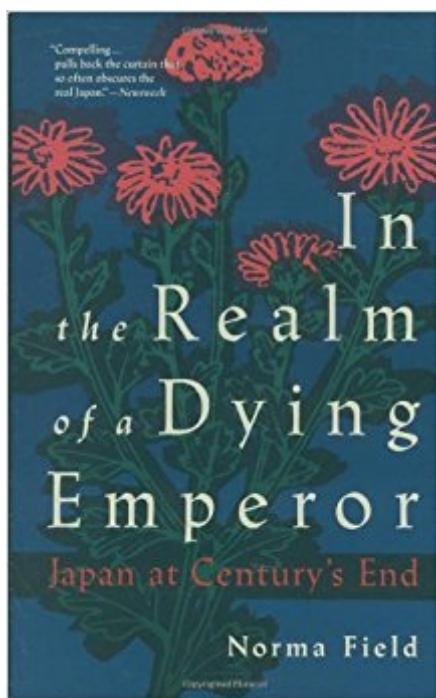


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# In The Realm Of A Dying Emperor: Japan At Century's End



## **Synopsis**

When the Emperor Hirohito died in 1989, Japanese newspapers had to use a special, exalted word to refer to his death, and had to depict his life uncritically, as one beginning in turbulence but ending in magnificent accomplishment. To do otherwise would have exposed them to terrorism from the vigilant right wing. Yet this insightful book by a Japanese-American scholar who grew up in both cultures reveals the hidden fault lines in the realm of the dying emperor by telling the stories of three unlikely dissenters: a supermarket owner who burned the national flag; an aging widow who challenged the state's "deification" of fallen soldiers; and the mayor of Nagasaki, who risked his career and his life by suggesting that Hirohito bore some responsibility for World War II.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Field, the daughter of a Japanese mother and an American father and currently an associate professor of East Asian studies at the University of Chicago, returned to Japan for a year's study just prior to the final illness and death of Emperor Hirohito on January 7, 1989. Using this event as a means to probe the nature of contemporary Japanese society, Field presents an in-depth study of three individuals who stood up against what she sees as "the death-in-life quality of daily routine" in contemporary Japan. These include an Okinawa supermarket owner who protested resurgent nationalism by burning a Japanese flag just prior to a national athletic competition, the Christian widow of a member of Japan's Self-Defense Force who fought against her husband's inclusion in a state shrine honoring the military dead, and the mayor of Nagasaki who spoke out publicly concerning the emperor's role in World War II. The book's message is both troubling (in its overall

depiction of Japanese society) as well as inspirational (in the courage displayed by Field's subjects). Altogether, this is an intelligent and thought-provoking analysis. Generally recommended.- Scott Wright, Univ. of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A provocative, multileveled ``meditation'' on Emperor Hirohito's 1989 death, raising dark questions about Japan's war guilt in the context of its triumphant prosperity today. As the child of a Japanese woman and an American soldier, Field (East Asian Studies/Univ. of Chicago) tells a story of postwar Japan inextricably linked to her own. She grew up in Tokyo, in her grandmother's house, ``finally'' leaving after high school to join her father in the US. In August 1988, Field returned to Tokyo for a yearlong stay. From her grandmother's oleander-filled, walled garden, she observed a driven, repressive ``democracy'' held in a deathwatch for its emperor. This ``frail embodiment of the war,'' whose funeral becomes a ``celebration of the successes of Japanese capitalism,'' Field sees as both promoter and symbol of Japan's ``national amnesia.'' The economic miracle has come at astronomical cost: ``In the society [the Japanese] are growing into,'' she writes, ``the most significant and only reliable freedom is the freedom to buy ever more refined commodities.'' Backing into her powerful points as she shifts between personal and global issues, Field structures her narrative around the stories of three ``resisters'': a supermarket owner who burns the ``Rising Sun'' flag; a widow who sues to stop the state from making her late husband a Shinto deity; and the mayor of Nagasaki, who publicly calls the emperor responsible for the war--for the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for the Battle of Okinawa. The horror the Japanese refuse to remember is here most powerfully conveyed by eyewitness accounts of ``babies' cries...stilled'' by Japanese troops hiding from the ``bloodless'' American invasion. An intelligent, informed, deeply felt interrogation of Japan that offers a rare insider-outsider point of view while implicitly questioning America's influence on this rich but troubled country. -- Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Great price and fast shipping!

This book was used along with the lectures and personal comments in a class for the Ecannon Valley Elder Collegium. It added to the instructor's presentation and helped us get a clearer view of Japan in the post WW II years.

good story. Awesome.

The book contains three episodes, a man who has lived in Okinawa and fired the (de facto at that time) national flag, a woman who has rejected the burial by the state of her husband having been a member of the Self-Defense Force and the ex-mayor of Nagasaki City who has referred to the war responsibility of the Emperor, as well as a report on the very curious atmosphere prevailing in Japan on the death of the Showa Emperor. A reader could understand the true but hidden mentality of the Japanese from the contents explicitly and implicitly. The author of course could have written the original in Japanese, but the fact that the work had to be translated itself has had a significance. I strongly recommend to read the work if you want to understand the Japanese who are now at the crossroad.

Norma Field eloquently provides a historical look at post World War II Japan. She utilizes personal memories as well as interviews with private and public citizens that recount their struggles as Japanese. Japanese life is one filled with contradiction. After Japan's surrender in August of 1945 they adopted an Americanized Constitution to symbolize to the world their commitment to peace. This Constitution has been at times nothing more than that, a symbol, because despite efforts to mimic the American guarantees of personal freedom and liberties, the Japanese traditions and cultural practices of Imperialism and Shinto overshadow these Constitutional guarantees, leaving citizens wondering where Japan's future lies. Norm Field puts faith in the Japanese people, that they as the people in her book have, will take the high road in Japan and except their past for all its good and bad and move bravely into the future.

sum hung jock: Per AFP News: His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito of Japan, 78, will undergo heart bypass surgery this week after tests showed the narrowing of his arteries has worsened, the Imperial Household Agency announced on Sunday. The operation, scheduled for Saturday, February 18, will be performed 'to maintain and to improve His Majesty's daily life. We have decided to ask his majesty to have a coronary artery bypass surgery,' a IHA spokesman said. The announcement came shortly after Emperor Akihito was discharged from the University of Tokyo Hospital, where he underwent a catheter angiogram on Saturday. The test showed that the narrowing of his arteries has progressed, compared with an examination he underwent a year ago, the spokesman said. Doctors have reached 'a conclusion that a new action has to be taken' to stop the trend, he said. The operation will be performed by physicians from the University of Tokyo and

private Juntendo University, the spokesman said. Akihito, wearing a gray suit and a striped tie, walked out of the university hospital Sunday, accompanied by Empress Michiko, as his physicians stood in line at the entrance. The surgery comes amid increasing concerns about Akihito's health. The latest angiogram was arranged after periodic electrocardiograms showed restricted blood flow to his heart. In November, the Emperor spent 19 days in hospital suffering mild pneumonia. Emperor Akihito, who ascended the throne in 1989 following the death of his father Emperor Hirohito, underwent surgery for prostate cancer in 2003. The Emperor's second son Prince Akishino in November suggested there should be a discussion about setting a retirement age for the titular head of state. Despite being stripped of much of its mystique and its quasi-divine status in the aftermath of World War II, the Japanese throne is held in deep respect by much of the public.

This book continues to resonate. It was published in the early 1990s and sort of predicted the malaise that Japan went through for the past decade. Even with Japan's economy picking up now, these issues--the lack of dealing with the legacy of World War II--are still problems for Japan as it tries to find a place in the modern world. The writing is sparse and beautiful. Highly recommended.

Uncovers many of the hidden parts of Japan with interesting and thought-provoking stories. Anyone interested in the culture of Japan should give this book a good reading.

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