literature]. August 1985 issue. Iwanami Shoten
- [2] Sakai, Junko. 2008. *Shimin no ōraru hisutorī: rekishi o kaku chikara o torimodosu* [The People's Oral History: Reclaiming the Power of Historiography]. Kawasaki: Shimin akademī shuppan-bu

- [3] Sakurai, Atsushi. 2002. *Intabyū no shakai-gaku: Raifusutōrī no kikikata* [The Sociology of Interviewing: How to Record Life Histories]. Tokyo: Serika Shobō
- [4] Sakurai, Atsushi and Tazuko Kobayashi. 2005. *Raifusutōrī intabyū: Shitsuteki kenkyū nyūmon* [The Life History Interview: An Introduction to Qualitative Research]. Tokyo: Serika Shobō
- [5] 1958. Terebijon no kenkyū (3) zadan-kai terebi bijutsu to iu shigoto [Studies in Television (3) The Art of the Televised Roundtable Talk] *Hōsō bunka* [Broadcast culture]. May 1958 issue
- [6] Tokyo News Service. 1994. *Terebi dorama zenshi: 1953–1994* [A Complete History of Television Drama: 1953–1994]. Tokyo: Tokyo News Service
- [7] Toriyama, Hiromu. 1986. *Nihon terebi dorama-shi* [The History of Japanese Television Drama]. Tokyo: Eijinsha
- [8] JSTVAN (Nihon butai terebi bijutsuka kyōkai). 1978. *Nihon no terebi bijutsu* [Television: Art of Japan]. Tokyo: JSTVAN
- [9] NHK. 2001. *20-seiki hōsō-shi* [The History of Broadcasting in Japan in the 20th Century]. Tokyo: NHK Shuppan
- [10] NHK. 1977. *Hōsō gojū nen-shi* [50 Years of Japanese Broadcasting]. Tokyo: NHK Shuppan
- [11] Hirotsu, Kyoko and Hideaki Matsuyama. 2012. Ōraru hisutorī o mochiita atarashī hōsō-shi kenkyū no kanōsei [A New Perspective of Broadcasting History Employing Oral History]. *Hōsō kenkyū to chōsa* [NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research]. January issue
- [12] Thompson, Paul R. 2000. *Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press