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How Emperor Hirohito Escaped Persecution, A Comparison between *Emperor* (2012) and the Academic Discussion on Japanese War Guilt

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INTRODUCTION

When the mayor of Nagasaki, Hitoshi Motoshima, publicly wondered in January 1990 if emperor Hirohito was responsible for a larger role in the Second World War than often attributed to him, he was shot in the back by a nationalist.

Motoshima survived, but the example illustrates just how precarious the discussion of Hirohito and his relation with Japan's war-time actions is. Some seventy years after the end of WWII the taboo surrounding emperor's responsibility for war crimes still weighs heavily on the nation. Even though Japan has done considerable work in processing its war guilt, this process has largely spared Hirohito. In other words, there still is a considerable taboo surrounding the topic.

With this in mind it may come as some surprise that Peter Webber's film *Emperor* (2012) has been produced as a joint American and Japanese production, as it aims to make the topic more tangible in both American and Japanese popular culture. This is quite a remarkable undertaking as it addresses this question for the first time in the post-Hirohito era. Just for that reason it is well worth examining in detail just how it treats the matter at hand, and why Hirohito is not impeached or set to explain his choices in this film. For many, this particular film, being a unique venture in discussing Japanese war guilt in the Hirohito context will be an introduction to the topic, or an enforcement of existing beliefs.

For the majority of the public this film will become the dominant narrative. The major problem with this new master narrative, however, is that it may well be taken as the whole truth. After all, it claims to be based on a biography. It ends with black and white pictures of actual people, carrying the same names as the main characters, explaining how they continued their lives. These sorts of claims of being an accurate representation of reality may lead an audience to trust the film's historical accuracy. But the narrative which the film

presents may wrongly inform the viewer who forgoes critical perception and simply accepts the film as portraying the truth.

The film shows that Hirohito is not put on trial for reasons of amicability (that is, the Japanese American relationship) and lack of incriminating evidence. This incriminating evidence, though, has since turned up, especially after the emperor's death in 1989. Furthermore, the most serious problem this film may have is that it simply asserts and reinforces the myth surrounding Hirohito that was created after Japan's capitulation in 1945.

The aim of this thesis is to compare the new popular/dominant narrative found in the 2012 motion film *Emperor* with the academic discussion about the events concerning Hirohito during and after the Japanese capitulation. The aim is to establish an understanding of the film's legitimacy in claiming historical validity, which in turn attracts that part of the audience which is likely to accept this film as a way to satisfy their interest in the sequence of events surrounding the emperor and post war Japan. To develop a historical benchmark three authorities will represent the academic discussion, namely by Carol Gluck, Herbert P. Bix and Austin Hoyt. Thus the question becomes: in which ways do the film (*Hirohito* (2012)) and the academic narrative as presented by Gluck, Bix and Hoyt compare to each other?

Even though the Japanese emperor is a unique phenomenon of Japanese culture, it requires a substantial amount of analysis. To understand the question what should be done with the head of a society after it is conquered is age-old. For America Studies as larger field this research question is significant in terms of nation(re)building. This makes the film as new dominant narrative and the way it measures up against the academic understandings even more interesting.

A further justification of this thesis, besides the importance of accuracy in remembering the past lies in what this film and post-war can add to the current discourse of

nation building. America is the core nation builder of the last century, even though their efforts failed as often as they succeeded. At the time of the film's development and release, the discussion about the war in Iraq was predominant. As Barack Obama was elected, partly on the promise of American troupes leaving Iraq, his inauguration triggered a discussion on how best to proceed. After the considerable investment that America had done in Iraq, both in terms of casualties as well as in currency, a serious concern was raised whether that investment was best served by withdrawing their physical military presence. Just as President Harry S. Truman in 1946, President George W. Bush Jr had faced a choice with the political decapitation of the nation in removing Saddam Hussein. After this removal of Hussein an intense power vacuum shook and destabilized Iraq, arguably beyond the American ability to rebuild or stabilize the nation. Actions such as J. Paul Bremer's overconfidently disbanding the Iraqi armed forces certainly did not help stabilize the situation, and both showed an unjustified trust of the Americans in their own capabilities, and significant misjudgment of the importance of local intelligence (Andrews, *New York Times*).

Japan and Iraq relate to each other as they both concern what America believed to be hostile nations forced into submission, with the aid of substantial military campaigns. Both of these campaigns led to a point where it became clear that the U.S cannot perpetually maintain an artificial status of the conquered nation's helmsman. For one, both Iraqi and Japanese could not help but see America as an occupying force, where America saw itself as liberators specifically pinpointing over-dominant rulers.

On top of that, there is the major obstacle of cultural disharmony. Both in the cases of Iraq and Japan, America stepped in forcing an (arguably) unnatural development upon the nations through Americanization, believing that this would be everything the nation needed to become healthy and strong again. Even though this is a simplified and somewhat naïve way of reflecting events, it covers the large range of often well intended actions ranging from

democratization to the introduction of Coca-Cola and Pepsi cola that clashed tremendously with the cultural values of the controlled nations. Coca-Cola, in this context stands for a forced involvement in a capitalistic system on an international level. In the case of Japan this also meant a mandatory process in which the constitution was rewritten, in part drafted by Americans, followed by Japan's first open election in 1946 (Hoyt, 45 min.).

Japan stands out in this context, though, because it is one of the few nations, next to Germany and Austria, that America conquered and occupied where a successful nation(re)building program was launched. In the twelve years that passed since the invasion of Iraq the nation has not found its feet again, whereas Japan by the end of the nineteen-fifties was well into the process of reconstruction. "By the 1950s, a former enemy became a Western ally, parts of American culture became part of the Japanese landscape -- and Japan began to find its economic footing as a manufacturer consumer devices and electronics" (Taylor Web). A main pillar of that program was the way America dealt with the Japanese emperor. Thus, on a larger scale this thesis hopes to add to this discussion of American nation building, namely by closely examining this particular case and the basis for its relative success.

STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

The main body of this thesis will consist of five chapters, one giving the main plotlines of the film, and four dealing with the main themes of the film. As the film carries too many elements to discuss in a fruitful manner, a selection has to be made among these elements in order to create a structure. The choice for these themes focuses on the main actors in the story: General Bonner Fellers, emperor Hirohito, General MacArthur, and Japan as a nation. It should be understood that there is no clear divide between these themes, but it seems logical to order the film along these four lines. Each of these four can be analyzed in terms of character, aims, and challenges. With these four themes the main body should be discussed effectively, and enough ground for comparison should be encountered.

The synopsis of the plotlines in chapter one should provide ample explanations for the choice of the themes of the three following chapters. What is not incorporated in those chapters, but essential for a proper grasp of the comparison is reflected in chapter five, as most of these matters concern the same theme, namely that of the Japanese people and their culture. Within these four chapters the themes are discussed, first from the film's perspective, and then from the historic perspective. These chapters will be followed by a detailed conclusion, which both discuss the themes individually and their combined effect of the answer to the research question.

Before entering the discussion of these four themes, one should be aware of a number of factors that problematize their discussion. There is an ongoing debate of translation, both culturally and linguistically, of Asiatic texts into a Western context or language. To some scholars this is a rather precarious subject, as it touches a number of post-colonial discussions of westernizing a text that is meant to be understood in a particular language and culture. To impose a Western translation of such a text may border on imposing a Western context as dominant; dominating its original meaning which has no ground for existing in a Western context as it is not part of a Western culture. This, however, is undermined by the fact that Western culture has adapted to internalize Asian elements; a most obvious example would be Asian food such as sushi. The West deems to have an understanding of something, based on their knowledge of an adapted version of the concept. Larger Asian structures are often still foreign to the Western audience.

A second argument for translation is the ambiguity of meaning. To understand the variety of possible meanings of a word or sentence one is bound to the limits of the known languages. Spanish for instance has more tenses than English, enabling it to give details as grammatical manner rather than explicitly stating them. In a similar way Japanese as a language provides the option of carrying meaning that is very difficult to translate properly into English, making simplification necessary. It is hard for those that do not speak Japanese to gather all its dimensions, and thus grasp all the facets in an English translation.

A problem flowing from this is that of subtlety and subtext on a cultural level. It is to be understood that the Japanese culture is one of politeness and subtle ways to bring across a

message. One of the major points of discussions coming from this is the role that the emperor played at the start, the continuation and at end of the war. For instance, an often heard comment after the war was the Hirohito should have spoken out against the militaristic course his nation was taking (Behr, 36 min.) What is not understood, is that the emperor's voice is very rarely heard, based on the understanding that it is simply too pure (read divine) to be used for simple earthly matters. Japanese culture is very different from Western culture in the fact that it knows how to communicate the heaviest and most serious messages in the simplest gestures. A famous example stems from the story of Confucius, who fell from grace in the city which he regarded as home. In order to transmit the message of exile to the teacher, the lord of the land had a jade slit ring delivered to him. It may look like a gift, or a piece of jewelry, but in fact it was a *Jue* symbolizing the broken cycle of trust and service (Dawson 99). Another example is the speech that was aired by Hirohito to declare Japan's capitulation, the first time ever that his majesties voice was heard, he simple asked the Japanese "to endure the unendurable" (Bix 518). These four words ended the war, signaling the end of the endeavor for victory and the start of the process of reconstruction. This message was interpreted correctly and without question, as defeat was commonly understood to be unendurable. In other words, to look at the role that Hirohito played means assessing that gap of understanding between a Japanese shout and a Western whisper.

Another major factor is that of Hirohito's office, namely the Chrysanthemum Throne. As will become clear in the chapters concerning the Japanese Imperial throne, there is a major discussion on the power at any one time, or during different periods of this throne (Behr 4 min.). The Chrysanthemum Throne carries the claim to be descendant from the sun goddess Amaterasu, as well as to have run unbroken down to Hirohito, who was the 124th emperor of Japan (Bix 9). Although influence of this office change over time, it has always been the object of reverence, and thus of secrecy, leading to great difficulty when trying to

separate fact from fiction. Within the context of Hirohito and the war, this problem rises particular in the context of the extent in which Hirohito had the freedom to exercise power. Opinions range from little more than a ceremonial role, during WWII, which is often considered to be the accepted narrative by the Japanese themselves, to the completely all-powerful head of state as if he had actually been the head of the dragon the Americans had fought after Pearl Harbor. Though this later image is mainly the work of WWII American and Allied propaganda, it remained present for a considerable length of time. Its main argument is the way the West understands the role of an emperor from its own history, as all-powerful, dominant, and unrelenting (Bix 13). Thus this image was projected on the Japanese emperor, especially in the absence of significant sources of actual information which unfortunately endorsed both extremes. This lack of reliable information in the West has much to do with the secrecy surrounding the emperor, who, until the years after the war, has been kept from view for reasons of reverence and tradition. Much of the discussion of the extent of Hirohito's guilt is rooted in the degree to which one may believe he acted as an autonomous entity. It is within this discussion a significant part of the academic discussion is found.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

When it comes to historiography it seems that the process of recording this particular part of history is primarily focused on the American (or Allied) observation. It is an overfamiliar maxim that notes that history is written by the victor, and so it is with this case. Hirohito's point of view has largely been absent from the discussion. As the historical counterpart of the film will point out, the Americans constructed the narrative that would sustain him as emperor for the remainder of his life. In this they were greatly aided by the Japanese establishment during the occupation and reconstruction era, but even before the occupation mass destruction of (possibly) incriminating documents. Much of what was not destroyed still

remains locked away in imperial archives, and thus plays no part in the formation of history in the academic sense. This makes it very hard to look specifically at Hirohito, and reconstruct what exactly transpired.

This is one of the primary problems that this particular field suffers from. It is undermined by a great lack of trustworthy primary sources. The majority of primary sources, even now after the death of Hirohito, still has some stake in the presented narrative. Take for example General Hideki Tojo, whose statements at the Tokio Trial provided one of the major arguments for waylaying accusations against the emperor. Since then, however, it has become clear that his statements had been provided by MacArthur via Bonner Fellers in order to protect the emperor and thus save the nation from chaos. The main historical narrative is constructed by personal testimonies of men and women who had a goal in mind, and it is very hard to verify them, which in itself may lead to doubt.

Think for instance of the manner in which a small group of people was held responsible in Japan after 1946. The emperor was presented as a pacifist, and his actions have long been judged in that light. Especially when incriminating evidence was initially scarce, as in fact all evidence and record relating to Hirohito was, he seemed to have received the benefit of the doubt. After all, one has the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. However, over time proving his guilt has become a process of deduction rather than hard evidence.

It turned out during Fellers' investigation that the circles surrounding Hirohito during the war proved incredibly loyal to him and consequently had little interest in seeing a trial or even an investigation take place.

Never the less his role has led to a serious discussion. Within Japan, even today, a discussion is ongoing on the question whether or not he was involved in the leadership and thus responsible. Bix shows that outside Japan this discussion mainly focuses on the degree

of involvement: "Recently due largely to the efforts of Japanese scholars, the publication of hundreds of new documents, diaries, reminiscences and scholarly studies pertaining to him [i.e. Hirohito] during the war and post war years . . . although far too many source gaps remain, these new materials justify retelling the story of Hirohito in the century of total war" (Bix 7). In other words a shift in openness is taking place leading to a valuable reevaluation of Hirohito, and his role. Attention should still be paid to what are called source gaps: occasions on which no known information is available concerning Hirohito.

The academic discussion about this topic is divided along these lines. Two names that dominate this discussion are Herbert P. Bix and Carol Gluck. Bix is author of *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, an eight hundred-page work that aims to provide a detailed analyses of all facets of the emperors life, specifically focusing on his role in the metamorphoses of Japan from a losing party in WOII to a modern society with a healthy economy. Dating from 2001, this work is rather realistic to the extent that he holds Hirohito responsible for Japan's war crimes. However, Bix does note that, in order "to pry open Hirohito's life and assess his motives[,] one must rely on his entourage of note takers and diarists, who worked closely with him, thereby came to know him well, and have actually published their notes" (Bix 6). Even though Bix treats his sources with great care the lack of variety may lead to some concern for work carrying such significance in the field, a matter noticed by peers.

Focusing much more on the matters surrounding the role of the emperor is assigned, the degree to which he is powerful, and the manners in which he is able to wield that power, Carol Gluck provides a good angle on the elements of the discussion that is the very hardest to pin down for non-Japanese particularly, though not exclusively. One of her main feats in the field is her being editor and co-author of *Show: the Japan of Hirohito*, in which she, among others, explains the manner in which Hirohito acted out his office and the relationship

between wielding power and existence in a golden cage. Consecutively she focuses on what she calls postwar paradoxes: seeming contradictions that range from the constructions to justify Hirohito, to forced democracy and MacArthur's rice distribution plan which saved the nation from starvation (Gluck XIV). Especially the undermining of a Japanese national moral compass through the neglect of Hirohito's, and thus the nation's war guilt by the Americans is part of her discussion.

The work done in this field is subject to some extremes, due the difficulty with which data is acquired, even though that corpus is gradually getting larger. Deduction work, which relies on the amount of evidence that is available on the one hand, and information on the tradition and rituals surrounding the Chrysanthemum Throne on the other, has been key to the main body of authors, led by scholars like Bix and Gluck. In Asia though, especially in Japan itself, the local experiences of the long twentieth century also constitute an influence on the manner in which historians fill in certain gaps in the evidence and narrative. Concerning Hirohito this leads to more extreme narratives veering from dictatorial militarism on the one hand and an oblivious pacifist on the other. Even though that latter position is maintained mostly by rightist Japanese, it still is present, even within the arena of academic discussion.

In certain opposition to this faction is the Japanese scholar Yasuo Wakatsuki, who wrote *Japan's War Responsibility*, in which he was one of the first, and clearest of Japanese voices to argue that Japan was responsible for and had to cope with war guilt. To top this he included the emperor in this picture of guilt and crime, which, as that was at odds with Hirohito's divine nature, caused a certain amount of discussion. This discussion considered especially Wakatsuki's traditional Japanese notions of what one should do after being shamed. Wakatsuki writings have not been available in translation, but he has participated in one or two documentaries, one of which is used for this paper.

Shortly after Hirohito's death a process started in which the taboo was lifted. More people started speaking about their war time experiences, and documents surfaced. This led to a reevaluation among historians and to a number of publications. One of the most public manifestations of this process is the BBC/PBS documentary "Hirohito: Behind the Myth" directed by Edward Behr. It has been a controversial airing, leading to protest from the Japanese community and even a firm reaction of the Japanese government: "Foreign Ministry spokesman, Yoshifumi Matsuda, said the program, produced by the British Broadcasting Corp., is 'unfair' and ignores evidence that Hirohito tried to stop Japan from going to war" (L.A. Times). In other words, they were not very pleased with which part of history got priority in this documentary. It will, however, be the third of the main sources, containing authorities such as professor Carol Gluck from Columbia University and the prominent Japanese scholar Akira Yamada, professor at Tokyo and Nanzan, and the former mentioned Wakatsuki.

THE RELATION BETWEEN FILM AND ACADEMIC NARRATIVE

The major question surrounding this topic is the relation between the debated truth and fiction: the sequence of actual events which is then translated and set to appear on the silver screen. Of what importance is their possible diversion of the path of accurate factual representation? Well, there is the fact that the film presents their fictional or at least tweaked version of reality as a fact which misleads the audience. It does this, for example, by showing messages like "based on a true story" and showing pictures of the actual people at the end of the film. This creates the understanding that that which has just been witnessed in the film was indeed part of an actual narrative. The fact that these black and white portraits are accompanied by little texts indicating how these people lived, and what they did after the

narrative shown in the film, only adds to the illusion that these two stories are one and the same larger narrative. This in itself is fundamentally problematic.

On top of that, observation and research at this point do not provide ample reasons to believe that the film creates an image of an emperor who is spotless, in the sense that there is no evidence to incriminate him, nor is there evidence to clear his name. What does speak for the emperor in the film, though, is that he clearly had the final say in Japanese surrender. This leads to a situation in which his effort to end the war is given more attention, and thus becomes more significant than his role in the war itself. As this is the film version it will become (a major part of) the dominant popular narrative in Japan and America. However, this thesis will also show that there certainly were a number of questionable facets to Hirohito's conduct prior, during and post wartime. These situations, however, are not part of the film, as evidence lacks. The narrative in the film is the setup of the emperor as pacifist myth¹ that was created postwar in order to save the Chrysanthemum throne and thus the effort to maintain some sort of structure in a nation that was otherwise shaken, bombed and burned to rubble. This film is more likely to be named propaganda, as it portrays a fundamentally flawed, or at least highly problematic, image of a post-World War II Hirohito, rather than a truthful account of the creation of this myth. This may well explain why this film was an American Japanese co-production and was so well received in Japan.

The question this in turn gives rise to is whether the unraveling of the relation between the emperor's status and function on the one hand and the power of his cabinet and especially his military apparatus over him in turn on the other hand leads a any form of balance. Or is either more prevalent, the film seems to attribute more power to the cabinet over the emperor, yet the scholars seem to attribute more authority to Hirohito. This difficult

¹ i.e. the version of events in which Hirohito was oblivious to the overly aggressive side of the Japanese war effort, and his name misused to validate cruel acts. The line of thought maintains that Hirohito was a pacifist caught up a military undertaking over which he had no control. In this version Hirohito thus become nothing more than a figurehead for power, who is powerless himself and stands at the mercy of the military government.

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formula is rather a set of constructive arguments than a simple yes or no question. This is a question that is very much worth looking at in great detail.

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CHAPTER I, *EMPEROR* THE MOVIE

Before considering the academic historical discussion of the situation concerning Hirohito, it is crucial that a thorough understanding is constructed of the film's form and effect. After all, in order to produce a meaningful comparison it is good to have a clear view of the primary source at hand. This chapter therefore will consist of a synopsis of the film *Emperor*. The synopsis is divided into the two plotlines of the film, the historic one and the romantic one. In other words: how does the main source for this thesis relate to its subject matter? The approach of this chapter will be primarily descriptive as it offers and introduces the content to be analyzed in the following chapters.

THE PLOT OF *EMPEROR* (2012)

The plotline may be divided in two intertwined lines. On the one hand there is the unmistakable political thriller concerning the answer to the Hirohito question, and on the other hand there is the love plot that drives Bonner Fellers to search for Aya Shimada.

The first and dominant plotline concerns the Hirohito question. Basically it concerns the question whether Hirohito should, or should not be, arrested and put to trial in a Nuremberg sort of fashion. The film starts on the plane of MacArthur, 50 miles out of Tokyo. MacArthur consults Fellers on the security risks involved in his landing, and traveling into Tokyo to take over the American High Command. As the American Government is uncomfortable with the safety risks about his very slim force, he takes some hundred American troops, compared to the two thousand Japanese troops lining the route into the capital. Fellers is shown to be MacArthur's primary Japan expert. Initially Fellers is ordered to arrest the thirty class-A war criminals of Japan, in order to effectively take control of the nation and start persecution. The film shows these arrests, focusing on the main prime

minister during the war, Tojo who commits a failed attempt on his own life. MacArthur is clear that his life is only saved in order to be able to execute him at a later point. At this stage the mission changes, as MacArthur puts it. American President Truman orders MacArthur to conduct an investigation into the role of the emperor in the war against America, in order to have a quick resolution to war guilt and political unrest. Even though MacArthur and Fellers agree on the fact that the task is unfeasible, Fellers is ordered to conduct the investigation and report with a final verdict which he believes to be right for Japan. They have decided that he may be tried as a war criminal. The film at multiple intervals clearly states that the American public simply wants the emperor's head in vengeance for the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent war in the Pacific. Fellers is chosen, however, to give a balanced report with concern for Japan (and MacArthur's) interests. But the problem lies in the crushed and humiliated state of Japan, and the concern that an arrest of the emperor would set a spark to the high degree of social discontentment with the state of the Nation's affairs.

At this point a detective thriller ensues in which Fellers leads an investigation with the goal to amass proof on the role of the emperor, either incriminating him or setting him free from further persecution. Within the investigation Fellers clearly distinguishes between revenge and justice, trying very hard to focus on the latter, in spite of resentment within his own ranks. From a list of thirty-two names, now including the emperor, an investigation is started and leads Fellers to meeting a number of Japan's highest dignitaries. The first is Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe, who was replaced by Tojo right before the war started. Konoe attempts to argue that the emperor is a gentle pacifist by nature, and was drawn into the war by Tojo and his militarists. He alternatively speaks of a national delusion, or a fever that was over Japan during the war obscuring sensibility in favor of hard core nationalism. Fellers attempts to hold the emperor responsible for war crimes,

but Konoe simply explains that they followed the colonial example given by the Dutch, Americans, English and French as seen in Asia before the Japanese grew dominant. Konoe excuses Kamikazes by drawing a comparison with the two incinerated cities, Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Seemingly, Fellers accepts this explanation, but does not press further. Konoe does name Kido, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, as valuable source of information, leading to a series of attempts to start a dialogue with the imperial administration. As the court has its primary allegiance to the emperor, Fellers hopes they will hand over information out of sense of duty, which will save the emperor from incrimination. This eventually leads him to enter the Imperial palace, and meet Vice Minister Sekiya. Sekiya hands over his diary, and explains that the emperor made the highly atypical choice to speak his mind before Pearl Harbor, reciting a Tanka poem: "It is our hope that all the world's oceans be joined in peace / so why do the winds and the waves now rise up in an angry rage" (*Emperor*, 60 min.). Fellers, however, cannot use this as sufficient proof to vindicate the emperor, as an American audience will not understand it as a strong move against the attack. Soon after Fellers writes a draft which states that he, for lack of proof, cannot exonerate the emperor of war guilt.

It is at this point at which the emperor seems lost, that Kido appears at General Head Quarters. Kido is Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and one, if not the, closest advisor of Hirohito comes to Fellers in the dead of night. Instead of giving statements on the period during or before the war, he speaks of the meeting held by the Supreme Council of Japan on the night of August 9, 1945. He stated that surrender was discussed, and that a deadlock emerged between three ministers for, and three ministers against surrender. This led the emperor to making the final decision to surrender urging all present to agree with him, in spite of a begging War Minister, Anami. Kido argues that the emperor was aware of fanatics, and in order to prevent their continued efforts he recorded his wishes so as to broadcast them

directly to the people. Some thousand military fanatics attacked the imperial palace, looking for the recording, but they failed. Not being prevented the recording was aired the following morning. After Fellers presses him it becomes clear that there is no proof of these events, but Kido gives his word.

What follows is a confrontation between Fellers and MacArthur. MacArthur is disappointed that no concrete evidence is presented to him. Fellers argues that, even though this is the case, the mission of the occupation is to rebuild Japan, which cannot be done without Hirohito as leader. Eventually MacArthur relents, because there is no incriminating evidence either. MacArthur, in American fashion, demands a direct meeting with the emperor. Remarkably this meeting comes to pass, resulting in the well-known picture of Hirohito and MacArthur together in the American Embassy. The meeting is the end of the film, and the start of cooperation between MacArthur and Hirohito.

The second plot-line that runs through the movie is that of the romantic relationship between Fellers and Aya Shimada. When Fellers arrives in Japan his first order to his driver is not to chauffeur him, but conduct an investigation into the whereabouts of Aya. This leads Fellers on a search for Aya, which intersects with the Political plot-line. It becomes clear however that Aya has perished in American bombings of her area of residence. Upon learning this, Fellers goes to call again on her uncle who speaks of his own war guilt, but also shows him the letters that Aya wrote to answer his but were never sent. It ends with Fellers burning incense at the family house shrine in her honor.

As Aya is no longer alive in 1945, therefor the film is interspersed by flashbacks, elaborating on their relationship. The first, early in the film, shows their first meeting at Douglaston College in 1932. Aya is portrayed as a conservative girl, even though she claims to be too outspoken for Japanese ways. She clearly disapproves of the party Fellers has taken her to.

A second flashback shows Fellers visiting Aya just before the war in 1940 when he got an assignment in Japan. Fellers meets her in public in front of the school in Tokyo where she teaches English, which embarrasses her. The head of the school threatens to call the police if he does not go away, forcing her to talk to him. She explains that she promised her father that she would never marry an American, and that he died, causing her to leave America abruptly.

The third flashback is set after Aya is finished teaching English for the day. As they meet outside the school, kids in uniforms throw rocks at Fellers. Aya explains how they are caught in militarist propaganda, teaching them the hate foreigners. The following scene starts with her cleaning his head-wound, and ends in a love-sequence.

The fifth flashback shows Fellers at Aya's apartments, attempting to write a paper. By now it is clear that he is out on a scouting mission, writing a paper on the mind of the Japanese soldier. Aya proposes that they may visit her uncle, a general, who may be able to give him insight. They travel by train, and the sequences show clearly what militarized state Japan has become. Soldiers and uniforms are everywhere. A warm welcome becomes a formal welcome when Fellers comes to the house, but the Uncle, who says to have served two years at the Embassy in Washington, seems calm. The general and Fellers speak of American and Japanese culture and politics.

The last flashback shows Aya's uncle waking Fellers up, telling him it is time to go as they are rounding up Americans. He warns that their two nations will soon be at war. It becomes an emotional scene of separation and the last time they see each other.

CONCLUSION

Webber's *Emperor* has two plotlines, working together to deal with four particular streams of character. All scenes in the film may be attributed to either one or two of these characters, clarifying or problematizing their persona. These four elements are: Bonner Fellers, Hirohito, MacArthur and the Japanese People. These four are clearly presented as the main parts, together constituting the majority of the narrative. It is for this reason that the following four chapters will deal with these characters on an individual basis by comparing their presence in the film with their presence in the historical discussion. By following this format the film is deconstructed in order to test its individual parts, rather than test the film in its entirety, which would be too large a subject for direct comparison.

CHAPTER II, BRIGADIER GENERAL BONNER FELLERS

Brigadier General Bonner Fellers is the first of the characters that comes up for analysis. His character is the main character of the film. Therefore it is important to question how Fellers is portrayed in the film, and how he appears in the historical debates. The chapter will end with a brief conclusion; a detailed conclusion will be given in the concluding chapter.

Only two minutes into the film Bonner Fellers states, in soliloquy, "I fear that the Japan I fell in love with is scared beyond recognition" (*Emperor*, 2 min.). These words, among the first he speaks, illustrate one of his key characteristics. Fellers is a very interesting character. He is part of the army, yet he seems to occupy a much more scholarly role rather than a military one. The audience, for instance, is shown a flashback of his time in college. Even though he not afraid to act, and is basically attributed a serious role in the saving of the Japanese Imperial institution ("his Majesty says that it is a privilege to meet you, Fellers, and he thanks you for your service to Japan" (*Emperor*, 93 min.)), he is often shown thinking whilst smoking. A serious contrast with the push and pull military characteristics one might expect of an army officer. What is typically American about Fellers is his fear that Communism may rise among the ruins of Japan, it something he sees as a threat and his superiors know it. "Fighting off the communists is the plight of our times" (*Emperor*, 13 min.), Fellers remarks in 1945 while the ruins of Berlin and Tokyo still smolder. It is a remarkable choice of threat, considering the Russians just helped play a vital role in defeating the Nazis.

One thing that repeatedly surfaces, throughout the film, is the way Fellers is apologetic. Repeatedly he defends Japanese' people, customs and oddities before his fellow officers and superior. Just after rounding up the class-A classified war criminals Fellers walks back into headquarters with fellow officer Richter, who ridicules former Prime Minister Tojo for a failed attempt at suicide:

"Shoots himself in the chest and misses his heart. What was he mumbling?"

"He was apologizing for taking so long to die"

"These people are barbaric"

"They have different ideas of honor" (*Emperor*, 12 min.).

It is a dialogue from which a few things speak clearly. To start, and hard to quote, there is the disdain with which Richter speaks of Tojo's actions. It may be because he has experience with Japanese on the battlefield, or that other experiences are meant to play a part in these remarks, but they are meant to classify the Japanese as a lesser civilization. In a sense it may be considered brave that Fellers is willing to defend Tojo, and Japanese customs before a fellow officer. Especially set in this time it is certainly not a popular opinion. Add to this that Tojo mumbled in Japanese, which Fellers understands. He took the effort to learn the language, even if it concerned only the rudimentary, but therefore can engage in the culture. Later in that same scene they join MacArthur who explains to the two of them, Fellers and Richter, that the mission has changed and is now to conduct a ten day investigation into the emperor's role in the war. Fellers reacts: "ten days, that is not feasible sir" to which Richter replies: "But isn't there a consensus already, sir? The whole world wants the emperor damned to hell" (*Emperor*, 11 min.). It shows the stark contrast of intention between Richter and Fellers, but it also symbolizes the contrast between Fellers who is willing to learn, wanting to know both sides of the story and a majority of people who have made up their mind after the war. However, the war in the Pacific in general and Pearl Harbor specifically offered plenty of opportunities to indeed make a sweeping statement and judge all Japanese as one, especially from a military perspective. After all, Japan at the time was a military nation engaged in a total war. Fellers seems remarkably reasonable under the circumstances.

In contrast to his apologetics it is not beyond Fellers to be critical towards the Japanese. After Kido made the effort to come to the American headquarters and tell the story

of the night Japan capitulated, a sensitive subject, and a brave act of Hirohito's right hand man, Fellers simply tell him that he needs proof that it happened as Kido relates events. It is a question that may be considered rude in its directness, and Kido answers that he can only give his word as evidence has been destroyed. Fellers' direct way among Japanese is also seen in his interview with Konoe. Konoe is not put off, but eventually reacts offensively to Fellers stern approach to questioning. "He [Hirohito] gave permission for Pearl Harbor," "So he does bear responsibility for starting the war? "Millions of people died in his name. Atrocities were committed every day as he expanded his empire, invading, conquering, decimating" (*Emperor* 23, 25, 27 min.). Fellers acts, and shows the burden of knowledge of both the Japanese and the American atrocities. This last is shown by the diligent way he takes Konoe's three minute long speech on the way Western Imperialism preceded Japanese expansion "see general, we are simply following your fine example" (*Emperor*, 28 min.). Though, it seems that his directness is mainly fueled by the desire to save the emperor, convinced that this is best for Japan. Frustration with Japan's closed ways plays a visible role in this, as he feels the Japanese do not support him effective enough in his efforts to save Hirohito from persecution.

Fellers, however, displays an ongoing struggle between his interest and affection for the Japanese culture and his American stubbornness. An interesting example is the way that he ignores what he knows are the Japanese ways of doing things. Upon entering Konoe's room he keeps his shoes on for instance, a very surprising act. Taking one's shoes off where this is logical, and it is logical in most of Asia, is a very small act which shows respect and grace. Yet Fellers neglects it. Another example is found upon Kido's arrival at headquarters, even though he tries to make him feel at ease, instead of returning a customary bow Fellers extends his hand in a gesture of greeting. In fact Fellers is rarely seen bowing even though he meets a number of officials and dignitaries. The most specific

exception to this habit is reception of the emperor before leading him to MacArthur. This exception may well be made because of genuine respect for the emperor, but it may also be argued that it is because it is his formal function as representative of the American Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces that forces him to. Another example is Fellers' habit to go out on foot in Tokyo at night, mingling with the Japanese. As part of this habit he repeatedly ends up in native Japanese cafes. On one occasion, 63 minutes into the film, he gets into a brawl with three men, in spite of policies of politeness. These examples show the shadow side of Fellers' extended interest and respect for the Japanese culture, namely the facets that clash with his American values. Even though he is aware of the proper Japanese way to do things he specifically chooses to do things in an American fashion, remembering that that is where his identity lies. He does not attempt to become a Caucasian Japanese, which is a very interesting choice, as often an interest or strong affection for a culture as contrasting as the Japanese comes with a resentment for the native culture.

FELLERS IN HISTORY

Fellers' role in the exoneration of Hirohito of any traces of war crimes, or even guilt, is an enormous subject. Surprisingly his role is larger and more cunning than the film may lead its audience to believe, on top of already being part of the larger operation of the occupation, which a viewer might almost forget in the film. Fellers himself runs the effort to exonerate the emperor: an image appears of Fellers as a calculating and cunning man.

Some attention may be given to *Memorandum to the Commander-In-Chief*, MacArthur, written by Fellers on October 2, 1945. Parts of this memorandum are quoted in the film such as: "it is a fundamental American concept that the people of any nation have the inherent right to choose their own government. Were the Japanese given this opportunity, they would select the emperor as the symbolic head of state" (Fellers 1). In the film this seems an extension of American ideals, but in its historical context it becomes a clever piece

of rhetoric. The combination of democracy leading to a symbolic head of state is a rather striking construction. That Fellers acknowledges the fundamental right to choose a government is all very well, but the problem is that he is part of a military occupation force. However, the same memorandum also notes: "it would be sacrilege to entertain the idea that the emperor is on a level with the people or any governmental official. To try him as a war criminal would not only be blasphemous but a denial of spiritual freedom" (Fellers 1). If there was any question to how highly Fellers would take this, it might be time to note that Fellers was a member of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers. He had a thorough notion of the importance of freedom of religion and an absence of governmental interference. With this argument in hand nobody could argue for persecution infringing the religious of a nation, the most advanced in Asia. In short, that would be a problem that should be avoided.

It is Herbert P. Bix' Pulitzer Prize winning book *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, sheds light on the hunt for proof that the film shows. Contrary to the claim of the film, that only ten days were on hand to conduct an investigation, Bix is clear that he had about five months, and contrary to the fact that he only spoke to a handful of dignitaries he conducted private interrogations of some forty Japanese war leaders, many of which with a class of war criminal status (583). Undoubtedly these interviews originally had the intention to gain understanding of the course of events of war-leadership, but eventually the aim started shifting. "Fellers' activities placed all the major war criminal suspects on alert as to the specific concerns, and allowed them to coordinate their stories so that the emperor would be spared from indictment" (583). If there were doubts of the devotion of the Japanese people towards their emperor, this should prove a powerful medicine. It is as if Fellers shows these men, many of whom would face the death sentence, how they could sacrifice their life for the emperor within the Western judiciary system. Whether one would commit seppuku in shame

upon the defeat of Japan after the ordered capitulation, or be offered to give one's life still in service to the emperor whether it was by facing a death sentence or a considerable length of time in jail, it would not have been a hard choice. But it was not an easy burden to bear the shame for a man like Tojo. It was an odd defying attempt to save the imperial throne, as one wrong statement of any of these leaders would lead to a collapse of the intricate lie.

The prosecuting attorneys were developing evidence to be used in trying these people, Fellers was inadvertently helping them. Soon the prosecuting attorneys found the war leaders all saying virtually the same thing. The emperor had acted heroically and single-handedly to end the war (583).

Now that may sound familiar, because it is basically what Fellers is told about his majesty the emperor by Marquis Koichi Kido, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. This brings up a problematic point, namely that the film about Fellers is an (unintended) extension of the master narrative that he helped to create. Nothing in the film seems to indicate that this is a construction of truth, yet historical evidence seems to suggest that it is. It may be a rare occurrence, but truth is actually stranger than fiction.

Just to indicate the lengths to which Fellers was willing to go, and went, to protect the emperor and maintain his version of reality, this example may be considered. On March 6, 1946, a situation arose in which a number of Allied nations, specifically Russia, were pushing for persecution of Hirohito. Russia, defeated in the Japanese-Russian war by 1905, was still not quite over the humiliation of being the first European power to be defeated by a non-European power. Now that they were on the winning side they wished to coin their success by settling old debts. When Fellers was made aware of the situation, and the possible danger that it may have produced, he was quoted as saying the following:

to counter this situation, it would be most convenient if the Japanese side could prove to us that the emperor is completely blameless. I think the forthcoming trails offer the best opportunity to do that. Tojo, in particular, should be made to bear all responsibility at his trial. In other words, I want Tojo to say as follows: 'at the imperial conference prior to the start of the war, I had already decided to push for war even if his majesty the emperor was against going to war with the United States' (584).

Seeing his work under pressure led to this extraordinary quote, an example of Fellers directly dictating what the most prolific of the Japanese war leaders on trial should say at his own trial. Nothing was left to chance in order to assure success. It is clear that Fellers believed that the emperor should be saved from persecution, and to ensure thus he knew no bounds. It is not surprising that the opinions on his conduct range from admiration of his zeal and courage, to pure disgust at his continued and very intricate labors of manipulation.

A few words remain to be said on the plotline concerning Fellers. The actual love story is not merely a fabricated scheme to propel the plot. In fact there are known letters from Fellers to a fellow college student that suggest a relationship of some intimacy. However, he was married at the time to an American woman. So that might have complicated things. It may be deduced that this may have sparked, or at least intensified an interest in the Japanese culture through his interest in his fellow student. It may be argued that Webber is rather optimistic to state that the relation "has some roots in history" (*Vérité Magazine*, 4,5 min.). It may be understood that the love plot-line is a very significant part of the film, which may well be understood as a symbol of Feller's love for a personification of Japan.

CONCLUSION

In the film Fellers is presented as a contemplating, almost brooding, character who is burdened with an impossible task. This attitude makes him the more logical, calm and slightly more realistic counterpart of MacArthur, at least as far as the American Military is concerned in the film. Fellers task to investigate the emperor soon seems to turn into a quest to save the emperor, in spite of low levels of cooperation from the Japanese side. Even though the film shows Fellers as being aware of Japanese customs, it makes an effort not to show him as wanting to trade his American identity for a Japanese identity. Fellers thus remaining an American, and not losing himself to Japan in the process, leaves no question that he believes that the line of actions that he undertakes is in primary service to America, and in secondary service to Japan.

Historians seem to be of the opinion that Fellers was a much more determined and cunning character than the films shows. They show how he, having months for his investigation, rather than days, he sets out not to have an investigation but rather to create a scheme to protect the emperor. Fellers is shown to act with religious zeal, trying to relieve the emperor from any form of allegation by strategically placing his senior officers and dignitaries in the line of judicial fire to the end of absolving the head of the nation. In order to procure this result, he is obliged to work closely with MacArthur, as well as to work in relative secrecy, while being aware of the fact that his convictions were highly controversial in this post war era.

CHAPTER III, HIS MAJESTY EMPEROR HIROHITO OF JAPAN

Emperor Hirohito is easily taken as the main focus of the film, and the film certainly revolves around him and his function to a great extent. However, he does not appear till the very end of the film. Until that time he is only spoken of by Japanese dignitaries and Americans who grapple with his function and effect on the nation. The question this chapter sets out to explore is: what is the role that Hirohito is given to play in the film and to which lengths does that measure up with or contrast to the way that he is remembered by historians?

The emperor's role in the war is primarily defined by the question whether he is to be charged with war crimes among the thirty or so established class-A war criminals. What is noteworthy in the progression of this film is the fact that the charges against Hirohito remain very abstract. With those abstract charges it is not surprising that evidence is hard to amass. MacArthur defines it as investigating the emperor for war crimes (*Emperor*, 12 min.). Generically speaking it seems that the American people seem to want blood in retribution for Pearl Harbor specifically, and the Pacific War in general. Fellers, however, does not make any specific allegations other than the list before Konoe: millions dying in his name, undefined atrocities, empirical expansion, kamikazes. It seems the film does little, in comparison to history, to incriminate the emperor.

What the film does show, at great length, is the way Hirohito is respected and revered. The custom to turn away if the emperor passes in convoy is shown in the film repeatedly. When MacArthur drives into Tokyo, Japanese troops line the road, turning on heel as the car passes. Fellers explains: "they avert their gaze for the emperor too, sir. They are paying you the ultimate respect" (*Emperor*, 6 min.). A symbol of reverence for Hirohito is also seen in the way the Imperial Palace is a last stronghold of Imperial autonomy, even when the Americans take over after capitulation. Fellers is only grudgingly allowed in, and it is made

clear on occasion that he "can't just walk in there. The Imperial Guards are trained to defend the grounds to the death" (*Emperor*, 54 min.).

Besides these forms of respect, there is the repeated show of the emperor's bravery in the face of a web of power. The Japanese Supreme Council is an example of this web. Consisting of five ministers, the chairman and the emperor, it is the leading organ of the Japanese state. It seems custom, though, for Hirohito not to speak at their meetings making him more or less honor bound to agree with their decisions. This means that his ministers have a serious amount of power. An example of this is seen after the supreme council meeting has discussed surrender, in which Hirohito presses surrender and is followed by a Japanese military attack on the Imperial Palace. This attack is a key moment, in which it is very clear that there are powers in the Japanese ruling order that are willing to bypass the emperor if he blatantly disagrees with them. Portraying events in this fashion makes moments of Imperial outspokenness all the more brave. One of these moments of outspokenness (be it by Japanese standards) is related by Vice Minister Teizaburo Kekiya, who speaks of the emperor at a meeting before Pearl Harbor reciting a tanka poem written by his grandfather emperor Meiji: "It is our hope that all the world's oceans be joined in peace. So why do the wind and the waves now rise up in an angry rage?" to which Fellers reacts that it is not a strong vindication of the emperor (*Emperor*, 58 min.). Well, the interpretations, as well as the translations, vary, but the film may suggest otherwise. It clearly shows that Fellers' decision to break the silence is remarkable. The poem may be interpreted as a paradox, if there are mutual interests of peace between Americans and Japanese then why do the dark clouds of war gather? In other words, there seems to be a need for harmony instead of war. Admittedly in Western context this does not sound grand, but the film is a continuous discussion on the conundrum of bringing West and East together into a productive conversation. Do note that the film argues that productive conversation would not take place, if it were not for the

decisive vote of Hirohito at the Supreme Council meeting discussing surrender on August 9 as related by Koichi Kido, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. He quotes the emperor at this occasion and also breaks tradition by stating: "I trust the Allies. I want to accept their terms. I wish you all to agree with me" after which he ended the discussion by leaving and thus ended the meeting (*Emperor*, min 71). Hirohito is said to understand that the military fanatics may defy him on this point, but he still ventured to press for surrender.

The strongest portrayal of the emperor is not given in his absence, but when he finally comes into view, after MacArthur demands a meeting. Accepting the hospitality of a foreigner for one is a statement in and of itself. But Hirohito goes further than that. Upon arrival he thanks Fellers for his services to the friendship between America and Japan. Even though MacArthur has been explained protocol at length, he insists on a picture as soon as he and Hirohito meet. MacArthur extends his hand and they shake. MacArthur also insists on a private meeting. Repeatedly courtiers protest, but Hirohito silences them and proceeds. It shows how he is willing to come to terms with the requirements set by the Americans in pursuit of the promise of peace, in spite of what might historically be deemed offensive or derogatory. When seated, Hirohito rises again and recites words in English that he has clearly learned by heart: "I come to you, General MacArthur, to offer myself as the one to bear sole responsibility. I wish that the punishment will fall on me, not Japan" (*Emperor*, 95 min.). It is a grand and strong gesture by Eastern and Western standards. Western society especially as the notion of sacrifice is ingrained deeply throughout Judeo-Christian traditions. It shows character. Upon this point the tension is broken, as MacArthur announces that punishment is not the point, and announces instead that he needs Hirohito's help to get "Japan back on its feet" (*Emperor*, 97 min.). The only consequence of this help is shown at the end of the film, as it announces that Hirohito renounced his godly status, and ruled till his death in 1989.

HIROHITO IN HISTORIC CONTEXT

If Hirohito as portrayed in the film is part of the myth of the singlehanded ending of the war, what was truly his function? The problem is that his actions at that particular meeting of the Japanese Supreme Council on August 9 1945 are simply unverifiable. It may very well be that he spoke up, it may also be a complete construction, but the campaign Fellers launched affected all who could testify. This seriously endangers their credibility, in spite of their belief to do what is best. Thus an historic assessment of the emperor, in contrast to the film, needs to contain the following: the way in which the emperor was used, his powerbases, and his war crimes.

Scholar Yasuo Wakatsuki holds the emperor fully responsible for his war crimes, "because the emperor had absolute power and authority" (Behr, 3 min.). This statement gives outing to one of the main views on Hirohito's responsibility. In the film Fuller is confronted with a similar opinion: "he is the emperor, sir, he could do whatever he wanted" but Fellers argues that "it is an intricate web of power surrounding the emperor; the Chrysanthemum Throne is a mystery, even unto itself" (*Emperor*, 33 min.). It is familiar construct, pleading that the emperor was beyond intrigue. But it does have a hint of truth, the very few that actually knew the way the emperor's power functioned, had very little incentive to make these circumstances known, even to a clear defender of the throne like Fellers. Thus the mystery can only be unraveled by deduction, or as Carol Gluck notes: "the Japanese military system was very complex, very contradictory, it's a messy system. Prime ministers are not selected by parliament, they are appointed [by the emperor]. So you have a system that is not geared to react in a straight line, the emperor is a part of that mess; he is part of that complexity in the thicket of things" (Behr, 4 min.). An image seems to appear of Hirohito in power, to select his PM for instance, yet distributing his power to his underlings to wield it as it is not part of his status to wield (earthly) power directly.

This leads to a system in which the emperor is powerful in his ability to distribute power, but depended on the ones that wield it in his name. To the Western eye this structure should not be unfamiliar. It is a traditional problem with the feudal system, the balance between dependency on the lord for license, and the dependence on knights for a complex mix of exercising power and maintaining the structure that upholds the lord. Thus to say that the emperor is all-powerful is both right and wrong, in true Japanese fashion. It is right in the sense that all Japanese would bend to the will of the emperor, but wrong in the sense that it is uncustomary to make his will known directly and thus dependent on those that ruled in his name. It is incredibly important to understand this distinction. It explains how Hirohito's court could become part of a nationalist emperor cult that led Japanese troops to refrain from ever doubting the orders that they were given. In name there were following the emperor into battle, but in reality it were his knights that wielded power in his name. Thus it becomes very hard to understand if, and to what degree the emperor could have done things differently, as he is traditionally regarded as a non-acting entity, "he did not do things. If you say that the emperor refused to court-martial, or the emperor decided to cover it up, you are missing the shadow and the veil in-between" (Behr, 8 min.). So this power relation is very hard to pin down, as there is a constantly shifting input leading to action. It is as if the power wielders, and the emperor are the two heads of the same body, the body acts but it is uncertain where the action originates. Now an educated guess would be that Fellers and even MacArthur understood enough of this system to put it to use.

Before entertaining that notion, which is part of the comparison concerning General MacArthur to be found in the next chapter, it is valuable to assess the actions that may constitute war crimes by Hirohito himself. To start, as Fellers mentioned in the film, there is the fact that millions committed atrocities, killed, and died in his name. This argument carried tremendous weight among Allied governments, and especially among the citizens of the

Allied nations who often suffered directly under these actions. The distinction discussed above, however, seems to make it very hard to attribute this directly to the emperor. If this is the case, what then may be argued to be his direct misdoing for which he may be held accountable in retrospect? Well, historically the emperor had the choice to lead a sheltered life away from the public eye and unconcerned with the day to day reality of running the nation. The Edo period is a strong example of this. During this period, which ran from 1603 to 1868 the direct leadership of Japan was held by the shogunate, who recognized the emperor as higher authority only in name, or as Kosaka puts it “before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan was governed by two rulers – the emperor, essentially a spiritual authority. And the shogun, holding political power” (Gluck 38). The shogun was a military leader, exercising his rule through an incredibly strict social structure which was feudal in nature. This considered, it would not have been a complete surprise if the emperor had relented to the militaristic extremists and withdrawn from the scene. However, the Meiji Restoration balances this, as it was the end of the shogun era, when power was invested in Emperor Meiji, Hirohito’s grandfather. So there is character and authority in the title as well: "in private, his defenders argue, he was strictly opposed to the war being fought in his name, but in public appearances was increasingly that of a military leader. The emperor also performed sacred rituals encouraging his troops' efforts, reinforcing propaganda which framed it as a holy war" (*Emperor*, 9 min.). These sorts of actions may well be interpreted as not particularly necessary in historical perspective, and may have made the war more aggressive, adding religious zeal to the highly nationalistic temperament of the Japanese troops.

The problem is, however, that there are more incriminating actions. As Wakatsuki, and likeminded scholars argue: he was simply the head of state and thus responsible for the actions of that state (Behr, 3 min.). If he did not know of the atrocities that happened in Manchuria, or the crimes in Indonesia, then he should have simply made it his business to

know. Crimes ranging from large scale forced prostitution, forced labor, maltreatment and torture of prisoner of war as well as incarcerated civilians, calls to defend the country to the last soul, and the repeated efforts to win a lost war leaving the nation in ruins. If, upon learning of these events, he would have encountered actions that he could not lend his name to he should have acted. It is a straightforward line of argumentation that is hard to disagree with, but it is doubtful whether Hirohito could have halted the momentum of the war train that carried his name. The puzzling fact is that Hirohito later pleads it was passivism he adopted at heart, which simply does not aligns with his actions. Behr's documentary argues that even as the tide had turn in 1944, and the Japanese were clearly losing control of the air and seas the emperor "after Tojo's resignation the war entered what for Japan was its bloodiest faze, the emperor demanded renewed tenacity to smash our enemies evil purposes. Up to 230.000 Japanese people died in Okinawa" (24 min.). Reality, Behr seems to argue in his documentary, should have been accepted by Hirohito's government, which may have spared vast numbers of casualties on both sides. The rallying cries of the emperor seem misplaced, especially from a retrospective vantage point. As if a father would encourages his children to fight a battle that cannot be won on the pains of death, it is morally questionable. Granted, up to a degree this could be explained by cultural difference, complex understandings of shame over defeat et cetera, but for a pacifist at heart these things surely matter less than the collective butchering that the war had turned into even before Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Behr also reports that the suicidal air units, or Kamikaze were deployed after approval by Hirohito, one of which, Kenichiro Oonuki, states: "we thought it was ridiculous. Nobody wanted to do it. We were about to write a submission when someone said: hang on, dare we actually write that we don't want to do it? The fact is nobody was willing to die, I can testify of that firmly. Who would be willing? Who would smile and commit suicide?" (27 min.). The disregard for value of life that speak from the approval of such a desperate course

of action cannot but raise questions in a Western context, and increasingly so in the East. This applies especially if fear was a common factor among troops. The sacrifice came to no avail, as at this stage it was clear that the war was coming to its end. What remained of the air force, however, was deployed on kamikaze missions. Japanese soldier from 1943 to 1945, Hitoshi Motoshima asks: "why didn't the emperor abdicate? Take the kamikaze mission... Killing young, talented men. For what?" and authority Akira Yamada, is much more clear: "quitting was nowhere near enough. He should have committed harikiri" (Behr, 32 min.). Yet, instead of taking action upon defeat Hirohito stayed put upon surrender, as a problem left to be resolved by General MacArthur.

CONCLUSION

In the film Hirohito is one of a particular contrast. Even though the film is named after his function, he himself is a shadow for the first half of the film. He is spoken of, and discussed almost continuously, yet he fails to appear on stage. His role in the war is alternately described as that of the leading figure by the American public, but mainly as the pacifist head of state, who was swept away in the currents of war. The film is frank with its claim that the end of the war is Hirohito's personal achievement, fought for within his war cabinet. Hirohito's generals and officials structurally describe him as brave and valiant in his efforts both to avoid war, and later to end it. However, as a Western audience it is hard to measure the manner in which he is brave according to Japanese cultural standards.

Historians, however, present an image in which this is shown to be a rather questionable sequence of events. They show that Hirohito never was seriously investigated. What was investigated were manners in which to keep him out of harm's way, resulting in the narrative the film retells as historically accurate. Thus the film fails to produce or recount the things that Hirohito may be responsible for, namely the atrocities that were committed during the war years in his name. That list of atrocities is almost impossible to recount in full,

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and recognition of it is a very difficult subject in Japan to this day. Historians convincingly argue that Hirohito was a much more controversial figure than the film shows him to be.

CHAPTER IV, GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR

T hird up for investigation is General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Powers. He is invested with the largest body of authority within the film's narrative, and arguably within the historic narrative as well. In his function as general over the nation of Japan, how does the film portray MacArthur, and does or does that not agree with the points that Historians prioritize?

MacArthur is portrayed as a boisterous figure that embodies the American stubbornness and bluntness that set them off so strongly against the Japanese. He and Hirohito both contend for the title of the film, because both are emperors in their own right. Initially it seems that MacArthur's role in the film is one of comic relief rather than one of historical purpose. His one-liners seem pretty straightforward. A good example of this is found in the short speech that he gives before he and his staff get off the airplane in Tokyo:

Gentlemen, we will take no weapons with us when we step off this airplane. Nothing will impress them more than a show of absolute fearlessness. If they don't know they're licked by now, they will get the picture today. Now, let's show them some good old-fashioned American swagger (*Emperor*, 5 min.).

It is a key quote. He is there to make an impression, he comes out of the airplane wearing aviator sunglasses, shining with brass, and donning a big corn-cob pipe. It is about as foreign as the Japanese can imagine. His speech also gives a sense of wanting to show, and be dominant over the capitulated nation. Especially the use of a word like 'licked' shows his disregard for convention and his self-confidence. Yet in spite of these characteristic traits, he does address the company as gentlemen, understanding himself to be one as well. When MacArthur is told at a later stage that former PM Tojo has shot himself he reacts that that is

an unacceptable situation, but when he is told that he is still alive he barks: "do not let that son of a bitch die before we get a chance to hang him" (*Emperor*, 11 min.). It is such a ridiculous statement, but he seems completely unaware of the fact that he has said something strange.

Next to barking slightly unusual remarks concerning unusual situations there is a more serious situation with which MacArthur is burdened. The film revolves around an investigation into Hirohito that is meant to produce a constructive way out of the demanded criminal charges. That is, because Washington has given him the opportunity to persecute Hirohito he is obliged to give proper argumentation if he abstains from doing so. In other words he will bear the brunt whether he decides to persecute or not, and this responsibility weighs on him because he understands that it is a rather impossible choice. This is the reason that he shifts this responsibility on toward Fellers, of whom he assumes to receive an advice sparing the emperor. "There is a strong consensus about the fate of the emperor, but it doesn't mean shit to me. I won't be bullied by those cretins in Washington. My mission is to rebuild Japan (*Emperor*, 12 min.). Thus he is the independent, (self) righteous American hero. That does not mean that there is no other reason that keeps him from persecutions: if I arrest the emperor, I'll face mass suicides, possibly open revolt. If I put him on trial, I could be setting a spark to a powder keg" (*Emperor*, 12 min.). In other words, the possession of their emperor is what little pride has been left to a naturally stubborn and proud people that are not too shy to commit suicide. MacArthur is stuck between Washington's demands and Tokyo reality.

The reason MacArthur takes this so seriously is because he is ambitious in the Shakespearean manner. He wants to show the American people that he is more than fit to run a nation, even if it is such a devastated position as Japan. What is more, he wishes to display that he knows better than the current Washington administration. Yet even though he is

ambitious he has a rather low opinion of the voter: "But Washington wants vengeance on the emperor, because their voters do, and their voters have no fucking idea what's good for them. If the emperor goes, the Reds will enter" (*Emperor*, 12 min.). MacArthur seems very convinced that he is not only the right person; he is the only one with clear vision. He does not seem to have a lack of self-confidence. This leads to a remark such as "I intend to make Japan the world's greatest experiment in the liberation of a people from military rule" (*Emperor*, 37 min.). Granted, it is this sentence that pinpoints the value of this particular narrative at the time it came out, and it is a brave thing to say because it was a monumental task he shouldered: Japan was in ruins, its economy was in tatters, and the people were starving. However, it is not a very subtle remark. Fellers is warned of this by a man in MacArthur's staff: "You know, he's playing you, General. MacArthur, like a fiddle. MacArthur believes in honor. And glory. His own, of course, at your expense. He wants to save Hirohito, but he needs you to do it" (*Emperor*, 38 min.). MacArthur intends to run for president, hence the large amount of pictures, hence the experiment. Saving Hirohito though is a tough sell to the voter, and could endanger his career and his campaign at a later stage, and therefore he appoints Fellers: "if MacArthur finds a way to save Hirohito and blame it on you he'll do it" (*Emperor*, 39 min.). A noteworthy detail is the plaster bust that Fellers passes as he leaves the American embassy; it is a bust of Julius Caesar.

MACARTHUR IN HISTORY

Knowing the sequence of events and the refusal to surrender until Japan was completely destroyed, the words of Bix seem unbelievable: "no official U.S. document unearthed so far has indicated that MacArthur or his staff investigated the emperor for war crimes. What they investigated were ways to protect Hirohito from the war crimes trial" (567). September 18 1945, however, saw the United States Senate vote unanimously in favor of the persecution

of the Japanese emperor. These two facts seem so contradictory, yet the man who brought them together was held in such high esteem.

The film makes certain implicit claims on the eccentric character which he was. It seems a cliché, but it sometimes seems that wars call for individuals with character, like Patton and MacArthur. The problems they caused their superiors with their lack of grace sometimes came close to hindering their achievements. The film is quite clear about this, and his eccentric quotes seem reasonably in line with the person he was in real life. The film's director, Webber notes in an interview: "emperor, the title, has a dual meaning in a way because obviously it is about Hirohito. But we hardly see Hirohito. The real emperor is MacArthur. In fact they called him Gai-Jin Shogun; the foreign emperor" (Vérité Magazine, 9 min.). These words carry some historic accuracy even though Webber mistranslated Shogun here, as it signifies the highest ranking military commander under the emperor. Traditionally this term is associated with the Edo-period, in which the Shogun ruled the nation recognizing the emperor as his superior only in form. This specific quote thus is valuable in terms of historic perspective on MacArthur from a Japanese perspective for a number of reasons. Firstly, they recognized that he had Hirohito in a vice. Secondly, to understand that MacArthur was the actual ruler and Hirohito the figurehead of that power and thirdly, it is a title carrying a serious amount of military prestige. It is this title which sheds light on MacArthur being so invested in the emperor's fate.

As said before, Hirohito was crucial to the proper commencement of the occupation of Japan. During the six year and eight months which it lasted, the occupation was relatively peaceful. The emperor had demanded that his subjects would endure the unendurable, and suffer the insufferable, and the people of Japan showed themselves loyal subjects - even if it meant a complete turn in the way they were told to understand themselves in the world. Historians of all convictions seem to agree on one thing: by not putting Hirohito on trial the

occupation was much more effective. The reason for this, however, was that MacArthur actually started to endorse his title of Gai-Jin Shogun, as Hirohito had no choice but to follow the directions of this military force that had overthrown his government. Effectively MacArthur ruled Japan, through the person of Hirohito:

As part of the indirect-rule, the emperor system was allowed to remain, although the new constitution reduced his role from 'Head of state empire . . . in whom the rights of sovereignty are invested . . . sacred and inviolable' to 'symbol of the nation and unity of the people . . . whose position is derived from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power (Gluck, Graubart 109).

Effectively this shift of power is forced upon the emperor, and becomes clear in the end of the Meiji Constitution, from which the first fragment is taken and the new constitution drafted by the Americans. By maintaining the emperor Douglas MacArthur had indebted the man to whom nobody in Japan could say no, and thus was given complete freedom for his rebuilding experiment. Taking this amount of freedom though did not make him very popular with his superiors in Washington.

When MacArthur learned of the atomic bomb being dropped on Japan, he was indignant and said to reporter Theodore White: "White, do you know what this means? Men like me are obsolete. There will be no more wars White, no more wars" (Hoyt, 23 min.). It is a sad moment, but maybe it was the moment when MacArthur realized that he needed to think of a plan b when it came to his future career. That MacArthur was considering running for president seems indeed to shape his actions as S.C.A.P. For example, it led to the story behind the famous picture of Hirohito and MacArthur at their first meeting. The film

maintains that the pictures MacArthur had made of himself were made as campaign material.

But historians have had other interpretations of this picture since:

As he approached the embassy to meet MacArthur Hirohito did not know how much the general knew of his involvement in the war. Or how, after the bloody conquest of China he had rewarded his military commanders. How he had known in detail of the plan to attack Pearl Harbor and not moved to stop it. He did not know if MacArthur knew that he could have prevented the execution of captured American pilots. He did not know that he knew that he had been informed of every kamikaze attack on American ships and had praised the pilots. The god-emperor had no inkling of his fate (Hoyt, 33 min.).

Little did Hirohito know that MacArthur was willing to overlook all this and more, as long as he could assure himself of the emperor's cooperation thus wielding absolute power as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. By then setting the military commanders up for trial, dictating to them their concessions and letting them shoulder the blame for Hirohito effectively beheaded the Japanese war machine whilst the image of Hirohito still presided. The knack is in tokens of concerns, which won Japanese favor: "the starvation concerned MacArthur; he rounded up millions of tons of food set aside for the invasion of Japan and began to feed the Japanese. When Congress balked he said, he would not treat the Japanese as they had his men on Bhutan" (Hoyt, 33 min.).

CONCLUSION

A lot of things may be said of MacArthur, but he did put everything he had into the opportunity to lead Japan. This may come across less in the film in which he alternately is shown to be an almost absurdist eccentric leader as well as very ambitious. MacArthur is

Hirohito's American counterpart, and thus stays as far away from etiquette and polite behavior as Hirohito and the Japanese are bound by it. The film portrays him on multiple occasions producing one-liners without concern for them being socially acceptable or even attainable. Especially in the first half of this film this leads to relatively comical situations. In the second half of the film, however, MacArthur is introduced as having political ambitions with regards to the precedence. It becomes clear that he uses Fellers to acquit the emperor in order to have a scapegoat if the acquittal backfires on his administration in Japan. He does this because acquittal of persecution is at direct odds with the line of action prescribed by Washington. As MacArthur is not portrayed with as much detail as history might require, he comes away less well than one might expect, as the focus lies primarily with his blunt remarks and ambitious character.

Historians are less harsh, and remember, for instance, the way MacArthur avoided the further escalation of famine by using marshal food reserves to feed the nation. Both Washington and the Pentagon were not amused at this particular choice. This is but one example to show the lengths MacArthur went to lead the nation well, a task which he took very seriously. The film was right in showing that MacArthur wanted to set an example, and was proud of his attempt. Failure was no option; MacArthur worked tirelessly trying to establish a desirable result (behr, 65 min.). This, to name a few of these merits, led to the introduction of Japan's new constitution, and consequently Japan's first free elections. No small feats. Putting this much effort into leading the country meant he left nothing up to chance in the process. Fellers was leading to acquit the emperor of any allegations, nor did he accept any interference from Washington. This approach left him both relatively successful, as well as highly controversial: as White Shogun.

CHAPTER V, THE NATION OF JAPAN

The continued search for evidence of Hirohito's war guilt, or the absence thereof, takes the viewer past a number of sets that portray Japan. Japan as a nation, a culture and an image plays a very important role in this film. It is part of almost all the considerations, and most choices that are made can be read as a choice for or against Japan's recuperation. Thus, Japan is arguably the fourth main character, sometimes personified in Aya or her uncle. This entity, though slightly more abstract than the other characters, brings to light a number of very important issues. The question in this chapter is: what are these concerns in the film, and what concerns are brought forward by historians considering this fourth persona?

One of the most impressive presences of Japan in this film is simply found in the background. When entering the city of Tokyo one sees a deserted wasteland which stretches to the foothills in the distance. Rubble and soot are everywhere. People attempt to maintain some standard of living and have built shacks and campfires. But mostly it is desolate and grey. This desolate destruction is emphasized in a number of ways. For one it is the repetition of destructed land and cityscapes that lends gravity. At regular intervals Fellers finds himself among rubble, walking through a makeshift street looking for a bar. It seems that every other scene shows devastation. Then adding to this are the contrasts. On the one hand there are the contrasts between Japan in the flashbacks as it looked like in its original state and the devastation afterwards. Possibly the most potent example of this is the school where Aya teaches, it plays a dominant role in the flashbacks as the place where they meet for the first time since college. Supposedly though that is also where she died during a bombing raid. Another stark contrast is formed between the state of Tokyo and the spared splendor of the imperial palace.

Now a specific example of the Japan that Fellers fell in love with is found in Aya. She functions as a visible reason for why Fellers has at some point gained an interest in Japan, and she symbolizes the state of Japan. As an English teacher she becomes the voice of the nation's reason. When they meet in college, in 1932, both Aya and the nation of Japan are still very much interested in the way the West thinks and works. They are eager students and have to go out of their way for foreign experiences. Japan at that point takes in foreign institutions of education and customs start to change, enabling a young woman like Aya to travel abroad and study. Later when they meet again Aya teaches the language of the Americans, the soon to be enemy. She notes that some of her students have been forbidden to follow English by their parents. The propaganda machine is running at full steam, and "the army is teaching kids to hate foreigners" (*Emperor*, 43). Later, at her uncle's house it becomes clear that after a short and intellectual relationship their ways need to part. He the West(erner) is no longer welcome in Japan. Their relationship is impossible, as "the police are starting to round up Americans - our countries will soon be at war" (*Emperor*, 77 min.). In the present Aya turns out to be dead, like so much of Japan at that stage of its history. She is part of the bombed ashes of her school, waiting to be rebuilt, but for the moment still silent witnesses to the rage of war.

Aya's uncle selflessly explains the Japanese culture to Fellers. He speaks thoughts that need to be spoken so that the viewer may understand what is going on, but are essentially implicit parts of the Japanese mind. One for example goes as follows: "Above all else, His Majesty is the reason the Japanese soldier is superior to the American soldier in his sense of duty. If we fight the United States, we will win because we follow his divine will" (*Emperor*, 53 min.). In theory this reasoning could explain why a Japanese soldier is capable of a kamikaze mission, whereas an American soldier will probably not be. Not

because the American lacks courage, but because for the Japanese soldier there is a religious (Shintoistic) element to his military service, to obliges him to practice complete devotion.

The first lesson appears in a flashback. Fellers and Aya visit him so that Fellers may learn of the culture for a paper he is writing for the American military. It is a distinction that may be used between two characteristic Japanese characters:

If you understand devotion, you will understand Japan. There are two Japanese words you should know. 'tatemae,' the way things appear, 'honne,' the way they really are. When you look at Japan, you see the most modern and Westernized of Asian countries, but that is a tatemae, the surface. And the honne? It is the true heartbeat of my country, which is more than 2,000 years old. It has nothing to do with the West. Japan runs on the ancient warrior code of loyalty and obedience (*Emperor*, 58 min.).

This distinction explains a great deal about the way Japanese customs have been portrayed and the way the investigation encounters difficulty. Obtaining objective truth by Western standards becomes virtually impossible, according to this theory. Moreover it leads the viewer to rethink the way he or she interprets the information provided by the Japanese in the film, becoming more aware of the fact that truth in itself might be layered. It is a very interesting concept and crucial in Japanese-Western exchanges at all levels.

Another very important lesson comes in the present, as Fellers visits Aya's uncle at a point when he seems stuck in his investigation. This time he speaks of what has happened during the war, and does not give an apology for the Japanese actions, but he does the second best thing, he explains where these actions come from: "We did our duty, but we lost our humanity. You must understand, we Japanese are a selfless people, capable of immense

sacrifice because of our complete devotion to a set of ideals. We are also ruthless warriors, capable of unspeakable crimes because of that same complete devotion" (*Emperor*, 81 min.). This is a tough passage, because not only does it attempt to give a form of explanation of the ruthlessness of the Japanese, both the words and the scene show a warrior who has seen and done more than he believes to be good for himself. In contrast to his household before the war, he is now alone. His wife is not there, his sons who were shown in uniform earlier on are gone now, and so is Aya. When Fellers lights incense on the family altar, one of the most Japanese things he does during the entire film, their picture tells the viewer that they have not survived the war. Only the warrior is left, left to explain to Fellers what happened.

These are a number of crucial understandings that are very hard to deduce from acting itself. A character such as Aya's uncle is very useful, allowing for a deeper level of understanding to come out through the film. Consequently the film's background may give rise to the question what justice is served in an attempt to persecute the emperor, when the devastation caused by the Americans is virtually indescribable, and arguably on par with that caused by the Japanese. The American call for judgement of the emperor then would then be a result of him heading the losing side. Former Secretary for Defense under Kennedy, Robert McNamara, who was part of a taskforce to maximize efficiency in Japanese cities, pondered this question. He notes:

LeMay said, "If we'd lost the war, we'd all have been prosecuted as war criminals."

And I think he's right. He, and I'd say I, were behaving as war criminals. LeMay recognized that what he was doing would be thought immoral if his side had lost. But what makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win? (Morris, 54 min.).

There is an uncomfortable feeling to this situation, reeking of that both scholars and others have pointed out to be a form of hypocrisy.

POST WAR JAPAN, THE HISTORIC PROBLEM

Returning to Japan on a larger scale, some attention may be given to the way this remarkable shift in power was received and what it did with Japan as a nation under the emperor. After the dust of war settles, a constitution is implemented by the Americans. Besides this, after all the tribunals and processes, the processing of war guilt could begin.

The revision of the constitution, which was part of the planned and forced democratization of Japan, was eventually left to the Japanese. They, however, repeatedly came up with drafts that resembled the original Meiji constitution to such a degree that very little seemed changed at all. In order to put motion into this process, MacArthur ordered an American drafting committee to be assembled. Where the ten day timeframe of the film was a serious exaggeration, MacArthur actually ordered the draft of the new Japanese constitution to be completed within the space of seven days. Two critical changes are interesting in particular in this context. One, in the Japanese constitution the emperor had been stripped of his divine identity, and had been reduced to less power than, as Hoyt puts it, a British monarch (43 min.). From divine head of state, commander of army and navy, he now became the symbol of the nation. It is as far as one may move from one end of the spectrum to the other. As if Zeus would be commanded by his conqueror, to come down from mount Olympus, relinquish his status as divine and become president of the EU, a lovely title which has no real function whatsoever. As if this was not enough of a shock, there is the second point: MacArthur "wanted a clause in the constitution that would prevent Japan from ever waging war again. Without MacArthur there would never have been a line in the constitution that says: Japan outlaws war and the rights of belligerency of the state" (Hoyt, 44 min.). The first point could be expected from MacArthur, after all as foreign shogun he knew that limited power for the emperor was essential for the possibility that others might gain power. Originally that would be himself as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, but later he

hoped that a democratic force would take his place and not be bothered by possible interference by an emperor-god, but be assisted in their task by a symbol of the nation. However, that a man who spent the majority of his life on war forces passivism on a state via their new constitution is a remarkable fact. MacArthur, who sees the atomic bombs as the end of war, may have thought that he was setting a new precedent, that they would be entering an era that would no longer see the need for nations to defend themselves. Yet on the other hand it is a well-known fact that MacArthur was fearful of the spread Communism. There can be very little doubt that he was unfamiliar with the opinion held by Churchill and Patton that the war should not end in Berlin, but in Moscow. Maybe he hoped that the nation which he was rebuilding would be spared such encounters. But it seems hard to believe that it is simply revenge. MacArthur's actions are so geared towards rebuilding Japan, maintaining structure and showing what a good job he can do, that a stab of revenge would stand out like a sore thumb.

Bix notes that:

the Japanese government was terrified of what the emperor would think of the constitution. Reluctantly they presented it to the palace. He is not happy being an emperor stripped of all political power, but he accepts the constitution because this guarantees that whatever happens to him, the imperial house has been preserved.

Hirohito urged legislators to accept MacArthur's constitution, placing power in the hands of the people he would now present himself as MacArthur wanted to see him as Japan's first democrat (Hoyt, 45 min.).

This meant that American occupation actually led to the first proper Japanese election, on April 6 1946. The amount of people that rallied to the polling booths was a great victory for

the young democracy, three out of four Japanese voted. Thirty-eight women were chosen. It was a major victory for MacArthur, but one he shared with the Japanese people who chose overwhelmingly for new representatives, rejecting war-time leadership.

As the dust settled, and rebuilding started, it became clear that with all the changes in legislature, rewriting of the Japanese constitution the Chrysanthemum throne was safe. This being seen broadly to be Hirohito main objective, now that he had achieved it, voices arose that he may abdicate to accept and atone for his war guilt. With a fresh emperor, a new start would be possible; the throne would be free of blemish and thus the final stage of it being secured for the future fulfilled. Hirohito turned to MacArthur. Historian John

Dower relates that

MacArthur said no, don't abdicate, and as a result of this from a Japanese perspective you have a man who becomes America's symbol of democracy. Who is totally sanitized by the Americans and by MacArthur in particular. For not even expressing real responsibility for decisions, nor moral responsibility for the horrors that took place in his name, and I think that poisoned the thinking about responsibility in general in Japan till the present day (Hoyt, 54 min.).

Dower has a point so far as this would have been the perfect time to stand down and let the next generation take over with fresh energy, and without any moral blemishes. After all, even though MacArthur and Fellers had started a momentous propaganda machine around the emperor, with which the imperial palace was very happy to cooperate, it was only a few years ago that the reality of the emperor had an entirely different shape. The Japanese were very happy to have their emperor still, but they had not forgotten that all sacrifices made, all actions during the last decade of war were done and committed in his name, in the name of Hirohito Tenno, the heavenly sovereign. Even though it was little spoken of, it was certainly not forgotten so easily, and therefore the imperial pardon had a tremendous gravity to it.

What is more, Dower just speaks of the emperor; Gluck notes something that goes for all Japanese. She notes:

I think that before the war people had a pretty clear idea of how things worked, but after the war they were told a story that was fake. A post-war story about responsibility which said: 'this war was made by twenty-eight people, and we have tried them. We have put them on trial, and we have hanged a number of them and the rest of them are in jail. It's all over. The emperor is not responsible, the people are not responsible, the millions of people involved in this war are not responsible.' That's the travesty (Behr, 48 min.).

Besides the unsettling point that Dower makes on the responsibility of the emperor, Gluck here pulls it into a broader context. Her point entails a bubble of guilt, locked in the sediment of Japanese society that may not see the light of day for the fear of the consequences. Yet common sense demands of the actors at the time, and those who know that understand what happened, renounce it and seek forgiveness. In order to build a more healthy relationship with the outside world, a sense of closure need to be found for a problem that is not recognized.

CONCLUSION

The film and historians present two different sets of problems in this last chapter. For one, the film grapples with the concept of complete devotion in relation to the horrors and war crimes committed by the Japanese overseas. Though Aya's uncle Fellers is explained that Japanese are not inclined to question authority, thus leading to a situation wherein it is followed without critical thought. This may lead to feats of great bravery, but if the orders are questionable it will also lead to acts of great cruelty. This may be one of the most direct ways the film acknowledges Japanese war crimes. However, this acknowledgement is not meant as an excuse, but merely an explanation as to how certain thing might have come to pass.

Another problem that comes to light during the film is the difference between the way things appear and the way things really are. These two concepts in Japanese thought are sharply separated, whereas they are very difficult for a Westerner to discriminate between. This leads to a state in which objective truth is very hard to come by, leading to the conclusion that the investigation of Hirohito might be a wasted effort. This then becomes the theoretical backdrop for Fellers difficulty to investigate Hirohito.

Thirdly there is the state of Japan to be considered. Numerous shots show a nation completely bombed to rubble, living in huts comparable to slums. The grounds of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, however, remain untouched. This might be seen as a signal that all Japan has left to be proud of is the Chrysanthemum Throne.

Historians seem to be less interested in these processes, and point out two specific problems: the war guilt drama on the one hand, and the forced democratization of Japan on the other. The process of dealing with war guilt was short and ineffective, it basically went through trying and sentencing some twenty-eight class-A war criminals. Consequently the Japanese people were told that their actions were annulled and that life was to be resumed. It was a choice which is understandable, as a productive and whole process of dealing with the war probably would have left the nation in a state of immobility. It would have been too large a process. However, the lack of dealing with the war had a lasting impact on the concept of justice, which is also highly undesirable.

The other main point is that of forced democratization, which led to a new constitution. As the Japanese drafting commission repeatedly produced drafts of the Meiji Constitution, nowhere near revolutionary enough for MacArthur, MacArthur decided to have the few members of his staff proficient in Japanese to draft a new constitution. This left Japan, for instance, with the clause which abolishes the military, and effectively claims pacifism. This clause came rather unnaturally, just as clauses on open election in which all

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Japanese citizens, regardless of social status or sex, were given the vote. It is not so much that the outcomes of the processes were negative, but the bluntness with which they were implemented that leads historians to question and discuss them.

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CONCLUSION

Gluck notes that: "Without the Americans, I don't know what would have happened. **G**Because I don't know if there would have been an publicity machine efficient enough: it almost was an Hollywood production. That they could transform that emperor in a matter of months" (Behr, 44 min.). She refers to the mix of Emperor Hirohito, General Bonner Fellers and General Douglas MacArthur, and their combined staff created a situation in which reality seemed to be altered and clear-cut war guilt disappeared in a matter of months. Indeed, Gluck's unbelief at the feat that they performed is justified, the fact is that the film that was produced relating a narrative that did not compare to the details nor scale of the actual operation.

Setting out to compare the truth and fiction concerning the last days of the war, and the year or so after the war as related in the emperor, the film was separated into its four primary themes, Fellers, MacArthur, Hirohito and the nation of Japan. Each comparison will be concluded in the following chapter, followed by an afterword.

GENERAL BRIGADIER BONNER FELLERS

In the film Fellers is shown as the more logical, calm and realistic counter part of MacArthur. Originally he is given the explicit task to conduct an investigation into the war-time activities and responsibilities of emperor Hirohito, specifically focusing on possible involvement in war crimes. This quickly becomes a quest to save the emperor, in spite of uncooperative Japanese officials, to find proof that the emperor is in fact not guilty of any involvement in such activities. Even though that search for evidence is virtually impossible, and renders no material at all, he turns this to an advantage by arguing that as there is no evidence, there are no grounds for trial either. What does appear though are stories relating to Hirohito's

pacifistic intention, and his repeated efforts to make his intentions come to actions. The story of Privy Seal Kido for instance, which relates the manner in which Hirohito stood up against the Supreme Council of Japan, breaking the deadlock and forcing a surrender of Japan to the Allies. These stories come to Fellers from the Japanese side, and give him the opportunity to claim that not only there is no evidence against him, but in fact there is evidence that speaks of his good intentions. Besides the quest of illusive proof, Fellers is shown as more of a scholar than a fighter, studying the Japanese culture in her martial facets, and its relation to the emperor. In spite of his knowledge of the Japanese culture and language, however, he makes an effort to remain an American in characters, making no attempt to be considered Japanese.

History shows that Fellers was a much more clever and cunning man than the film portrays him to be. In contrast to the determined Fellers of history, the film shows him to have a much more searching and questioning character. It seems that Fellers was completely convinced that any allegation directed at the emperor would be seen as a serious form of sacrilege by the Japanese, and would backfire on the Americans in a fashion that Chalmers Johnson would call blowbacks decades later. The Japanese, defeated and humiliated would not have accepted the humiliation of their emperor by a forced court appearance. Thus, a convinced Fellers set about securing the Chrysanthemum throne with nothing less than religious zeal. Fellers had months, not ten days, to privately interview the highest ranking military officers, politicians, and civilians, and used these interviews to gain personal understanding initially but mainly to organize a coherent line of defense that accepted war guilt and thus shielded any possible indictment of Hirohito (Bix 583). His efforts and freedom allowed for the Japanese to save their emperor.

HIS MAJESTY EMPEROR HIROHITO OF JAPAN

Hirohito is at the core of the film, even though his presence remains only to be felt and not to be seen until the latter half of the film. He is described as a person who is basically swept up in the war-effort even though this is not his own wish. He is described as the head of the state Shinto religion that leaves no discussion on that fact that he would be a pacifist. Thus stories by Koichi Kido and Teizaburo Sekiya on his brave attempts to change the minds of war-lusty generals, and eventually even forcing them to capitulate would show his innocence of all willful involvement. When he eventually comes into view he is not the strong man one might expect but a small, man with a thin voice. He is compliant with MacArthur's Western behavior which clashes with protocol, in order to save the greater good. Then in private he delivers a private message in which he states "I come to you, General MacArthur, to offer myself as the one to bear sole responsibility. I wish that the punishment will fall on me, not Japan" (*Emperor*, 95 min.). The message being clearly learned by heart, and pronounced falteringly, almost endearingly visibly moves MacArthur. It is an emperor who would logically be exonerated on the basis of there being no proof against him, proof that speaks for him, and good character.

Reality, however, shows that there is a very painful problem hidden in the film. The fact that there never was an investigation into possible war crimes by the emperor, but only efforts to keep him from harm's way. Had there been such an investigation, and had it been properly conducted the emperor could not have escaped trial. Thus it may be argued that the Hirohito which is portrayed in the film is no more than the extension of the myth that Fellers created to save him. Granted it is not easy to establish just in which way Hirohito was powerful, but his role in the war could have been completely different if he had made any attempt to not cooperate with the Japanese militarists. As head of state though, was at least in part responsible for the way that state operated. By his own Meiji constitution he was

supreme commander of the Japanese military and navy. There seems no escaping his war guilt. More disconcertingly though is that, if one follows the line of thought that he acted to save his throne for the Empire, Hirohito continued his reign even after it was properly secured. In spite of all the cases that were made for the emperor, he never accepted responsibility for what happened in and under his nation when he was its divine ruler, which to this day is a problematic situation in Japanese culture.

GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR

Being the other emperor of this film general MacArthur is rather an anti-Hirohito in his complete disregard for all forms of convention or etiquette. This for instance of the way he first listens to the lengthy explanation of all the rules surrounding a meeting with Hirohito, and then simply extending his hand to him upon meeting and proposing a picture with the two of them. It seems characteristic, first he (feigns) to listen, and then he proceeds with what he had planned all along in spite of advice or convention. The film shows him in numerous situations when he injects absurdist quotes into serious conversation. He seems to be living in a universe of his own, and for his own purposes. He disrespects Washington and accepts Fellers' line of argument that the emperor should not be persecuted, and on top of that, the film seems to argue that he put Fellers on the job because he was confident that this would be the outcome of the investigation if Fellers was the one in charge. The film actually suggests that he uses Feller to exercise his vision for the emperor because he wants a scapegoat which he can blame if his choices come to haunt him. He does this, as the film explains, because he plans to make a bid for the presidency after he has successfully rebuilt Japan and showing the Americans and the world that he is a great leader and statesman, besides a man of war. MacArthur is shown as ambitious as Julius Cesar.

Historically, and maybe unsurprisingly, MacArthur is much more dimensional in character than is argued in the film. However, history also clearly shows that he had no intention, and made no effort to investigate the role of the emperor, as historian Yoshida Yutaka notes:

the cable said that material which could prove the emperor's responsibility for the war could not be found, and included the warning that if the emperor would be indicted the country would be in chaos. Accept there are absolutely no records of MacArthur seriously searching for or gathering any material related to the emperor and his war responsibilities (Hoyt, 95 min.).

This cable was sent to Eisenhower, then the Army Chief of staff, and it is a clear example of MacArthur trying to ward off any interference that might endanger the health of the occupation over which he had control, and for which he was responsible. It did not occur to MacArthur to question the emperor's responsibility, because any other result than a complete exoneration would jeopardize his mission to set Japan back on its feet. MacArthur took pride in what he did, and wanted to set an example that would last. Little did he know that his effort would ensure that Japan would recuperate and would become one of the strongest economies in the world, in part thanks to his efforts.

THE NATION OF JAPAN

In short, the film portrays the nation of Japan as a country bombed to rubble. It shows the people starving and stark contrasts between the standing buildings of the imperial grounds and the rest of Tokyo. The film attempts to give some theoretical background on the Japanese people. It tries to explain the Japanese philosophy of complete devotion, which should be

given to all actions. In particular this is framed in the context of the emperor, and nationalist service. In the form of Aya's uncle the film explains that complete devotion may lead to wonderful accomplishments, enormous sacrifice and complete peace, but it may also lead to unquestioning loyalty to military leaders and how the ruthless actions that may follow may well lead to unspeakable crimes. It is not an attempt to excuse, but certainly to explain Japan's war crimes. Besides this, the explanation of the two concepts, *tatemae*, the way things appear and *honne*, the way things really are, attempts to explain why in Japan things rarely are simple in nature. In fact, obtaining truth by Western standards becomes incredibly hard. The relation between Aya and Fellers may symbolize the relation between the Japan and the West, with growing disillusionment as the war nears. This symbolism, the disappearance of Aya, as well as the rest of her family except her uncle may render some understanding of what the nation went through in the final stages of the war.

Historically, two specific things stand out the war guilt trauma, and the lack of processing and the forced democratization of Japan. Behr, Hoyt, Dower and Carol Gluck all agree on the fact that the manipulation of truth and the conscious avoiding of judiciary closure affected the Japanese severely. As Gluck notes:

I think that before the war people had a pretty clear idea of how things worked, but after the war they were told a story that was fake. A post-war story about responsibility which said: 'this war was made by twenty-eight people, and we have tried them. We have put them on trial, and we have hanged a number of them and the rest of them are in jail. It's all over. The emperor is not responsible, the people are not responsible, the millions of people involved in this war are not responsible.' That's the travesty (Behr, 48 min.).

This line of argument is dominant, and it hinders the Japanese, whether they are veterans, second or third generation, with finding closure on a period that was traumatic for both sides of the frontline, and either home front. Even though this burden, which MacArthur gave the Japanese to carry, was balanced to some degree with the blessing he gave in a constitution, it remains a burden. The constitution itself ensured, for the first time, an honest and population-wide election of the leadership of the nation. It was celebrated among most citizens as a major improvement on their previous situation, leading to a 75 percent turnout during the nation's first election. It did cost them dearly: their emperor's divinity. After all, what is divinity, in exchange for democracy?

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

If the question remains, why Hirohito gets off free in the film, there is a multifaceted answer. To start, there is the very simple one: for lack of incrimination, as well as evidence. The film does an appalling job at seriously considering whether Hirohito did things wrong, and if so naming these wrongs. In a sense it is a two hour-long wild goose hunt: there is a quest going on for proof, but it is unclear what needs proof. It is a film about an investigator, rather than the investigation, which is not what it promises to be. That is a shame, though it may be directly linked to the enormous success that the film achieved in Japan. If the film would have been more critical of the emperor it would probably not have had such a large audience, due to the way Japanese culture is not ready to accept that in a film this large. Instead of focusing on his wrongs, it focuses on his merits: the wise emperor pushed for the end of the war, forcing his ministers to capitulate and kindly renounced his godly status. That representation might entice the Japanese public, but contains some serious errors.

Then there are the personal motivations to be considered. Hirohito went free simply because MacArthur ventured an experiment in nation building of heroic proportions. He did

this in order to prove his superiors in Washington wrong, and show the American voter that he is more than capable of running a nation. Hoping to run for president after the task of rebuilding was finished. Moreover, if he did not do it for these reasons, MacArthur simply did it because it was the American (read stubborn or unconventional) thing to do. The world wants Hirohito's head on a stake, so why give it them? This is the reason Fellers enters the picture, to be responsible if his "good old American swagger," as MacArthur calls it at the beginning of the film, backfires (*Emperor*, 5 min.) In turn, Fellers is determined to have justice take its turn, and thus tries very hard to get a clear view of events concerning Hirohito and the war. It may also be interpreted that Fellers tries to save Hirohito as a tribute to Aya. What MacArthur and Fellers agree upon is the fact that there is serious risk of unfavorable reactions from the Japanese if they were to arrest the emperor. Or as MacArthur put it: "If I put him on trial, I could be setting a spark to a powder keg" (*Emperor*, 12 min.).

From the perspective of the popular historian this is a terribly interesting film. It seems that it defiantly has a purpose in mind. Webber considered his film to be a comment on current affairs:

what made me want to tell the story was that I felt that it was quite resonant in terms of what is happening nowadays, we are still going through a period of war. Across the world, particularly in the Middle East. And I looked at some of the decisions that were made in the aftermath of WOII and some of the discussions more recent time, say in Iraq, and it just seemed that there was a lot more intelligence at work then (*Vérité Magazine*, 2 min.).

This seems to be something Webber feels very strongly about, because at times he is more engaged in conveying the feeling that this is a clever, sophisticated allied approach, rather

than showing a strongly built investigation. That is a very interesting balance of purposes, conveying this notion and historical accuracy. With a bit of ill-will, however, offence might be taken from a portrayal of history in this fashion. This is especially true when one understands the historic perspective, for had Webber shown what was really going on, in terms of using the emperor as a figurehead for his regime, then it might be a much more noteworthy addition to the debate.

The historic debate has been sold short with this film, as the version of events which history presents seems more cinematic than the film. The film's design to offer a natural solution to nation building, however, seems to present a strongly simplified version of events. The film's main argument outside of the plotline would be that there is a better way, namely by focusing on more cooperation between the American forces and the nation being (re)built, and should certainly be considered. It is a solid approach that contrasts starkly with the way the Bush Administration acted in Iraq. In proving this, however, Webber does simplify history to such a degree that reality only vaguely resembles the narrative presented in the film. Most specifically the way MacArthur and Fellers sidestep regulation in order to produce a usable result, at times leading to situations that may be argued to obstruct and even pervert the course of justice.

That Hirohito was aware of, aided, and encouraged very questionable behavior of the Japanese Army and Navy in the Pacific during the course of the war is only debated seriously in Japan, as the rest of the world no longer doubts his role. The discussion now concerning Hirohito is to which extent he knew and participated, and consequently, to which degree he is to be held responsible. By simplifying this matter, so as to argue for his case of a more considerate and co-operation based occupation, Webber seems to pursue a deeply felt personal belief. He does, however, also prove that history rarely speaks for just one argument, and may often be molded to suit either side of the discussion. Webber's attempt may fuel an

idealistic call for a better collaboration, and more understanding, leading to better and more humane results, which is good, but not nearly as simple as his film leads the audience to believe.

Then, returning to the research question: in which ways do the film (*Hirohito* (2012)) and the academic narrative as presented by Gluck, Bix and Hoyt compare to each other, and what would the effects of such a comparison be on the trustworthiness of this particular historical film narrative? The film *Emperor* by director Peter Webber is a surprising cooperation between American and Japanese producers. It is a film which indicates a process of judicial miscarriage, without even naming it. It appeals to a broad and international audience. But it does not educate the public, but continues the myth that was created in the days after the Second World War, that Hirohito was a pacifist, and stood up bravely against his cabinet, eventually forcing them to end the war in capitulation to the Americans. Historians have worked hard in the decades since the death of the emperor to save what historical evidence still exists, and record the testimonies of those that are still alive. Doing so in part to disprove the construction this film attempts to maintain in a convincing manner, namely the myth as constructed by MacArthur and Fellers. The consequence is that the master narrative that is spread through popular culture is still a form of propaganda to defend an emperor who has been dead for a quarter of a century. This is a implementation of justice with which the Japanese even today still struggle, but which is once again enforced by this film.

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