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Showa History, Rising Nationalism, and the Abe Government Response

In this article, the author uses the *Authentic Account of the Showa Emperor's Life* to address both historical issues during the Showa era and related current issues.

The largest historical issue is the failure to provide a clear “authentic account.” Although it took 25 years to complete and collected thousands of materials, there is clear evasion on certain events surrounding WWII and the emperor's shortcomings, which the author states is due to the the desire to paint the emperor as a “non-political, constitutional monarch.” Basically, the *Jitsuroku* is a form of domestic propaganda.

In reality, the Showa emperor played many a role in the events surrounding the war while hiding behind the constitution, which is in large part do to the oligarchic government inherited from the Meiji system. He held many high-ranking positions, such as chief priest of State Shinto, supreme commander of the military, superintendent of sovereign powers, and moral teacher to the nation. However, he used these different positions to his advantage, even to the extent of being a “leader comfortable with deceiving the public” by emphasizing one role to the benefit of another.

Additionally, after his death, many people debated the Showa emperor's war responsibility (especially because he was never tried for war crimes) but this is also not seen anywhere in the *Jitsuroku*.

This article also connects the issues with the *Jitsuroku* to the current political situation in Japan; specifically, PM Abe's historical revisionism, which is seen in some of his actions, such as revisiting the comfort women topic, establishing a Defense Ministry, revising education laws, and overall promoting “Japanese-ness.” Overall, his actions are aimed toward strengthening nationalism and reshaping the system in order to keep Japan's place in the global economy.

In my opinion, although many politicians want to restore Japan's “honor,” actions such as sanitizing history and restricting free press are inherently *dishonorable*. Not only is shaping history to how *you* want to be seen exactly how history should *not* be preserved, but it is a lie of omission. I am a firm believer that history should be preserved completely without bias, even if the truth is hard to confront. I believe it is better to know what really happened than be left with too many questions. Eventually, our recent history will be the future generations' ancient history, and at that time if there are no unbiased, accurate historical records, then how will they know what really happened? By sanitizing history now, we are only providing a disservice to our descendants. They probably will not care about “lost honor” from 200+ years ago—they will want to know the reality of events “back then.”

Also, while I think total freedom of press like in America can be troublesome in its own way in regards to the spread of inaccurate information, I think restrictions for the sake of protecting an *image* is petty.