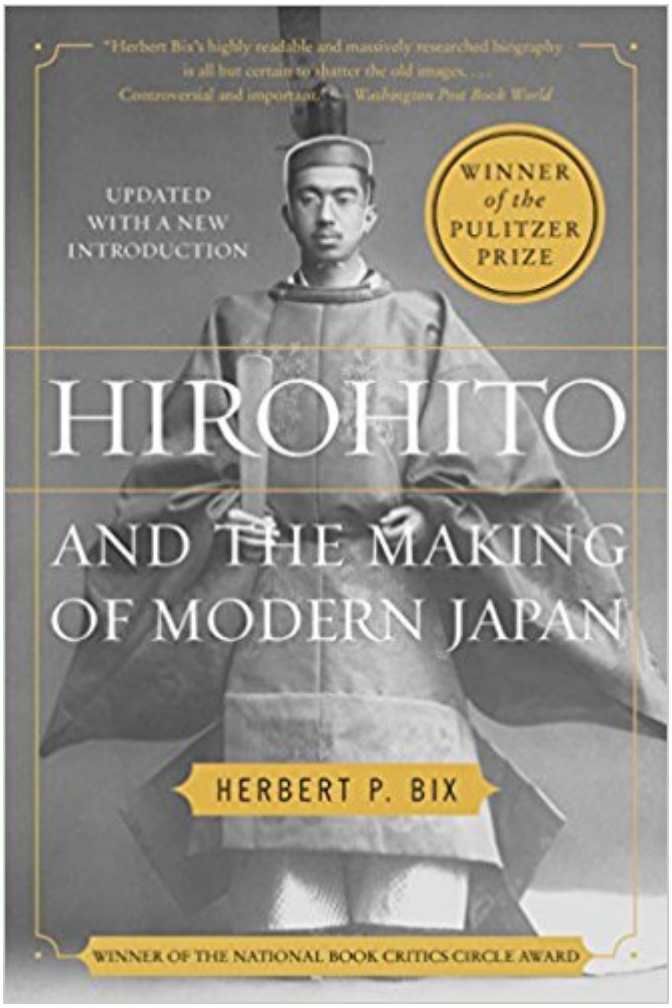
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Hirohito And The Making Of Modern Japan



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Synopsis

Winner of the Pulitzer PrizeIn this groundbreaking biography of the Japanese emperor Hirohito, Herbert P. Bix offers the first complete, unvarnished look at the enigmatic leader whose sixty-three-year reign ushered Japan into the modern world. Never before has the full life of this controversial figure been revealed with such clarity and vividness. Bix shows what it was like to be trained from birth for a lone position at the apex of the nation's political hierarchy and as a revered symbol of divine status. Influenced by an unusual combination of the Japanese imperial tradition and a modern scientific worldview, the young emperor gradually evolves into his preeminent role, aligning himself with the growing ultranationalist movement, perpetuating a cult of religious emperor worship, resisting attempts to curb his power, and all the while burnishing his image as a reluctant, passive monarch. Here we see Hirohito as he truly was: a man of strong will and real authority.Supported by a vast array of previously untapped primary documents, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan is perhaps most illuminating in lifting the veil on the mythology surrounding the emperor's impact on the world stage. Focusing closely on Hirohito's interactions with his advisers and successive Japanese governments, Bix sheds new light on the causes of the China War in 1937 and the start of the Asia-Pacific War in 1941. And while conventional wisdom has had it that the nation's increasing foreign aggression was driven and maintained not by the emperor but by an elite group of Japanese militarists, the reality, as witnessed here, is quite different. Bix documents in detail the strong, decisive role Hirohito played in wartime operations, from the takeover of Manchuria in 1931 through the attack on Pearl Harbor and ultimately the fateful decision in 1945 to accede to an unconditional surrender. In fact, the emperor stubbornly prolonged the war effort and then used the horrifying bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with the Soviet entrance into the war, as his exit strategy from a no-win situation. From the moment of capitulation, we see how American and Japanese leaders moved to justify the retention of Hirohito as emperor by whitewashing his wartime role and reshaping the historical consciousness of the Japanese people. The key to this strategy was Hirohito's alliance with General MacArthur, who helped him maintain his stature and shed his militaristic image, while MacArthur used the emperor as a figurehead to assist him in converting Japan into a peaceful nation. Their partnership ensured that the emperor's image would loom large over the postwar years and later decades, as Japan began to make its way in the modern age and struggled -- as it still does -- to come to terms with its past.Until the very end of a career that embodied the conflicting aims of Japan's development as a nation, Hirohito remained preoccupied with politics and with his place in history. Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan provides the definitive account of his rich life and legacy. Meticulously

researched and utterly engaging, this book is proof that the history of twentieth-century Japan cannot be understood apart from the life of its most remarkable and enduring leader.

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Customer Reviews

To many, Emperor Hirohito of Japan is remembered as a helpless figurehead during Japan’s wars with China and the U.S. According to the received wisdom, he knew nothing of the plan to bomb Pearl Harbor and had no power to stop atrocities like the Rape of Nanking. The emperor was the mild-mannered little man who traipsed with Mickey Mouse in Disneyland and who brought peace through surrender, certainly not "one of the most disingenuous persons ever to occupy the modern throne." Herbert Bix’s charged political biography, however, argues that such accepted beliefs are myths and misrepresentations spun by both Japanese and Americans to protect the emperor from indictment. Since Hirohito’s death in 1989, hundreds of documents, diaries, and scholarly studies have been published (and subsequently ignored) in Japan. Historian Bix used these sources to develop this shocking and nuanced portrait of a man far more shrewd, activist, and energetic than previously thought. Caught up in the fever of territorial expansion, Hirohito was the force that animated the war system, who, acting fully as a military leader and head of state, encouraged the belligerency of his people and pursued the war to its disastrous conclusion. To the very end, Hirohito refused to acknowledge any responsibility for his role in the death of millions as well as the brutalities inflicted by his forces in China, Korea, and the Philippines. In fact, he worked with none other than General MacArthur to select his fall guys and fix testimony at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials--the emperor trying to protect the throne at all cost, the U.S. acting to ensure control of the

Japanese population and the military by retaining Hirohito as a figurehead. Not surprisingly, this hefty work of scholarship is making waves, as Americans and Japanese reconsider their roles in WWII and its aftermath. By placing Hirohito back in the center of the picture and puncturing the myths that surround him, Bix has effectively asked the Japanese to come out of their half-century repression of the past and face their wartime responsibility. Without doing so, he implies, the monarchy will forever impede the development of democracy. For those interested in Japan's wartime past and its influence on the present, this is fascinating, if lengthy, reading. --Lesley Reed --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bix penetrates decades of "public opacity" to offer a stunning portrait of the controversial Japanese emperor, "one of the most disingenuous persons ever to occupy the modern throne." Hirohito ascended to the Japanese throne in 1926 (at the age of 25) and ruled until his death in 1989. Bix closely examines his long, eventful reign, concentrating on the extent of the emperor's influence-which was greater than he admitted-over the political and military life of Japan during WWII. Bix's command of primary sources is apparent throughout the book, especially in the voluminous endnotes. From these sources, the author, a veteran scholar on modern Japanese history, draws a nuanced and balanced portrayal of an emperor who did not seek out war, but who demanded victories once war began and never took action to stop Japan's reckless descent into defeat. Bix makes Hirohito's later career intelligible by a careful exposition of the conflicting influences imposed on the emperor as a child: a passion for hard science coexisted with the myths of his own divine origin and destiny; he was taught benevolence along with belief in military supremacy. These influences unfolded as Hirohito was drawn into Japan's long conflict with China, its alliance with the fascist states of Europe, and its unwinnable war against the Allies. The dominant interest of the Showa ("radiant peace") Emperor, Bix convincingly explains, was to perpetuate the imperial system against more democratic opponents, no matter what the cost. Bix gives a meticulous account of his subject, delivers measured judgements about his accomplishments and failures, and reveals the subtlety of the emperor's character as a man who, while seemingly detached and remote, is in fact controlling events from behind the imperial screen. This is political biography at its most compelling. Agent, Susan Rabiner. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I spent a little over three years in Japan in the US Air Force 1969-1972. While I was there I read many books about Japanese history as well as some of their popular fiction (translated into English)

and found them to be quite fascinating. This book by Herbert P. Bix has been on my list for a while because of the topic as well as the author’s credentials and I finally read it. All I can say is it was very thoroughly researched, well written, and I learned a lot about the Emperor’s part in the events of WWII as well as why Japanese society is the way it is today. Once I got into the book a bit, momentum took over and it was hard to put down, not because it was like a thriller but because I just kept wanting to learn more. I can highly recommend this book to anyone interested in WWII, Japanese history, or Emperor Hirohito. A lot of the mystery is dispelled and based on letters, notes, diaries, etc of those around him. It was a great read!

I was born in 1938 and have good recollections of our nation at war. In 1964 I was the medical officer on a Navy ship in Guam, and the following year my wife and I spent three weeks in Japan. I didn’t know that in 1963 Herbet Bix was an American Naval officer stationed in Yakusuka, where he met a Japanese girl, married her, then became a university professor, teaching in both Japan and in the USA.I had read a lot about our "Naval War in the Pacific" and Guam still had many war scars, and at least one Japanese holdout in the "boonies".I had also read that allowing Hirohito to remain emperor in Japan was tandamount to allowing Hitler to remain chancellor in Germany after the war.But this is the first book I’ve read written which describes the Japanese view of the war. Hirohito was a fascist dictator just like Hitler, Stalin or Mussolini, but due to the "pragmatic" views of MacArthur and the other allies, he was allowed to spread the notion he had always been a pacifist, and that he, like the Japanese people at large, were only passive victims of the "militarists".Hirohito is now long dead, but the issue of "war guilt" is still very much alive. We live in rapidly changing times, and this book is an excellent preparation for seeing what will happen next.

A tour de force explaining why emperor Hirohito was not indicted as a war criminal, how the Imperial Court, with the cooperation of General MacArthur, conspired to create the impression that the emperor was merely a puppet of the military services "in the interests of peaceful occupation and rehabilitation of Japan, prevention of revolution and communism..." "...positive action [should] be taken to prevent indictment and prosecution of the Emperor as a war criminal."

New biography on former Japanese emperor Hirohito sheds some new light on his life. Author has disabused emperorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s image as a benign, pacifist, British-style constitutional monarch. Author argues emperor enjoyed sweeping powers which meant his authority was independent of constraints imposed by legislature, bureaucracy. Without his support and approval

no cabinet minister could rule for long. He even had the authority to overturn the decision taken by the armed forces.Hirohito was not what he seemed. Emperor had deep knowledge on diplomatic and military matters. He asked probing questions to his chiefs of staff and war minister and carefully examined policies, strategies before issuing orders to wage aggressive war. Sometimes he intervened to make changes in ongoing operations. However at times he avoided restraining army even when it acted without his authorization. He accepted the situation as a fait accompli. Emperor was not opposed to army expanding his empire and allowed brief usurpation of authority so long as operation remained successful.Hirohito was an imperialist and an extreme nationalist. He agreed to expanding war in China initiated by Konoye government. Author has argued that Hirohito approved Japanese air bombardment of defenseless Chinese cities. Author has accused the emperor being complicit to some of the worst atrocities committed by the army. In the Wuhan offensive form August to late October 1938 IHQ authorized the use of chemical weapons on 375 separate occasions. For this Hirohito bore direct responsibility. Sinking of American gunboat Panay in the Yangtze River by Japanese bombers was an extremely embarrassing incident for Tokyo. Foreign Minister Hirota issued profound apology to ambassador Grew. However Hirohito did nothing. In authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s opinion emperor could have assuaged feelings of American people by sending Roosevelt telegrams expressing his profound regret.Again HirohitoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s hand is seen when Japan began hostilities against Anglo Saxon powers. Here it should be said that TokyoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s decision to establish ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœnew orderÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ in Asia ran counter to entrenched western interests. Author blames Hirohito for prolonging the agonies of his people as well as Asia and Pacific by continuing the war even when it became clear that Japan had lost. In his blind obsession to preserve monarchy he let go several opportunities to end hostilities. What finally forced Hirohito was the prospect of an internal revolt against his rule by his subjects who had become despondent, war weary.Most striking thing about emperorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life he survived JapanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s defeat, American occupation, cold war. He managed to retain throne even while under pressure from royal household to abdicate. Further he escaped indictment as a war criminal at Tokyo war crime tribunal by deflecting all blame on Tojo. What made this possible was unique concatenation of circumstances. With Japan now under American occupation his powers were clipped. However Hirohito refused to reconcile to the status of an impotent monarch and made a futile attempt to revive his authority.In short, this book is shocking indictment of Hirohito exposing him as most disingenuous monarch to occupy the Japanese throne. Author has just stopped short calling him a rascal. Author has explained difficulties he experienced in reconstructing emperorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life and cautions readers by

saying there are still many unknown dark corners. Hirohito is said to have kept a personal diary where he recorded his inner most thoughts. This is not available for researchers. Also not obtainable is emperorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s extensive correspondence with other members of the royal family. Author hopes that some future point in time these would be made available for researchers. Then it would become possible to obtain a comprehensive picture on Hirohito.This work ably supplements David BergaminiÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book Imperial Conspiracy. Bergamini also espoused similar views though he wrote the book based personal experiences and did not have the privilege doing archival research. On account of it I do not consider the present work as breaking any new ground.

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