

The Un-Prosecuted Perpetrator

The Complex Case of Emperor Hirohito

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ABSTRACT

Following the Second World War, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito was exempted from the Tokyo Trials, and the extent of his responsibility in the war has remained intensely debated among predominantly Western scholars. While some see him as a puppet of the military, others claim that Hirohito carries similar responsibility to the major war criminals of the European Axis. The usage of restorative justice, and an interplay between various powers, have obscured the truth of Hirohito's potential responsibility. Consequently, countries that were victimized by the Japanese perpetration prior to and during the Asian-Pacific War propose different narratives that deeply contrast the heroization of Hirohito in the dominant narrative presented by Japan. In modern-day society, such disputes can still flare up when these narratives conflict, such as in relation to the 'comfort women' issue, destabilizing the relations between Japan and the victimized countries in question. By investigating various cultural products, such as museums, propaganda, manga and film through the prism of cultural memory studies, this paper examines Japan's failure to adequately address wartime responsibility and the consequences it has on the creation and mediation of the nation's cultural memory. Doing so might do more justice to the Japanese national and cultural memory and prevent international fallout.

KEYWORDS

Emperor Hirohito, restorative justice, wartime guilt, comfort women, international relationships, cultural memory

INTRODUCTION

The Nuremberg Charter of 1945 states that '[t]he official position of defendants, whether as heads of state or responsible officials in Government Departments, shall not be considered as freeing them from responsibility or mitigating punishment' ('Charter' 2014). In the case of the major war criminals of the European Axis, their deaths prevented prosecution, but the Japanese Emperor Hirohito—another contested leader who has often been grouped alongside Hitler and Mussolini—was still alive and could, thus, be prosecuted (Wakabayashi 2008). Following Japan's surrender on August 15th, 1945, Hirohito was at the United States' disposal, and the American General Douglas MacArthur oversaw the formal investigation into his war responsibility (Dower 1999). However, MacArthur concluded that the Emperor should not be prosecuted during the Tokyo Trials of May 1946 to November 1948 as 'his indictment will unquestionably cause a tremendous convulsion among the Japanese people [...]. He is a symbol which unites all Japanese. Destroy him and the nation will disintegrate' (quoted in Bix 2000, 568). Instead, the Emperor's actual war

responsibility has remained intentionally vague, causing speculative scholarship to propose opposing views. The varying narratives on Hirohito's responsibility cause clashes between the dominant Japanese narrative and the narratives of other countries, such as South Korea, whom were victims of Japan's perpetration prior to or during the Asian Pacific War. Most recently, however, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has reignited the debate concerning problematic war remembrance of Japan; the Ukrainian state media's portrayal of Hirohito alongside the major war criminals of the European Axis as equally complicit caused threats from the Japanese government (McCurry 2022).

This article investigates the complex case of Emperor Hirohito with a particular focus on the usage of restorative justice and other decisions made following Japan's surrender to shed light on these striking differences in war narratives. It is, however, not this research's goal to find an exact answer to the ongoing debate concerning Hirohito's role and responsibility in the Second World War.¹ Instead, this article will employ a literary approach through the prism of cultural memory studies, taking into account Hirohito's symbolic role as supreme leader of the Japanese people, with the main focus on cultural representations of him as a perpetrator. From this perspective, the factors that have contributed to the particular lack of depictions of his perpetration in contemporary Japanese cultural memory will be examined. There is a vicious circle where the dominant narrative in Japan reinforces the current policies that refuse to accept and openly apologize for Japan's perpetrations. Understanding why cultural memory in Japan functions the way it does and how this could be considered offensive by other countries is crucial in figuring out how one can prevent alienation of or hostility towards Japan. Therefore, shedding light on this interplay between the remediation of memory and Japan's geopolitical policies concerning South Korea and, more recently, Ukraine, might reveal the road to both nationwide and international reconciliation.

The complexity of the case: a brief summary of scholarship

Before the arrival of MacArthur, about two weeks after Japan's surrender, Tokyo's sky was filled with smoke; '[b]onfires of documents replaced napalm's hellfires as the wartime elites followed the lead of their sovereign and devoted themselves to obscuring their wartime deeds' (Dower 1999, 39). As a result, no known incriminating documents pointed to Hirohito's complicity, and MacArthur had to base his judgement of the Emperor solely on the (potentially biased) witness statements of those closest to him. It is, therefore, no surprise that the predominantly Western scholarship concerning the Emperor's complicity poses a conundrum due to the absence of definitive evidence. This has made it nearly impossible to reach a conclusive verdict on his level of involvement in the war. The academic debate further intensified after Hirohito's death in 1989

(Otomo 2011). On the one hand, ‘sympathetic historians contend he was a man of peace, denied authority by both tradition and the constitution. They argue that he was made the ‘puppet of the militarists around him’ against his will (Burgess 1986),² that even when Hirohito wanted to intervene, he could not do so (Wetzler 1998) or that he strongly distrusted his army (Thomas 1996). On the other hand, some historians place his reign alongside Hitler and Mussolini’s. Herbert Bix (2008), for example, states that ‘[f]or the war crimes and other violations of international law committed by Japan’s military forces after December 7, 1941, the largest share of responsibility may again be attributed to Hirohito as both commander in chief and head of state’ (6; see also Kersten 2003, 15). Due to the lack of incriminating evidence against the Emperor, Bix (2008) and John Dower (1999) argue that MacArthur shielded Hirohito by pressuring General Tojo Hideki to assume all responsibility for the war. Dower’s and Bix’s view implicates the Emperor ‘in all of Japan’s war crimes—and, by extension, contends that he should have stood trial’ (Kirsch 2022, 4). It should be noted that David Bergamini, a predecessor of Bix and Dower, argued in *Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy* (1971) that Hirohito’s image as a passive actor in the war was also a coverup by MacArthur. He suggests that ‘Emperor Hirohito had been the instigator of Japanese aggression and should be held solely responsible for the war’ (Robinson 2011, 136). The historian Peter Wetzler (1998) additionally argues that Hirohito was aware of the planning that went into the attack on Pearl Harbor and states that he had no choice but to approve these war decisions.

Compared to extensive scholarship on the major war criminals of Italy and Germany, scholarship concerning Hirohito’s war responsibility has been relatively scarce. Most of the work originates from Western sources and (critical) work by Japanese scholars is limited. An example of a non-Western critique stems from the Japanese former prime minister, Prince Fumimaro Konoe. He believed that the ‘Emperor bore grave personal responsibility both for failing to prevent the war with the United States and for failing to end it sooner’ (Dower 1999, 321). A mediated voice, as offered by the author Masataka Kosaka, comments that ‘[t]hough the emperor himself was not responsible for the failure to change the [prewar] political order, it is undeniable that many of the acts that led to tragedy were carried out in his name, however painful they were to him’ (quoted in Wetzler 1998, 2). Additionally, the writer Kawahara Toshiaki states: ‘Deep in their hearts, all Japanese admit that the emperor is culpable for the war; they just don’t push the issue’ (quoted in Wakayabashi 2008, 274). However, it is interesting to note that some of the immediate post-war critiques from members of the imperial family or soldiers focus on Hirohito’s decision to surrender, as many Japanese wanted to continue fighting. This illustrates the nationwide involvement in the war effort and the deep-rooted loyalty to the Japanese heritage system where the Imperial Army’s honor remained undefeated.

It appears that further investigation into Hirohito's complicity is actively complicated by the Imperial Family and the Japanese government as, for example, the memoirs of the Emperor, written by an imperial court official, are not available to the public and are currently in the hands of the Imperial Family. It has been suggested that the Emperor's monologue contains his reasoning behind the Second World War and the attack on Pearl Harbor. As Motoko Rich (2017) states, these memoirs describe that, even though the Emperor had the power to prevent the war, he 'feared that if he had vetoed the decision to go to war, the country would have plunged into a civil conflict', suggesting that he did support the decision to go to war. However, even if these memoirs had been available to the public, the question remains to what extent they would provide an accurate account of the war, as it was, in fact, MacArthur who incentivized its writing. Together with the fact that the little research concerning Hirohito's complicity poses differing views concerning his innocence, the refrain of the Imperial Family to publish his memoirs further complexifies the investigation into his war responsibility.

Hirohito as a demi-god in Japanese society

Besides a lack of documents, prosecuting Hirohito was further complicated due to his symbolic function in Japanese society. Hirohito was the 124th emperor in a line of royalty that the Japanese believe to never have been broken since 660 BC. As John Burgess (1986) illustrates, 'Hirohito came to power in 1926', initially lacking the popular support he would later receive, as he refrained from being in public spheres during the beginning of his reign (Bix 2000, 6-7, 135-6, 659-60). Following the belief that his line of royalty descends from the sun Goddess Amaterasu (Wakabayashi 2008; Wetzler 1998), Hirohito—as the previous emperors—was 'revered by millions of Japanese as a demi-god' (Burgess) and, according to Bix (2000) and Wetzler (1998), he consciously strengthened his status as a demi-god, together with his role as the official priest of the Shinto religion, in order to mobilize the country for his imperialistic quest.³ This endeavor was successful and created a strong national identity that, during the war, led to 'a generation of young men march[ing] off hoping for the honor of being slaughtered in his name' (Burgess 1986).

Hiraki Hori (2017) states that creating such a national identity was vital in the years anticipating the war, and, with the help of Japan's film industry, this nationalistic discourse continued. The role of the Emperor in such films, however, was obscure: images of Hirohito were considered holy and his subjects were not allowed to gaze upon him. In fact, 'protocols required a copy of a photograph—a sheet of paper—to be treated as if it was the sacred body of the emperor' (22). This eventually led to lessening the 'circulation of Hirohito's visual presentation in popular media' (30). On the rare occasion that he was portrayed in non-fiction films, his body was

presented ‘in a rigid manner [...] creat[ing] a sense of distance between the viewers and the emperor’ (61) to stress his position as a demi-god through the creation of a ‘ritualized space’ (64).

After Japan’s surrender, however, Hirohito was downgraded; his executive sovereignty ended, and he instead became a ‘symbol of the state and of unity of the people’ (Burgess 1986; Bix 2000, 564-5). Even though Hirohito’s status as a demi-god was denounced and he started playing a more active role in rebuilding society, he remained a mystery to the public and did not take part in other interviews or investigations. Therefore, much of the available scholarship is based solely on the aforementioned (potentially biased) accounts of those surrounding him in the Imperial household or the Japanese government.

MACARTHUR’S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

To understand MacArthur’s choices in post-war Japan, we need to investigate the concept of restorative justice. As stated by Charles Villa-Vicencio (2000), the prosecution of perpetrators is not always the only means to achieve transnational justice. Instead, he suggests that ‘the duty to prosecute needs to be subjected to the immediate needs of a society, which are sometimes desperate needs simply to end bloodshed and war’ (220). In this examination of restorative justice, the (political) perpetrator is part of the nation-building after gross human rights violations to ‘resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of offence and its implications for the future’ (quoted in Villa-Vicencio 2000, 214-5). Necessary to the process of restorative justice is the perpetrator’s confession and subsequent atonement, creating space for dialogue between the perpetrators and the victims as ‘the needs of everyone in the healing process are of paramount concern’ (Sullivan and Tifft 2006, 2).⁴

In the case of Hirohito, the American occupants argued that his abdication or prosecution would further bring the country to ruin or, in Yoriko Otomo’s words; Hirohito was ‘saved’ in order to ‘preserve public order within the newly-occupied Japan’ (2011, 63-4). While McArthur’s memoirs state that Hirohito assumed all responsibility for the war in a private conversation—and Hirohito states during his surrender broadcast that he will sacrifice himself for peace—the Emperor was formally exempted from the Tokyo Trials without publicly confessing guilt (65-7). Instead, Hirohito played a prominent role in the rebuilding of Japan. He did this, for example, by taking royal tours throughout the country (Dower 1999). Dower (1999) states that ‘[u]p to the war’s end, [the] Japanese had been indoctrinated to apologize to the emperor for each and every failure to advance the nation’s cause’ (332-3), but ‘the imperial tours revitalized and refocused this mass psychology of self-criticism and apology’ (333; see also 334-6). These visits

consequently aided in reuniting the nation, but also pushed the memory of the war and Hirohito's potential complicity or responsibility further into the background; they presented the Emperor as a symbol of Japan's unity while, at the same time, stressing his ceremonial role within Japan, therein rehabilitated his image but also made it impossible to hold him accountable for any potential war responsibility. Even though his role in rebuilding Japan after the war can be identified as an attempt at restorative justice, '[n]ation-building clearly requires the voice of victims and survivors to be heard' (Villa-Vicencio 2000, 209). It appears to be precisely the voices of these victims, both Japanese and non-Japanese, that have been swept under the rug in the process of rebuilding.

Emperor Hirohito and responsibility: the comfort women issue

To illustrate the challenges of the usage of restorative justice in Japanese society, this research investigates one of the unresolved matters not considered during the Tokyo Trials; the issue of 'comfort women'. The term 'comfort women' describes the young women and underage girls that were forced into military sexual slavery during the war. According to Helen Durham and Bebe Loff (2001), the comfort women 'had been a gift from Emperor Hirohito to his troops' (302), while Joseph Neary (2001) suggests that the Emperor had 'established legal grounds for recruiting comfort women. In enacting such an ordinance, the Emperor gave an official government seal to use comfort stations and comfort women' (125). When three Korean former comfort women filed a lawsuit against the Japanese state in 1991, 'the issue of "punishment" perplexed the Japanese, who, after the war, had never thought about responsibility for Japanese war crimes. The Japanese government continued to deny legal responsibility' (Nakahara 2015, 164). Only in 2000, after gaining international support, the Women International War Crime Tribunal (WIWCT) was held in Tokyo. Together with nine of his generals, Emperor Hirohito was convicted of 'crimes against humanity under the law then applicable' (Chinkin 2001, 337). Even though the trial's judgement ruled in favor of the comfort women, the tribunal lacked legal authority: both the Imperial family and the state did not respond to the verdict, and neither was legally obliged to do so (Chinkin 2001).

While the trial allowed space for the voices of the victims, their testimonies were cut from the program broadcasted by Japan's only public broadcasting station, Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), which supposedly provided a 'Full Pursuit of the Tribunal' (Nakahara 2015, 168). Hirohito's verdict had also been edited out, and the name of the broadcast was changed from 'Questioning Wartime Sexual Violence by the Japanese Army' to 'Questioning Wartime Violence'. According to Michiko Nakahara (2015), the negligence of the Japanese government regarding the comfort

women, and the political censorship that the media experienced during the WIWCT, summarizes the problem that the Japanese state and war remembrance in Japan have caused:

After the war, Emperor Hirohito, the sovereign and supreme commander of the Imperial Army and Navy, did not take any responsibility for the war, and any allusions to the Emperor's war responsibility have become taboo. That is why the Japanese people were not able to assess war responsibility after WWII on their own. Because the Japanese people have not faced an accurate history of the Asian Pacific War, they cannot teach younger generations about the history of war and cannot form common perceptions of history up to this point. (Nakahara 2015, 165)

The consequence of this failure to assess responsibility is illustrated by the reconciliation agreement between Japan and South Korea. The two countries created the 2015 Comfort Women Agreement to better their relations and 'to resolve outstanding issues concerning wartime sexual slavery' (Chun 2021). However, Jahyun Chun (2021) illustrates that the Korean Government has since reopened the comfort women issue as Japan does not accept the truth in their implementation of history nor apologizes to the victims. Furthermore, Japan has not officially prosecuted those involved in the perpetration even though the WIWCT put Hirohito and 9 of his generals forward as the responsible perpetrators. The 2015 Comfort Women Agreement failed to give the victims of this military sexual slavery closure, as it does not hold Japan accountable. The lack of accurate history in Japan leads to the question: if the acceptance of responsibility concerning war crimes is such a taboo, how is the war mediated in the collective memory of Japanese society?

COLLECTIVE WAR REMEMBRANCE IN JAPAN

The collective remembrance in Japan largely omits past perpetrations, such as the issue of comfort women, but also puts forward a victimized narrative. For example, Margaret Stetz (2019) underscores Japan's failure to assess war responsibility and teach it to younger generations, and states that the comfort women issue is still not 'incorporated into state-approved textbooks in Japan' (63). Instead, this aspect of history is presented 'as voluntary prostitution by well-paid sex workers' (63). In framing the military sexual slavery as voluntary prostitution, such past violations are dismissed in Japanese society, Stetz concludes. Furthermore, one of the films that is often used by teachers of Japanese middle and high schools to celebrate the 'End of the War Day' is the animated *Grave of the Fireflies* by Isao Takahata (1988). The film is based on Akiyuki Nosaka's novel of 1967 which depicts the death of his little sister as a consequence of malnutrition following the American firebombing of Tokyo in 1945. Instead of illustrating Japan's role in the

war, *Grave of the Fireflies* portrays the mass destruction and suffering caused by the Americans and the struggle of two innocent children to survive. Masako Racel (2009) states that '[d]irectly following the war, many Japanese were ashamed and remorseful for their part in the conflict. With the passage of time, however, much of the original guilt has been replaced by feelings of victimization' (58). This change in the war narrative is also evident in Japan's museums. Celsea Robinson's (2011) analysis of war remembrance in museums found that the Yushukan museum in Tokyo glorified Emperor Hirohito; 'he saved his nation and his people by ending Japan's most destructive war ever' (156). She concludes that the 'lack of direct criticism of Hirohito in any of the museums indicates something else' and asks, 'whether this is a reflection of positive public opinion of Emperor Hirohito himself, or of a taboo on direct attacks' (156).

The most recent example that illustrates the intricacies of this dominant Japanese narrative in modern-day society arose when the Ukrainian government, in light of its ongoing conflict with Russia, published a video on the 25th of April 2022, depicting Hitler and Mussolini together with Hirohito. This implies that Hirohito's war responsibility is similar to that of the two major war criminals of the European Axis (Yamaguchi 2022; McCurry 2022). Following a protest from the Japanese government, the video now circulates without Hirohito's portrait, yet 'many Japanese on social media continued to criticize the original as an insult and said Japan should stop supporting Ukraine' (Yamaguchi 2022). The uproar this video has caused in Japan once again illustrates the suppression of critique on the Emperor while also highlighting the consequences of various narratives and speculations concerning Hirohito's wartime responsibility in both national and international spheres.

Hirohito in popular culture

While there is still only a limited portrayal of the Emperor in Japanese popular culture, Hirohito is no longer considered a demi-god that cannot be looked upon. However, the lingering deep-rooted respect for him has undoubtedly influenced his current portrayal in films. For example, one of the films that portrays Hirohito is *The Emperor in August*, directed by Masato Harada (2015). The 2015 film is a remake of the 1967 *Japan's Longest Day* as directed by Kihachi Okamoto. *Japan's Longest Day* was one of the first films produced in Japan that explicitly concerned the Emperor and those surrounding him. The main difference between the two films is that Okamoto's version scarcely portrays the Emperor directly as his full body is barely ever visible and his presence is mainly *implied*, while he has a much more prominent role in the 2015 version. This change aligns with the post-war cultural development of Japan, which started to accept Hirohito as the symbolic Emperor of the people instead of an untouchable demi-god. Both films take a similar stance around the Emperor's decision to surrender following the atomic

bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the focus on the last days of the war leading up to Hirohito's famous broadcast, the films follow the chain of command of the Imperial Army and the attempted coup aimed at preventing the war from ending. Before the broadcast, military leaders posed two attempts; one at the Emperor's palace and one at the Radio station, to prevent the surrender (Otomo 2011, 65-6). Harada's remake poses a view of Hirohito as the one that is actively pursuing the surrender while the other generals strive to keep the war going. The film, therefore, portrays Hirohito as an emperor who chooses his people above his honor as he states: 'My people are suffering even as we speak' (Harada 2015, 1:34:25-1:34:31). Griseldis Kirsch (2022) argues that the portrayal of Hirohito in *The Emperor in August* is more that of a 'peace-bringer, not that of warmonger', which 'illustrates the necessity of making decisions that are in the interest of the people, even if they are against the wishes of others in positions of power' (15). While Hirohito is portrayed here as the hero that brings peace, the majority of the nation initially reacted to his broadcast of the surrender message with emotions 'ranging from shock, betrayal and a sense of loss' while few felt relief (Molasky 1999, 7). Yet, the film depicts this broadcast as the welcomed message that ends the nation's suffering.

While Hirohito's role as a hero in the surrender is portrayed in great detail, the film fails to mention actions that happened before April 1945. Kirsch, therefore, argues that even though the Emperor's war responsibility is not explicitly mentioned, the film makes clear that none of the other characters can point toward Hirohito as complicit in the prolonged continuation of the war (2022, 15-16). Especially when compared to the critique of Bix (2008; 2000), Dower (1999) and Prince Konoe, it appears that this historic drama puts forward a biased account of the Emperor. However, it also makes one wonder how—if Hirohito indeed was such a helpless figurehead—he could be the hero that demands surrender in *The Emperor in August*. According to Kirsch (2022), a similar pattern returns in other Japanese war films, as it 'is always the others, never the hero, who are tainted by guilt and responsibility. The protagonist emerges innocent, a victim of unfavorable circumstances, and the blame gets shunted around' (6). In this film, Hirohito is the one that ended the war, but all his deeds prior to April remain out of focus and out of question. It appears to be a tainted depiction of one version of history.

The framing of the Emperor as 'a victim of unfavorable circumstances' returns in the ongoing manga series *Shōwa Tennō Monogatari* that started in 2017, written by Issei Eifuku and illustrated by Junichi Nōjō. This manga bibliography represents a very similar image to *The Emperor in August*. The opening chapter of the manga focuses on MacArthur's meeting with Hirohito on the 27th of September 1945. In this private meeting without interpreters, based on MacArthur's memoirs, the manga repeats Hirohito's supposed words with which he chose to save his citizens

by taking ‘full responsibility’. This intrigues MacArthur, as he asks: ‘Was he once part of the annals of history? A monarch that, in exchange for his own life, decided to save his citizen’s...!!!’ (Eifuku and Nōjō 2017). Hirohito’s righteousness, then, leaves MacArthur to wonder, ‘[w]hat kind of life did emperor Hirohito...’ but he breaks off his question midline and instead asks: ‘What *unfortunate destiny* did he follow up until now?’ (Eifuku and Nōjō 2017, emphasis added). Here, the choice to name the life of Hirohito ‘unfortunate destiny’ suggests a sense of uncontrollable circumstances, taking away part of the Emperor’s responsibility for the way his life has turned out. This, then, removes the blame from the individual and instead points to destiny as the one reason behind all choices. Again, the Emperor is exempted from all individual guilt.

It becomes evident that the lack of accurate historical accounts concerning the war and Japan’s responsibility in the war led to the omission of all possible perpetration and blame assigned to Japan, the Imperial Army and, more specifically, the Emperor. Popular culture adds to this image through its heroization of Hirohito, posing him as the one who actively pursued Japan’s surrender, while his responsibility for any potential perpetrations is entirely neglected.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT ON MODERN-DAY JAPAN

The erasure of Japanese perpetration in the news, in children’s films, and in textbooks, illustrates the nationwide trauma that Japan experienced during and following the Second World War. This is echoed by the lacking debate concerning Hirohito’s guilt or complicity in Japanese scholarship and society. However, this erasure also illustrates the shortcomings of the American use of restorative justice in Japan: the focus on recovery after the war failed to properly address the actions of the past. Villa-Vicencio’s (2000) claim that ‘it is important to recognize that the price paid for national stability, which may include amnesty for perpetrators, can have adverse implications for the long-term stability’ seems to ring true for Japan (213). Even though the war was fought in his name, Hirohito’s position as a national moral compass complexifies the debate regarding his wartime responsibility and complicity. Subsequently, Japan’s mediation of the Emperor as a perpetrator is non-existent. The lack of a truth and reconciliation commission also illustrates that, while the assumed perpetrator has been exempted from justice, the truth to his complicity has never seen the light of day. Therefore, the narrative of Japan is one of deep suffering, which Emperor Hirohito managed to end by broadcasting his surrender on the 15th of August 1945, allowing his true war responsibility to fall into the shadows of his attempt to save his citizens from harm.

However, it is not just national stability, but also Japan's international relationships that might erode as a consequence of this erasure. This is visible in the case of South Korea, as Japan's inability to apologize for the Japanese military sexual slavery or to properly recognize the Emperor's potential role in it continues to compromise their international relationship. Similarly, Ukraine's portrayal of Hirohito as one of the major war criminals of the 20th century caused an uproar in Japan, both nationally and politically, showcasing a disconnect from the considered historical truth about their Emperor. It is precisely the coming to terms with historical events and potential perpetrations that is necessary to pose an honest account of the war so it can be taught and, in turn, incorporated into Japan's collective and cultural memory. Until then, the contrasting narratives concerning the war responsibility of both Japan as a whole and their sovereign will continue to circulate, clashing whenever they encounter one another, destabilizing the nation, and jeopardizing international relations.

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¹ The Second World War was known in Japan as the Greater East Asia War, which encompassed both the Second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945) and the war with the Allied forces between 1941 and 1945. This paper looks not only at the perpetrations committed in the Second World War but also during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the other various conflicts and conquests of the Japanese empire during that time. However, the main focus is on the consequences the perpetration during the Second World War had on international relations and the war remembrance in Japan. Hence the usage of the Second World War.

² An example of historians who have argued that he was a 'helpless figurehead' (Robinson 137) are Robert Butow in *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (1961) and Leonard Mosley's *Hirohito, Emperor of Japan* (1966). In work following Hirohito's death, other scholars refrain from the binary between complicit and helpless and instead search to explain his decisions.

³ The Imperial expansion of Japan is part of the response to the American visit of the Perry Expedition ship in 1853 and the forcefulness to open the borders for international trade. When Japan realized how far behind it was on the Imperialistic scale, it started an expansion in 1867 throughout East and south-east Asia which lasted till 1945. Japan, starting in 1931, had increased their power to expand by invading Manchuria (China). This led to the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 (Otoma 2011, 64-5).

⁴ Finding a singular definition of the concept of restorative justice is a challenge, as its usage is different in each context. Therefore, Kathleen Daly (2006) suggests that this 'lack of agreement on definition means that [restorative justice] has not one but many identities and referents; and this can create theoretical, empirical, and policy confusion' (135). Additionally, in her exploration of the limits of restorative justice, Daly suggests that it 'is a set of ideals about justice that assumes a generous, empathetic, supportive and rational human spirit' (134), and that a pure form of restorative justice, like any form of justice, cannot be achieved, but that elements of it should be incorporated whenever possible (134-135).