



Ghosts of '45: Japan's War Legacy and National Purpose

Geoffrey E. Hill

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In Ghost's of '45, Geoffrey E. Hill addresses the great questions revolving around Japan's past militarism-how did it get started, why were they so aggressive, why were individuals submissive to authority, what was the reason Japanese felt superior, was American bombing and the atomic bombs really justified, why are the Japanese reluctant to recognize their militaristic past, and what can the Japanese do to emerge from this predominantly negative war legacy. After World War II, the Japanese people rebuilt their country, established a new government, restored their infrastructure and became a pacifist nation. Despite these profound changes, modern Japan has not been able to achieve a desired national purpose and a leadership standing in the international community. In Ghosts of '45, Hill examines this problem by exploring the roots and evolution of Japan's militaristic period through historical sources and the recollections of people living in wartime Japan. He features in-depth interviews with both well-educated Japanese individuals familiar with Western culture and American POW's subjected to forced labor. Three narratives are brought together that could help guide Japan toward finding renewed national purpose and international respect: the roots of Japan's militarism, the ongoing war legacy, and key principles concerning the status of the emperor and public education about wartime Japan. In addition, Hill discusses comparisons between the emperor and the pope, the samurai code and the code of the English knights during the Middle Ages, and the beliefs that allowed Japanese wartime brutality and American slavery.

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