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“Education or Propaganda?: the Japanese Mobilization of Children Through Kamishibai in the Asia Pacific War”
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David Earhart rightly argues that Japanese children were mobilized to a degree greater than those of any other combatant nation in World War Two. An examination of the visual and textual elements of propaganda kamishibai plays aimed at children, created between 1938 and 1945, reveals the wartime roles envisioned for girls and boys of various classes and regions, and the ways those roles changed as the war intensified. Such an examination also exposes rhetorical, visual, and cognitive strategies that distinguish propaganda from other communicative acts, enabling a broader understanding of political deception.

Sharalyn Orbaugh is Professor of Modern Japanese Literature and Popular Culture at the University of British Columbia. Her 2015 book, Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan’s Fifteen Year War, theorizes the nature and function of propaganda through a close examination of kamishibai, an entertainment medium turned to propaganda purposes in World War Two. Her research interests include anomalous embodiment in Japanese literature and popular media, queer literature, science fiction, and propaganda.