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Hirohito and the making of modern Japan

Living a life of isolation far from the views of the public, the personality of a divine being and the atrocious war crimes committed; Prince Hirohito was the leading discussion within Japan leading up to and following the “war to end all wars” known as World War 2. Not much is known about Hirohito his documents are protected by the Ministry of the Imperial Household. Extraordinarily little information exits to the public regarding Hirohito, most regards of him come from people working close to him. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* includes most information about Hirohito and the atypical childhood that dawned him. The Harvard Professor, Herbert P. Bix, organizes information on Hirohito in a descriptive and formal matter. From before his birth to his deathbed 44 years after World War 2. Bix describes how his attendance in the Peers’ school affected his decisions. Hirohito was the first ruler in his lineage that has received a “Hybrid” education having the Scientific ideas adopted by Western Education while maintaining the dignity of Eastern Education. Hirohito’s education, handpicked by his grandfather, Meiji, was set up for success for the completion of the Meiji Restoration. This book articulates the various aspects of Japanese culture starting from “Modern” age. Hirohito’s decisional mishaps and the events leading up to them are described and condensed. Hirohito after WWII evaded many of the war crime trials which eventually lead to his 44 years of reign after the war. Bix’s purpose of the details is to describe how much oversight Hirohito put into within his 60-year reign and involvement in the ordering in the second world war. Bix’s description of how Hirohito's involvement in many war crimes in Unit 731 and the Rape of Nanjing. Bix argues with scholars who believe Hirohito’s innocence in the Tokyo trials, and how the blame on Tōjō was the reason that Hirohito was not tried for war crimes. Although the book is structured chronologically, Bix tries to inform the reader on all aspects leading to the conflict, including details such as which teacher taught him and the political stance of said teacher. Bix also writes in a more Asian structure when presenting information, where the conflict is presented first and then information leading to the conflict second. This book is enjoyable as my choice read because although long and wordy, the book feeds my love for Asian (specifically Japanese) culture. Hirohito is a key figure in the Chronical of Asia just as Temüjin or Sun Yat-Sen, providing a significant impact in defining a Leader. Hirohito authorized attacks such as the Pearl Harbor and granted Unit 731 with chemical/biological weapons which allowed much information. However, Hirohito never became a war criminal during the Tokyo Trials and remained in reign for 44 years more years. To understand Bix’s narrative, one must have some historical background in WWII and a passion to learn. In short, Bix and his controversial perspective with its rich sources are the perfect book to read about history but not from a history textbook, the comprehensive and engaging narrative keeps one invested in the understanding of Japanese Culture and History.