Cinetek series

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On

Yukiyukite shingun

Jeffrey Ruoff and Kenneth Ruoff
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To Glennis and Jean
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I like to make dramatic movies. I feel strongly about this, more than other directors. I love Hollywood action films, and I wanted Okazaki to act like an action star. I want to make action documentary films. (Hara Kazuo)
(In order of appearance)

Okuzaki Kenzō, ex-Private, 36th Engineering Corps
Okuzaki Shisumō, Okuzaki Kenzō's wife
Mr. Okuzaki, groom
Miss Suo, bride
Chief of Surveillance, Hyogo Police
Yamada Keizaburō, ex-Sergeant
Shimamoto Ioko, mother of Private Shimamoto Masaaki
Takami Minoru, ex-Sergeant, execution squad member
Seo Yukio, ex-Sergeant, execution squad member
Sakimoto Rinko, sister of executed Private Yoshizawa
Nomura Toshio, brother of executed Private Nomura Topei
Aikawa Rōhei, ex-Corporal, execution squad member
Hara Toshio, ex-Sergeant, execution squad member
Hamasaki Masashi, ex-Sergeant and medic, execution squad member
Matsuyama Tarō, ex-Sergeant and doctor, execution squad witness
Koshiba Shōichi, ex-Sergeant
Kawagishi Hiroshi, teacher, accomplice of Okuzaki
Koshimoto Masao, ex-Captain, executioner
Oshima Erimaro, anarchist, accomplice of Okuzaki

List of scenes

1. Okuzaki Kenzō acts as a go-between at a wedding in Yabu.
2. Intertitles announce Okuzaki's convictions, and the title of the film appears.
3. Okuzaki phones and then meets with the Chief of Surveillance, Hyogo Police.
4. Okuzaki visits Yamada Keizaburō in a Fukaya hospital.
5. Okuzaki protests against the Shōwa Emperor's birthday in Tokyo.
6. Okuzaki lectures a group of lawyers about his actions and traits.
7. Okuzaki tries to visit Kobe Prison to measure seals.
8. Okuzaki prays with Shimamoto Ioko over her dead son in Hyogo.
10. Okuzaki prays for the soul of Sergeant Tanaka in Nantan, Hyogo.
11. Okuzaki attends the Minoshi in his home in Yagake, Okayama.
12. Okuzaki confronts Seo Yukio in his home in Hakata, Fukuoka.
15. Okuzaki and relatives confront Hara Toshio in Iwasa, Yamanashi.
16. Okuzaki and relatives ambush execution medic Hamasaki Masashi in Nagara, Kobe.
17. Okuzaki and relatives interview ex-doctor Matsuyama Tarō in Yabu.
18. Sakimoto and Nomura visit a graveyard together.
The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On focuses on a man who struggles single-handedly to challenge the postwar political Establishment. While Japanese intellectuals debated the relevance of the emperor system and the morality of individual and collective responsibility, Okuzaki Kenzo took direct action. He is infamous in Japan for having sung pacifist ballads (small marbles) at the Emperor in front of the Imperial Palace in 1969. In The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, Okuzaki continues his violent political activities. This lauding work was not Haru's first film, nor his first brush with controversy. From my viewpoint, a documentary should explore things that people don't want explored, bring things out of the closet, to examine why people want to hide certain things.² Like the director Inamitra Shikheit in Nippon senzaikatsu (History of Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess, 1970) and Kaneyuki-san (Kaneyuki-san, the Making of a Prostitute, 1972), Haru portrays contemporary Japanese society and history through the lives of radicals, outcasts and marginals. Finishing, Haru's The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On - the story of an eccentric veteran who seeks to avenge the injustices of the war - is the most significant documentary film produced in Japan in the 53 years since the end of the Pacific War.

Hara Kazuo's biography and filmography

Hara Kazuo's life and work have been shaped by witnessing the protest movements of the late-1960s and early 1970s:

I did not go to college. I did not participate in the demonstrations. I was on the outside looking in...The sense of failure among those who participated was strong. But I was not directly involved, so I don't have this feeling of failure; I was always...on the outside, thinking to myself, 'how wonderful.' The 60s and 70s continue to shine in my mind.³

In keeping with his background, Hara makes films that attack mainstream society, and does so from the perspective of an outsider:

My outlaw complex is very strong. I don't feel that I am in the middle of society. I am in the lower part. Those
people on the bottom disdain those people in the mainstream. A movie director from the 'bottom' does not make movies that portray mainstream society nicely. I make bitter films.4

Hara's anti-establishment stance emerges clearly from his choice of subjects. The main characters in his first three documentaries—a disabled poet, a radical feminist, and a stubborn anti-imperialist veteran of Japan's campaign in New Guinea—are marginal individuals who defy conventional narratives. Hara's most recent film, focusing on the famous left-wing essayist, Inose Mitsuharu, who not only wrote stories, but also, as the film shows, invented a fictional personal history.

Hara Kazuo was born in 1945, the most turbulent year in Japan's 20th-century history. The country's Fifty Years War to dominate Asia, between 1931 and 1945, ended in catastrophic defeat and foreign occupation. The period after the surrender was miserable for most Japanese, characterized by widespread hunger and even starvation. Hara's father was a soldier, and his family was poor. He attended public schools. (The educational system had been reformed during the occupation era (1945-52) to extend opportunities and stress the teaching of democracy.) After graduating from secondary school, Hara went to the capital to attend the Tokyo Shashin Senmon Gakki (Tokyo Academy of Photography). To support himself, he worked part-time in a school for children with disabilities, and found in the younger students subjects for his art. In 1969, he exhibited his collected photographs of these children at the Nislel Salon in the Ginza area of Tokyo. The show was titled "Baka ni suna" ("Don't Make Fun of Them"). At the exhibition he met his present wife, Kobayashi Sachiko.

It was during these years that social movements rocked Japan. Students took to the streets to protest about matters as global as American imperialism and as local as imperialism in the Japanese family. Workers had their own diverse objections to the status quo, and so they joined the students in the streets. Feminists demanded full participation of women in Japanese society. These movements were united by a willingness to challenge accepted values. This deeply influenced Hara: "There was a movement in the 60s and 70s to attack taboos, and I feel the need to come up to that. This sense of the freedom to break taboos, this emancipation, helped me to start making films."

In 1971, Hara founded Shisei Productions with Kobayashi Sachiko. She has produced all his films, and Hara speaks of the work as collaboration. Hara's first documentary, like his exhibition of photography, focuses on the disabled. Hara's elder brother, Goodbye CP (Goodbye CP, 1972), was made in collaboration with a group of individuals with cerebral palsy, shocked and depressed, with their stolns of physical disability. In response, one critic, Saeki Masahiro, accused Hara of sadism. Quite deliberately, Goodbye CP challenges taboos about representations of disabled people, and, in particular, the shame associated with physical differences. The protagonist, Yoko, Hiroshi, proudly displays his naked body on a beach in central Yokohama. Hara noted in an interview: "It is difficult to look at handicapped people's bodies...so that's what I wanted to show.4 Yoko asserts his right to appear different, to crawl around town on all fours, rather than use a wheelchair. The director encourages the disabled to speak for themselves as participants, rather than as victims; as Yokos matter of factly states: 'They can do without.' Goodbye CP does not show a facile sympathy with the plight of people with disabilities, but rather forces viewers to confront their own fears and misgivings.

As would be the case with all of Hara's films, the making of Goodbye CP generated considerable controversy. Yoko's wife, Yoshiko, also doubted, arguing that the film is undermining their attempts to join mainstream society. Characteristically, Hara includes the ensuing argument between Yoshiko and his wife in the documentary itself, forcing debate about the process and the ethics of representation. Yoshiko threatens divorce if her husband continues his participation, contending that Hara is portraying her as a "lesbo." Hearing of Yoko's intention to drop out of the project, his peers show up at the apartment and encourage him, as the man of the house, to stand up to his wife. A harsh battle ensues between Yoshiko and her husband in which she also lashes out at the filmmaker, crying: "This is an invasion of the home!"

Hara's reflective approach intentionally opens up questions of documentary practice for subjects and viewers. In what would become a pattern with his films, individuals involved penned their
memories of the production and their interpretations of the result. A very low-budget feature. shot in black-and-white with non-synchronous location sound. Goodbye CP had little impact on the film world, but played a crucial role in redefining the ways in which people with disabilities were treated and represented in Japan. The director was repeatedly invited to speak at conferences of social workers and healthcare providers. Haras and Koyabayski separately authored articles calling for changes in the treatment of the handicapped and criticizing state indifference in the question of whether disabled individuals should bear children.

Hara's second film was another low-budget production. casting about five million yen (approximately $40,000 at 1920 yen to the dollar). Kyokushinki enzai kawase (1974: Extreme Private Eyes: Love Song 1974, 1974) explores issues of intimate family relationships, privacy and gender roles. These subjects also became topical in American documentaries in the 1970s, Craig Gilbert's twelve-episode public television series, An American Family (1973), for example, focuses on the controversial topics of divorce and sexuality. In Extreme Private Eyes: Love Song 1974, Hara follows the activities of his estranged wife, Takeda Miyuki, a radical feminist, as she has an affair with a woman; conceives a child with an African American soldier stationed in Okinawa (in phone conversations, her mother suggests that she kill the baby); starts a day care centre for prostitutes; distributes pamphlets to prostitutes (which, in city text, leads to Hara's being beaten by gangsters); joins a feminist commune, and works as a singer in a GI bar. All the while arguing with Hide and the lori. Koyabayski, also the sound-recordist and producer of the film. Like Imamura's Pinkusou kusamak and Family Affairs (1962), Hara's film paints a searing portrait of a Japanese post-war town corrupted by the American naval presence. Hara explained his reasons for making this controversial work.

In the sixties and seventies, there was a feeling that if the individual did not cause change, nothing would change. At the time, I wanted to make a movie. and I was wondering how I could make a statement for change. At the time, there was much talk of family-imperialism (korei; ushabashiru). The strong sentiments of the novel was that family-imperialism should be destroyed. I thought that it could put my own family under the camera, all our emotions, our privacy. I wondered if I might break taboo about the family.

In Extreme Private Eyes: Love Song 1974, Hara sought to explore ties between the "family system" (korei; ushabashiru) and the "empire system" (korei; ushabashiru). The darkly autobiographical documentary shattered audiences in Japan, and became the talk of the film community. Hara's inclusion of scenes of self-humiliation scenes—the suicide of a woman in a wartime role who wears a kimono, and a scene in which a披露takaka woman科尔Keiko Marakura is confronted by his father, Koyabayski: "He's only after your body. he's certainly not good in bed"—led critics to conclude that Hara had made the transition from sadism to masochism. Hara dismisses these labels.

When the subject of my film was perceived to be stronger than I, as Takeda Miyuki was, I was called a sadist; when the subject was perceived to be weaker, I was called a sadist. Instead of being a sadist or a sadist, I would say that the nature of documentary filmmaking is that the director puts himself in various situations.

Like many avant-garde works, Extreme Private Eyes: Love Song 1974 ignores established conventions of cinematic style. The sound is never synchronous with the grainy black and white scenes. In many instances, there is a radical disjunction between sound and the images. Like Jonas Mekas' Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (1972). Hara's film has a strong home-movie flavour accentuated by jump cuts, flash-forces, her establishing shots, first-person voice-over and a handheld camera, although Hara uses relatively long takes as opposed to Mekas' fragmentation of time and space. Hara's voice-over has the same halting, emotional tone as Mekas' narration, and the non-synchronous sound accentuates the feeling of dislocation and loss.

Hara states in the voice-over that "the only way to keep the relationship was to make a film". Here, as in Ross McElwee's Sherman's March (1985), the camera offers a bridge to intimate contact with others, a pretext for interaction. The filmmaker does not passively record reality, but rather provides certain circumstances. Of his methods, Hara later noted: "I am not the type of director to shoot something just happening (like a documentation), but rather
like to make something happen and then shoot it. His documentaries are virtual collaborations - along the lines of the ethnographic fictions of Jean Rouch such as Moi, un noir (Me, a Black, 1957) - in which the director encourages the subjects to perform their lives for the camera. In Hara’s words: “Life is acting. There are two sides to people. The person one wants to be, and the person one is. I want the people in my movies to act the way they want to be.”

After the scandal of Extreme Private Eros: Love Song 1974, thirteen years passed before Hara released another feature. During this time, he supported himself by freelance work on fiction films. He worked as an assistant cameraman on Isumaru’s Fukushin jin wa was ni ari (Vengeance is Mine, 1979) and Eijanaika (1981), and as an assistant director on Urayama Kiko’s Taru no ko to (The Children of the Sun, 1980) and Kunai Kei’s Umi to de (Sea and Penet, 1986). The unanticipated success of The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On dramatically changed Hara’s life. It made him a major figure in film in Japan and on the international arthouse circuit. He travelled abroad for the first time, attending festivals where his feature won numerous awards. Later, he obtained a year-long fellowship to visit the United States, where he studied at New York University with Christine Choy (co-director of Who Killed Vincent Chin? [1987]) and also spent countless hours viewing films at the Museum of Modern Art.

The profits from The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On facilitated the production of Hara’s most recent film, Zenkin ashita (A Dedicated Life, 1994), about the short story writer, Inoue Muneharu. All of Hara’s unorthodox “action documentaries” have implicitly raised questions about the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. With A Dedicated Life, Hara sought to focus directly on this issue by tracing how Inoue weaves fiction from everyday experiences. Hara initially planned to film the writer for ten years. The production took an unexpected turn, however. Shortly after shooting began in 1989, Inoue was diagnosed with cancer. The footage documents his battle and eventual death from cancer while unswerving the fiction and reality of the writer’s personal mythology. Inoue, it becomes clear, was an invertebrate liar.

During a clip from a television appearance, Inoue, burning with resentment, tells how his father missed the application deadline for elite junior secondary schools. Inoue insists that, with his high grades, he would have easily won entrance. His younger sister, however, recalls that Inoue failed the exam. The repeated revelations of the writer’s invented past provide much of the humour of A Dedicated Life. Inoue claims that his first love was a Korean girl who dropped out of his junior secondary school to join a brothel. Inoue supposedly went to see her three or four times, only to end up having his first sexual experience with a much older prostitute. Asked about this brothel, one surprised elementary school acquaintance, who never left the town in question, has no memory of such a place. Another classmate confirms the fiction of Inoue’s adolescent escapade. To accentuate its fabricated nature, Hara stages a fictional sequence, using actors, of Inoue’s tale of first love. Is it all likelihood, the director will continue to explore the line between fiction and documentary. Hara has spent the past few years developing a feature film based on the life of an infamous Japanese murderess. His most recent documentary, Urayama Kiko no sho (The Life of Urayama Kiko, 1998), is a portrait of the film director Urayama Kiko, who began as an assistant to Isumaru at Nikkatsu Studios. Hara is currently a visiting professor at Waseda University.

In the name of the Emperor; the historical context

In February 1972, the Japanese soldier, Yokoi Shōichi returned home from the jungle of Guim, where he had continued to fight the Pacific War, unaware that Japan had surrendered 27 years earlier. Upon arriving at Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Yokoi stated: “Embarrassing as it is, I have returned alive. I brought back the rifle that I received from the Emperor.” Yokoi remained loyal to the Emperor in whose name the war was fought. In 1975, Yokoi was surprised to hear the Shōwa Emperor (Hirohito) publicly blame the war on the militarists. The Emperor really said something unexpected. I believed from the bottom of my heart that I went to war as a child of the Emperor according to the Emperor’s orders. Now the Emperor says, ‘The war was started by the militarists who used me. I could not say ‘No’... Honestly, I am disappointed.”

Yokoi’s disappointment in the Shōwa Emperor was shared by many veterans who were told after Japan’s surrender that he was a pacifist who never supported the war. Some have refused to countenance this abrupt about-face. Okuzaki Kenzō, the protagonist of The Emperor’s
Naked Army Marches On, holds the Emperor personally responsible for the disastrous conflict.

The Japanese interviewed in Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook's *Japan at War: An Oral History* (1992) often refer to the Emperor as the reason they supported the war. Ogawa Tamotsu says: "I really believed it was my duty to serve as a Japanese soldier - one of His Majesty's Children".21 Miyauchi Kikuo tries to explain how he could have taken part in a war deemed stupid by younger people: "For us the Emperor and the Nation were supreme. For them, one should not withhold one's life."22 Naval officer Koizumi Kyorohi remembers facing starvation in the jungle in the Philippines, and leading a group of soldiers to surrender:

As we came down from the mountains and approached the enemy, the two army men urged the rest of us to go on ahead because they had such terrible diarrhoea. I suggested that we all rest instead. Later, they repeated their request. Finally they said they didn't want to surrender. As two members of the Imperial Army, they'd rather 'die for the sake of the Emperor.' They asked me to leave them a hand grenade as we left them.23

Japanese soldiers were forbidden by Imperial Rescript from surrendering, and those few who did often brought shame on their families.

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On explores Japanese memories of the Pacific War, forcing repressed events into consciousness. What has the war meant to the Japanese people? While Americans remember the Second World War as "the good war,"24 Japanese remember it as a bad war. There was a time, however, when the conflict was going well for Japan. Japan's war began in 1931 with its invasion and eventual annexation of Manchuria. Hostilities with China escalated into full-scale war in July 1937. The Japanese military's tactics were often vicious, with widespread indiscriminate killing of civilians, use of poisonous gas, and even use of prisoners of war for gruesome medical experiments.

Japan's war against the Allies began with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. After a series of lightening victories, Japan, by mid-1942, controlled one seventh of the world's land. At that time, the closest adviser to the Shōwa Emperor recorded in his diary that the Emperor's "face was especially radiant, and he was smiling."25

From mid-1942, however, Japan suffered defeat after defeat. By autumn 1944, it was clear to many Japanese leaders that their country had no hope of victory; the fighting nevertheless continued for another year. During this final period, casualties increased dramatically. Japanese soldiers died by the hundreds of thousands throughout the Pacific. Okazaki Kenzō was near death when he was captured in New Guinea in 1944; he was nursed back to health in an American field hospital. He thus missed the most brutal phase of the New Guinea campaign. Only 30 of the more than 1000 members of Okazaki's unit, the 36th Engineering Corps, survived. Including Okazaki, ten of these survivors appear in The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. Approximately 146,000 Japanese soldiers died in New Guinea during the war.26

Japan surrendered unconditionally on 15 August 1945. Japanese casualties, including civilians, numbered nearly three million, while Japanese occupation caused the deaths of millions more throughout areas in Asia.27 With the end of the war, the Japanese began the process of mourning, remembering, and distributing blame for the "bad war." The Far East International Military Tribunal, stabbed by the Allies and dominated by American authorities, provided one interpretation of war guilt; seven war criminals - "militarists" - were executed in 1948.

The Shōwa Emperor played a critical role in ending the conflict in August 1945, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet Union's entry into the Pacific War. Glorification of this decision, however, has served to mute questions about his responsibility for a war that lasted fifteen of the first twenty years of his reign. The glorification began with Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō's speech to the nation on the day Japan surrendered: "His Majesty made the sacred decision to end the war in order to save the people...the nation sincerely apologizes to His Majesty (for the way the war ended)."28 A few weeks later, Suzuki's successor, Prince Naruhiko Higashikuni, reiterated the message in his opening speech to the Diet.

The termination of the war has been brought about solely through the benevolence of our Sovereign. It was His Majesty himself, who, apologizing to the spirits of the Ancestors, decided to save the millions of His subjects from privation and misery, and to pave the way for an era of grand peace for generations to come.29
Politicians immediately provided interpretations of the Emperor's heroic role and blamed the defeat on the people. Later, responsibility would shift to the military.

The Japanese government and, for their own political reasons, the American authorities who ran the Occupation downplayed the Emperor from the war. In November 1945, the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Shidehara Kijirō issued a report which stressed that the Shōwa Emperor bore no war responsibility. American authorities exonerated the Emperor from trial as a war criminal, but scripted him of 'coercive', rewriting the constitution to make him 'the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people'. New clothes were tailored for the Emperor to change his image. The Imperial Household Agency choreographed nationwide tours by the Shōwa Emperor. Covering nearly the entire country between 1946 and 1954, the Emperor, his generalissimo outfit replaced with suit and tie, walked among the people to encourage them to rebuild Japan into a peaceful nation. Debriefed for a brief period during the early years of the occupation, the issue of the Emperor's war responsibility gradually became taboo.

This remaking of the figure of the Emperor, symbol of Japan, contributed to the reconstruction of Japanese national identity. Soothing myths transformed the image of the country from aggressor to victim. The Shōwa Emperor's character and historical role, in its orthodox form, came to be depicted as follows. Firstly, he was a long-time pacifist, as symbolised by his courageous decision to end the war. Secondly, although he disagreed with the decisions of his ministers during the pro-war and wartime periods, he abided by the constitutional monarch, simply administering decisions made by others. In this way, he was rendered exempt from responsibility for the conflict. The Emperor - like the Japanese people - was thus 'victimized' by a tiny group of militarists bent on war. With the subsequent passage of the extremists, the true pacifist nature of the Emperor and the Japanese nation blossomed. Popular films such as Okamoto Kihachi's Nihon no tobinsha na kimi (Japan's Longest Day, 1947) propagated this myth of the Shōwa Emperor's historical role.

In 1952, just before Japan regained independence, a young Dietman, Nakasone Yasuhiro, raised the question of the Emperor's moral responsibility for the war in the House of Representatives. Nakasone proceeded carefully in his inscription of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. After making an obligatory reference to the Emperor's pacifist nature, Nakasone asked the government's opinion on a possible abdication in order to renew the monarchy and console the victims of the war. An enraged Yoshida responded that anyone who proposed the abdication of the beloved Emperor was a non-citizen or ex-Japanese (nisei). This exchange between Yoshida and Nakasone became well-known only after Nakasone became Prime Minister 30 years later. By the early 1980s, Nakasone upheld the official line. While he was Prime Minister, Nakasone, like Yoshida before him, defended the Shōwa Emperor as a pacifist who bore no war responsibility. Furthermore, by trumpeting distinctive symbols such as the Imperial House and the Japanese flag, Nakasone worked to reinforce the feeling of national community among the Japanese. He was the first to make a highly symbolic 'official visit' as Prime Minister to Yasukuni Shrine on the anniversary of the surrender. Until the occupation authorities ended state support, this site was the official monument to Japanese war dead. Re-establishing state support has long been a goal of conservative politicians, and Yasukuni Shrine remains a symbol for those who still look favourably upon Japan's wartime actions.

Appropriately, Nakasone's period as Prime Minister (1982–87), overlaps exactly the years during which The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On was in production. Born in 1918, Nakasone comes from the same generation as Okuzaki. Both may served in the military during the Pacific War - Nakasone as a naval officer and Okuzaki as a private in the Army. In 1946, Okuzaki returned to Japan from a prisoner-of-war camp in Australia only to find his mother emaciated and blind from lack of food. Distraught at not being able to provide for her family, she had nearly succeeded in hanging herself shortly before his return. Both veterans came to question the Emperor's war responsibility. Early in his political career, Nakasone was dismissed as a non-citizen by the Prime Minister for voicing these concerns in the Diet. Okuzaki, for his part, delights in calling himself an "anti-Japanese", seeing the term "nisei" as appropriate for himself in the title of one of his recent books. He has pursued his quest into the Emperor's historical role in a direct manner, using a shotgun to fire pachinko balls at the Emperor. Okuzaki explained the reasons for his 1969 attack, "As a soldier during the war I suffered. All my combat buddies died, and I hate the person most responsible for the war, the Emperor."
The making of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On

In the late-1970s, Okuzaki Yasuo asked Imamura Shôhei to direct a film about his life. Imamura had, by that time, made a series of remarkable films about the Pacific War for Japanese Television, including *Machi Matsuki ni konna* (Marine in the Uncut Comes Home, 1974), a story about a veteran who returns to Nagasaki for the first time after 33 years abroad. Although fascinated by Okuzaki's story, Imamura eventually abandoned the venture when he recognised that it was too contractual to be broadcast on television. The director suggested the project to Haru, who had worked on Imamura's *Vengeance to Mine and Eijunsaku as an assistant cameraman. Imamura arranged for Haru and Okuzaki to meet in February 1981. For his substantial contribution, Imamura received the first credit, "Planning by", on The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On.) By early 1982, although Okuzaki remained sceptical of Haru's abilities, they had agreed to make a film together.

Haru and his wife, Kobayashi Sachiko, produced the documentary independently through their company, Shōdo Productions, without funds from Japanese Television or any of the major film studios. "If companies would give me money", Haru recalled, "I borrowed money from friends. It was really a film that could only be made independently. I had no money, but I had time and freedom. I didn't have weapons to make a film about a taboo subject." Imamura assisted with the financing, and Okuzaki himself provided some of the funds. Throughout 1982 and 1983, Haru shot some 60 hours of 16mm film, using a small crew. Over a difficult two-year period, Haru produced, directed, shot and edited the film. The two-hour documentary eventually cost about $30,000 (or $25,000 at 12 yen to the dollar).

Haru conceived of this work as a means of confronting the historical legacy of the Pacific War. He noted: "Military organisations continue to exist today in Japan. The Nanking Massacre, the experiments conducted on humans by Unit 731, etc., even among the victims, there are few people willing to talk about such events. Why? The war is over, so why don't they talk about it? Because the war values continue to exist in Japanese society. I wanted to film the segment of Japanese society that still maintains values of the wartime era."

Before the shooting began, Haru met with ex-Sergeant Yamada Kichisaburo, who provided the list of members of the 35th Engineering Corps. This list was used to track down the veterans of the New Guinea campaign. The ex-Sergeant had more fully realised his proper life than had his old friend, Okuzaki. Yamada raised a family and even sent his children to college. Haru planned to film Yamada's story concurrently with that of Okuzaki, but the veteran fell ill and was hospitalised.

At this point, the subject-matter of the film was still broadly defined as a portrait of the war generation. Okuzaki's political activities embraced many different aspects of the fifteen-year conflict, including the Nanking Massacre. Haru has described his exploratory approach to non-fiction: "This is a real difference between documentaries and drama films. The director himself doesn't understand what will happen. This was certainly the case with The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. I had no idea how that film would turn out when I was making it." Through his own research, the director obtained conclusive evidence of the illegal executions of several Army privates. Only after the filming of ex-Sergeant Takashi Mihara did Haru narrow his focus to the murder of Japanese soldiers by their superior officers during the New Guinea campaign. Throughout the film, Haru discussed possible scenes with his protagonist. The director filmed Okuzaki visiting the graves of his mother and of his father's ancestors, scenes which do not appear in the finished work. Okuzaki routinely phoned Haru at six o'clock in the morning with ideas for the documentary, including, for example, a wedding ceremony in which the elderly veteran would act as a traditional god-between, and a trip to western New Guinea to erect memorials for dead Japanese soldiers. Okuzaki was as enthusiastic a star as any filmmaker could ever find. The director recalled that his outlandish subject was always fighting with the crew: "Some of the younger staff members quit. I, too, really came to dislike Okuzaki. He was chaotic. In the film he sounds logical only because of skillful editing. The way he speaks is often incoherent."

At numerous points during the shooting, the erratic veteran withdrew from the project. In one case, he threatened to burn all of the accumulated footage in Tokyo.
In another instance, Okuzuki berated Hara for shooting an encounter in which he receives a beating from an insatiable sergeant; he felt it inappropriate for the hero of the film to be shown during a moment of weakness. The veteran even spoke of kidnapping the 77-year-old Shimamoto Isoko, against her family's wishes, to take her to the village in New Guinea where her son was buried. Okuzuki's involvement in the making of the documentary was so substantial that he considers himself to be the director as well as the star. From his prison cell, he even wrote and published his own review of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. When Hara visited him at Hachinohe Prison in 1987, the intractable activist said: "Without me, the film will lose its meaning. I would by all means like you to film the scene when I leave." Shortly after the filmed encounter with ex-medics Hamaguchi Masahiro, Okuzuki disclosed his intention to murder one of his former officers, hoping to convince the director to record the homicide. "I want to kill Koshimizu and I would like you to film it", the veteran told Hara. "No movie has such a scene in it. Having you film such a scene would be my greatest present to you." Hara discussed the issue at length with his lawyer, his producer and other directors. The filmmaker recalled:

This was a very delicate problem. I had to decide if I should film it or not. I still have not made up my mind. One reason that I didn't film it is that I had become really sick of Okuzuki. I might have filmed it. Human beings have dark sides, and people want to see something frightening. People want to see the evil side of people. A little bit of me says I would like to see it. I went to speak to Inamura. His opinion was really different. He told me not to do it. When Hara mentioned his misgivings, Okuzuki told him: "You're no good." I greens, during a five-hour conversation in Kobe, producer Kobayashi implored Okuzuki not to kill anyone.

In March 1983, Okuzuki returned for two weeks to western New Guinea (now known as Irian Jaya) with Hara and assistant director, Yasuoka Takao. Under the best of circumstances, filming of this pivotal sequence would be difficult. Even since the transfer of the territory from The Netherlands to Indonesia in 1963, a low-level guerrilla war for independence had been fought there. In 1983, access to many areas was restricted by Indonesian authorities. At Okuzuki's request, Hara and Yasuoka reluctantly agreed to pose as the nephews of Private Shimamoto Masayuki to facilitate a visit to his burial ground in Arso. During the delicate negotiations to obtain permission to travel to the inceptor, Okuzuki became increasingly abrasive, yelling at officials and crew. Much to Hara's amazement, authorization was granted to visit the village. In Arso and other towns such as Abepura, Okuzuki commemorated fallen Japanese comrades. Hara also filmed the veteran's return to Demba, the village where he was taken prisoner in 1944.

On the last day of the exhausting trip, at Okuzuki's request, Hara filmed him thanking the police for their cooperation. When an alarmed officer requested the footage in the camera, Okuzuki insisted him. In response, the policeman demanded all of their film. The director was obliged to surrender 50 rolls of 16mm stock to Indonesian authorities, some two hours and fourteen minutes, all of the footage shot in the territory. Hara was distraught. The crew returned to Tokyo empty-handed. At Narita Airport, Okuzuki spat on his passport before handing it over to Japanese customs officials, and later berated Hara for his failure to refer to him as Sensei (master). Okuzuki's intransigence only further damaged their attempts to obtain the confiscated footage. In spite of concerted efforts through diplomatic and private channels, Hara and his producer were never able to retrieve the exposed film.

Shortly after their disappointing return to Japan, Okuzuki tried to convince the director to accompany him to the eastern half of the island, now Papua New Guinea, to visit the Wewak Garrison where the 38th Engineering Corps had been stationed. The veteran intended to retrace his retreat through the jungle and illegally cross the frontier between Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. Hara refused and thereafter had virtually no contact with Okuzuki. Some eight months later, in December 1983, he learned from a television news report that the veteran was a suspect in a shooting. Although Okuzuki was quickly apprehended, later newscasts detailed a substantially larger plot of political assassinations. Okuzuki had targeted several politicians of the Jiyu Minshutō (Liberal Democratic Party), some employees of the Indonesian Consulate in Kobe, and one Japanese veteran involved in the Nanjing Massacre.

Dismayed, Hara put aside the unedited footage for two years,
The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On

Character analysis: Okuzaki as action hero

Although embodying some of the traits of an action star in The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, Okuzaki Kenji was an unusual figure as a hero, much less as a movie star. At 62 years of age (as an aside informs us), slight of build, with a mouthful of crooked teeth, sporting at the outset, a red "Yussa Barley" automotive jacket, the veteran of the New Guinea campaign strikes a rather pitiful appearance. Yet, he is tireless and fearless. This type fits Hari's preference for strong, decisive characters, such as Batman and Superman: "I love Hollywood action films, and I wanted Okuzaki to act like an action star." Never distracted by romance, monetary considerations or the demands of daily living, Okuzaki pursues his political agenda single-mindedly. His worldly concerns are few; viewers scarcely learn of his day job as a car mechanic.

Okuzaki's commitment to social activism is total. Painted political slogans adorn the façade of his store, as well as the sides of his mobile sound-track. One reads "All men are equal - there are no authority figures such as the Emperor." Although opponents and allies emerge over the course of the film, the veteran never passes to re-evaluate his methods, nor does he ever express doubt. On the contrary, he spends every free moment erecting monuments for dead soldiers, praying for their souls, badgering living veterans, and staging direct protests against the Japanese government. When the sister and brother of two murdered soldiers abandon the investigation, Okuzaki continues without them. Not to be undone by their refusal to accompany him on further interviews, he nonetheless substitutes others in their roles as grieving relatives.

Although cast in the mould of a hero, Okuzaki is not a larger-than-life figure. Rather, he represents the ordinary, even anonymous, Japanese man of his generation. Born in 1920 to a poor family, he came of age during the 1930s, a period of rising militarism as Japan sought to expand its empire. Like millions of his compatriots, he was conscripted into the military upon reaching adulthood and took part in a war fought in the name of the Emperor. Unlike his fellow countrymen, however, he has insisted upon lifting the veil of silence that has obscured the painful war years. In Nagare, Kante, where he has tracked down Haraguchi Masaichi, at a restaurant, he accosts the owners: "All you want is money! These people lost their brothers. Which is more important? Forget about money!" Unimpressed by his country's pious commercial boom, Okuzaki has abandoned his

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While some Japanese critics, such as Kanatani Kiichi, find the English title terribly misleading, it does convey a sense of Okuzaki's fanaticalism. Furthermore, this problem was not limited to the English-speaking world. Critics in the French, for example, cite the French title as 'L’armée de l’empereur invisible' ('The Emperor's Army Marches On'), an even more deceptive translation.49

18 - The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On

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former anonymity for a unique position in Japanese culture as a proponent of violent civil disobedience.

Ookizaki, like Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, has been seen as a political symbolist; rather than support official symbols, however, he attacks them. On 29 April 1982, during the Shōwa Emperor’s birthday, a national holiday, the veteran staged a protest “to console the souls of the many victims who died for the Emperor during the Pacific War.” His soundtrack, from which he blares anti-Emperor announcements, sports two flags which parody the Japanese flag. Whereas the official flag has a white background and a red circle (the rising sun), the veteran’s version inverts this colour scheme. Over the loudspeaker, he shouts: “Ookizaki Kenjirō is here, on Emperor’s Day. The Emperor is 81 years old and still on the throne. Many soldiers died for him and his group.” Before he is carted away by the police, Ookizaki takes the opportunity to criticise the entire political establishment, including the Nihon Kyōsohō (Japanese Communist Party), for opportunism.

Through additional symbolic gestures, the veteran acknowledges the political impact of war memorials. In several scenes, he raises grave markers for dead comrades (as he did in Eisan Jaya in the fortified footage). At the end of the documentary, Ookizaki attacks another veteran for insisting that he has paid his respects to the executed soldiers by visiting Yasukuni Shrine, considered by conservatives to be the proper memorial to the dead war. “You think that by going to Yasukuni Shrine the spirits of the dead are consolled?”, an aptated Ookizaki yells while moving in to strike the ex-Sergeant. As the activist recognises, this shrine remains part of the ideological structure that encouraged Japanese unquestioningly to support the war in the first place.

Ookizaki’s activities, especially his anti-emperor protests, have enraged him from mainstream Japanese society. Nevertheless, he implicates the Shōwa Emperor whenever possible, denouncing him as “the most cowardly man in Japan” and “a symbol of ignorance and irresponsibility”. With only minor support from others, he is virtually a man-alone social movement. As noted in an interview at the beginning of the film, only incompletely translated in the English subtitles, Ookizaki’s convictions include: “1956: Murder of a real estate broker, ten years at hard labour. 1969: Shotting of a stag at the Emperor in the palace, one year and six months. 1979: Scattering pornographic handbills of the Emperor, one year and two months, 1981: Plotting to murder ex-Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, not indicted.” Proud of his convictions, Ookizaki sees himself as a warrior in a crusade. Above all, he is a man of action, as Hara noted, “Ookizaki throws peaches balls at the emperor. But intellectuals, you know, they debate ideas, but they can’t do anything.”

With boundless energy, Ookizaki dominates the screen. Of the 30 scenes which comprise The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On, he appears fully in 24. (Three of the remaining six consist primarily of printed italics.) Even his interactions with his wife, Shizumi, are determined by political expediency. At the beginning of scene 5, she dutifully presents him with a packed lunch and a wrapped gift for his day of protest. Later, during confrontations with accused veterans in scenes 21-23, Mrs Ookizaki impersonates, at her husband’s request, the relatives of various soldiers killed in New Guinea. In scene 25, she even throws herself between her enraged husband and ex-Sergeant Yamada, taking a blow to her leg that was intended for the elderly veteran. Standing in front of a Red Cross hospital, Ookizaki thanks her for his sacrifice. “She did well, I appreciate it. She saved me.” Mrs Ookizaki serves as an accomplice and sidekick to the eccentric hero. Later, after her husband’s imprisonment for attempted murder, Shizumi picks up where he left off, announcing his intentions over the loudspeaker of their mobile van.

While fearless and willing to take responsibility for his acts, Ookizaki behaves erratically, attacking his interviewees at one point, excusing himself the next. Time after time, he is belligerent, stubborn and self-aggrandising. He takes every opportunity to point out to his fellow veterans that the postwar life he has lived is superior to theirs. Ookizaki shows cunning, but little wit, in his pursuit of the accused veterans. Since he takes himself completely seriously, his speeches and actions, while often humorous, are only inadvertently so. When Ookizaki assigns his wife the role of grieving relative, he finally cracks a slight smile and laughs at himself; otherwise, he seems totally self-unconscious.

On occasion, Ookizaki also acts politely and solicitously. Speaking on the phone with the Chief of Surveillance for the Hyogo Police, he engages in a formal, ritualised exchange of pleasantries. (At the same time, he makes sure to record their conversation with a wiretap.) During most of his confrontations, the veteran continues
to use the appropriate hierarchical forms of address demanded by the Japanese language. Despite the utter unconventionality of his surprise visits, he always comes bearing presents, as custom requires. Dropping in on Takumi Mizono in Yapaku, Okayama, Okuzuki apologises for the insufficiency of his gift: ‘I should have brought something better’. When the veterans confess their crimes, Okuzuki becomes forgiving and understanding. He expresses concern over ex-Sergeant Yamada’s difficulty with use of just moments after he has attacked the elderly veteran with blows from hands and feet.

Occasionally, Okuzuki presents a gentle bearing, especially during the mourning scenes, when he becomes uncharacteristically modest. His grief, which he shares with the family members of the internees, is indistinguishable from that of the others. In Eniimi, Hiroshima, he introduces himself to Shimano Masao Isako, whose son he buried with his own hands in Aro, New Guinea. Bowing and sobbing, Okuzuki says: ‘Unfortunately he died, but he was lucky to have been buried. I think he was happy. So I want to console his soul now’. His feelings for the soldiers, privates killed during the prime of their youth, appear utterly genuine.

Okuzuki explicitly rejects the hierarchies of the family, the military and the nation. He retains a healthy notion of individual responsibility as regards the Emperor and the soldiers who committed crimes during the war. The veteran Takami reiterates an explanation made notorious by Nazi officials at the Nuremberg Trials, ‘An order is an order, we had to obey’, a rationalisation which Okuzuki rejects. When ex-Sergeant Saw claims that ‘In the Army orders always came first’, Okuzuki beats him to the ground. The protagonist brushes aside the veterans’ appeals to military hierarchy, while at the same time recognising that superior officers bear special responsibilities for actions taken in their names. ‘I’m accusing the Emperor for the same reason. He was responsible as the Supreme Commander of the Imperial Army.’

Okuzuki maintains that his social movement is divinely inspired. He visits Yamada Kichitaro at a hospital in Fukaya, and tells him that his illness represents ‘divine punishment’ for his wartime activities. During his protest of Emperor’s Day at a Tokyo intersection, Okuzuki proclaims his iconoclastic version of heroism over the loudspeaker of his mobile van: ‘A great man observes God’s law, not man’s law, without fearing man’s punishment’. Later, he recounts how he sat on the judge presiding over one of his trials, demonstrating his contempt for the law. Like the vigilantes of American detective films, he works for justice through extrajudicial means, outside a system he defines as corrupt. The protagonist of a hard-boiled crime story is typically, as John D. Macdonald notes, ‘a private investigator who occupies a marginal position with respect to the official social institutions of criminal justice’. Like the classic action hero, Okuzuki has to resort to violence to bring the guilty to justice. Incapable of compromise, Okuzuki’s unassuaged nobility derives from the righteousness of his moral beliefs and the justice of his cause.

Although he claims divine inspiration, Okuzuki is a radical empiricist, steadfastly attached to a series of particular events that occurred in New Guinea at the end of the Pacific War. Unlike the relatives of the victims, he does not accept the Rahamen-like consequences of the conflicting testimonies obtained from the veterans. Instead, Okuzuki pieces together the traces of the illegal executions by an obsessive attention to the exact details of how many bullets were fired, where the principals were standing, and the direction in which the bodies fell. Like the woman in Alain Resnais’ Hiroshima mon amour (1959), Okuzuki refuses to live in the present, to forget, and to get on with his life as so many of the other veterans have done. He remains resolutely, even aggressively, stuck in the past.

Imposing ex-Sergeant Yamada to confess, Okuzuki calls on the survivor of the New Guinea occupation to acknowledge the terrible truths of war because ‘fact is fact’. As in Kurosawa Akira’s Ikoma no kaido (Record of a Living Being, 1955), the main character’s mad obsession with the war disturbs the surface calm of the present. The injustices of history are, for Okuzuki, fresh wounds that call for redress and revenge. Like a vengeful spirit, he comes back to avenge the slain soldiers. Although clearly no ghost, he embodies the return of the repressed memory of Japan’s military adventures during the Pacific War. This seems quite literally the case when Okuzuki abruptly shows up at the house of ex-Sergeant Takami, his superior officer whom he has not seen in the intervening 37 years. Dazed, Takami covers his face with his hat and tries to slip away.

Although working through extrajudicial means, Okuzuki maintains mostly cordial relations with the police. In scene 3, the veteran discusses his travel plans with the Chief of Surveillance for the Hyogo Police, a meeting which clearly indicates that his
movements are monitored by Japanese authorities. At times, it seems as if Okuzuki desires their presence because it gives his protests a proper audience; he needs to be caught and punished to make his gesture of revolt complete. The police officers, for their part, consistently provoke comic relief in The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. Unlike Okuzuki and the veterans, the police remain anonymous. Although officers appear in six separate scenes, few of them are identified by name. Indeed, Okuzuki refers to the uniformed guards outside Kobe Prison as "robots" for refusing him entrance. Occasionally, policemen cover their faces in reaction to the camera; in front of the prison, they request that Hara stop filming. Several times, the police show up at the end of a heated confrontation between Okuzuki and one of the veterans. In at least one instance, Okuzuki himself calls them. In this absurd and comical twist, the perpetrator of the offence, not the victim, has requested their presence. Born after the Pacific War, the young officers are barely equipped to address the controversial subject matter. Understanding little of the situation, they are brokered by the unstable veteran and come across as faceless representatives of the social order.

Although frequently amusing, Okuzuki also appears dangerously unpredictable in his actions, capable of anything at times: aggression, violence, assassination. The roll-call of his prison sentences proves that he will go to any end to accomplish his goals. He is, after all, a convicted murderer. Throughout The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, the viewer questions Okuzuki's sanity, although the filmmaker withholds judgment. Hara allows the veteran to state his case with conviction, even if he is insane. After Okuzuki has wrestled ex-Sergeant Seo Yukio to the ground, he implores him to speak openly of the past. When Seo responds that he has never met him before, Okuzuki yells, "I gave you my card", as if this social nicety justifies his violent actions. In his fanatical pursuit of the truth, Okuzuki represents a kind of comic anti-hero. Like most classic hero types, he remains a character without psychological depth, completely animated by duty to a higher goal. Hara never explores the room of Okuzuki's erratic and grandiose behaviour in, for example, his family background. Nor does he offer an interpretation of Okuzuki's aggressive actions in terms of post-traumatic stress. Since Hara deliberately avoids all such forces into psychological motivations, viewers know almost nothing about Okuzuki at the end of the film.

Narrative analysis: anatomy of an investigation

Although The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On might be called an historical documentary, the film clings tenaciously to the present, rather than to the past. Hara explores the memory of the Pacific War, the resonance of the war years in the present, to "trace how the war survives in Japanese society today."34 Similarly, while the film focuses on the activities of Okuzuki Kenji, it skips over the details of his individual biography. Most historical documentaries - such as Connie Field's The Life and Times of Rashi the Rover (1980), Noel Buckner/ Mary Dore/Sam Silk's The Good Fight (1983) and Henry Hampton's Eyes on the Prize (1988) - use extensive archival footage, interviews with eyewitnesses and authoritative voice-over narration. Many also include interviews with scholars and journalists. Such conventional historical documentaries contribute to what Bill Nichols calls the "discourses of sobriety."45

Hara resists the didactic temptation of this form, instead focusing his story on the present-day activities of Okuzuki and the reactions that he provokes in others. Although the veteran frequently refers to the Emperor, Hara never cuts to footage or photographs of him. Nor is there any reference whatsoever to the atomic bomb, an unusual omission for a Japanese film about the Second World War, especially since Okuzuki visits Hiroshima repeatedly. Occasional photographs of soldiers appear, but they are usually found in the homes of the relatives whom the veteran visits. Hara focuses on the living memory of the war, like Claude Lanzmann, whose Shoah epic, Shoah (1985), chronicles the Holocaust in Europe without any archival imagery. Through synchronous sound interviews and images of the concentration camps as they appear 40 years after the war, Lanzmann anchors his film in the here-and-now to redeem the past and give the dead "an everlasting name."46

Hara's presence in The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On is more ambiguous than Lanzmann's moral stance in Shoah. The director never declares his thoughts about Okuzuki and the other veterans. Whereas the mass media treated Okuzuki as a lunatic whose actions were incomprehensible, Hara forces viewers to evaluate his character and actions without explicit editorial commentary. In addition, the director fails to intervene when Okuzuki assaults his interviewees. At these times, Hara holds back and observes the confrontations with apparent detachment, a voyeuristic posture that
makes the viewer an inadvertent witness to violence. By putting the audience in the position of an accomplice, these scenes acutely pose questions about the ethics of documentary representation and the responsibilities of filmmakers towards their subjects.

Hara, unlike Lanzmann, does not conduct the interviews in his documentary. In The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On, he hovers in the background. The filmmaker’s voice is only heard in the penultimate scene when he speaks to Mrs Okuzaki outside Hiroshima Prison. Nevertheless, there is no pretense that the camera is not there, as in the documentaries of Frederick Wiseman. On the contrary, throughout the two-hour film, the characters refer to the crew in passing, address the camera directly, and yell at the filmmakers. When Okuzaki presents Takami Mirono with a gift, the ex-Sergeant also bows in thanks to the off-camera film crew. At Hiroshima Prison, one of the guards places his hand over the camera lens. In the encounter with ex-Captain Koshimizu, Koshimizu’s wife glides across the background and, directly facing the camera, takes a picture of the scene.

The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On deliberately restricts itself to its main character’s world-view, plunging the viewer into a harrowing series of protest and confrontations with veterans and police. None of the other characters really gets the chance to call into question Okuzaki’s methods and activities. (Through ironic juxtaposition and deliberate strokes of black comedy, the director manages to retain some independence from his protagonist.) Although Okuzaki confounds conventional divisions between left-wing and right-wing ideologies, he limits his political activities to crimes committed by Japanese officers against their fellow countrymen, and says little about the treatment of Chinese, Koreans or any other population colonised by Japan during the war. By confining the perspective of the film to the erratic veteran, however, the director directly confronts the audience with the moral chaos of the war.

The first third of The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On (across 1-10) introduces the principal character and his political activities. Although no story deadlines are immediately established, several possible narrative threads develop. The roll-call of prison sentences at the outset, given in chronological order, raises the spectre of future convictions. Having spent twelve years and eight months in jail, will Okuzaki go to prison again for his acts? In scene 3, he mentions plans to go to Tokyo. In scene 4, while visiting ex-Sergeant Yamada in the hospital, Okuzaki announces his intention to return to New Guinea. He hopes that Yamada will accompany him. During scene 8, he tries to convince Mrs Shimamoto, whose son died there, to come along as well. However, this narrative thread eventually peers out. Although Okuzaki later travelled to western New Guinea, an interlude in scene 28 explains that the footage from the trip was confiscated there by Indonesian authorities. The veteran’s return to the scene of the crime, therefore, turns out to be little more than a black hole in the story, a gap caused by the historical vagaries of colonialism and the Pacific War. Remarkably, director Hara calls attention to this missing sequence, highlighting the chance incompleteness of his narrative.

The introductory scenes alternate between tragedy and black comedy. The drama comes from the seriousness of the charges and the intensity of Okuzaki’s involvement in the investigation. The dark humour emerges as he transgresses social norms in ways that are simultaneously disturbing and amusing. In the opening scene, a marriage ceremony, Okuzaki serves as a traditional intermediary between the bride and the groom. As a wedding song plays in the background, the viewer follows a procession of cars which bring the bride, the groom and the guests to the ceremony. Once everyone has arrived, commemorative photographs are taken. Now seated, the bride and groom sip sake from a cup held by others. Okuzaki’s speech, entirely customary for a go-between, starts out innocently, maintaining the formality of the ritual, “I, Okuzaki Kenji, am delighted to serve as go-between for the wedding of Miss Sato and Mr Ogaki. Congratulations on your wedding!” Without warning, however, the veteran then launches into an astonishing harangue:

After graduating from Kobe University, the groom, Mr Ogaki, fought the Establishment. He was arrested, 1, Okuzaki Kenji, killed a real estate broker, shot patchko balls at the Emperor, then scattered pornographic handbills at the Emperor in department stores. I served thirteen years in prison. My actions were all against the Establishment. This match was made because both the groom and the go-between fought the Establishment.

As Okuzaki concludes, “this is a rare wedding”, the stunned viewer is inclined to agree.

Another traditional wedding tune is sung. Then, suddenly,
Okuzaki attacks the concept of nationalism: "Maybe this country [Japan] exists for you to use, but judging from my experience not only Japan but any other country is a wall between men. It stops them from joining each other. It's a big wall, I think a family is another wall. It separates human beings from each other. It's useless. It's against divine law. So I attack it." Okuzaki implies that the nation is no more than an imagined community. In the scene, the train departs, and Okuzaki, as the narrator, reflects on their journey.

The scene is filled with a sense of foreboding, as Okuzaki sounds a warning about the consequences of nationalistic thought. The train pulls away, and the film cuts to a shot of the train passing through a mountainous landscape, symbolizing the journey ahead.

The film then cuts to a scene of Okuzaki and his family preparing for departure. The family, dressed in traditional attire, gathers around a small altar, offering prayer and tribute to their ancestors. Okuzaki, as the narrator, reflects on the importance of these rituals and their connection to the land and its people.

The film then cuts to a scene of Okuzaki and his family on the train, surrounded by other passengers engaged in similar acts of remembrance. The journey continues, with Okuzaki providing commentary on the cultural and historical significance of the landscape they pass through.

The film then cuts to a scene of Okuzaki and his family arriving in a distant town, where they are greeted by their family members and friends. The scene is filled with a sense of reunion and connection.

The film then cuts to a scene of Okuzaki and his family preparing for their final journey, symbolized by the scene of the train leaving the station. Okuzaki reflects on the journey ahead, filled with uncertainty and a sense of finality.

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search for the truth about the executions. (In scene 25, Okuzaki proudly states, "Violence is my forte.") As in several of the previous scenes, the interview with Seo ends with the arrival of the police, who escort Okuzaki away.

Scene 13 is one of the few in which the central protagonist does not appear. Saitō Rinko, the sister of Private Yoshisawa, provides independent verification of Okuzaki's confessions, maintaining that her brother was murdered. Her methods are also unorthodox: she asks his sister at the alter yesterday to tell me how he died, exactly what happened. I shouted the facts and prayed hard. Then his face moved. His face in the photo moved.' In a subsequent confrontation, Saitō claims that her late brother told her of the circumstances surrounding his death. For the scene's dramatic effect, Saitō and Namura Toshiya, the brother of executed Private Natsumi Jimpē, accompany Okuzaki on his interviews. They take part in the encounters with the veterans Haru Toshio and Higashiguchi Masahiko, presenting sequences that last twelve minutes each.

In scene 15, Okuzaki meets up with Saitō and Namura outside a health centre in Iwawa, Yamanashi. Inside, in the lobby, they meet ex-Sergeant Haru. Following a brief exchange, they all retire to an office where Okuzaki pursues his inquiry into the executions of Yoshisawa and Namura. The dramatic arc of this visceral scene oscillates between accusation and denial, until Haru Toshio makes a moving gesture of approach towards the relatives. Then, the appearance of several policemen temporarily interrupts the rhythm of the interrogation. A brief moment again when the officers leave and the scene concludes with a dramatic confession. Throughout the confrontation, the camera remains mostly at the level of the seated characters. The angles of the shots are cramped and numerous jump cuts occur. Seo's light casts uneasy shadows on the walls, including that of the microphone boom. Both the camera and the accused veteran seem trapped in the small room.

Like Takami and Seo before him, Haru Toshio, at the outset of the interview, remains wilfully vague about his wartime experiences. The veteran blandly states: "My memories faded after many years". Both Namura and Saitō aggressively question him, but to no avail. "The execution", an intertitle precociously states, "took place two weeks after the war ended". Asked if he was a member of the firing squad, the ex-Sergeant says, "I don't know";
which Okuzaki replies incredulously, "You don't know! It's either yes or no." Leaning across the table, Sakimoto places a photograph of Yoshizawa in front of Haru Toshio, imploring him to tell the truth. Both relatives make appeals on behalf of the souls of the soldiers, as if the dead may only be laid to rest through public confession.

After several minutes of equivocal responses, Okuzaki takes a more threatening stance, offering to his explosive encounter with Soo Yuki: "I didn't intend to treat him. But he refused to talk, so I hit him. Today, I came here planning to beat him. I can do it." Sakimoto's persistence and the presence of the grieving relatives together with the framed photographs of their dead brothers, push the veteran towards a partial admission of guilt. Haru Toshio confirms the innocence of the two Army privates: "One thing I want to tell you. Your brother, they did nothing wrong." Reaching across the long table, he clasps the hands of Norn and then Sakimoto who refuses to let go. Sobbing, Sakimoto appeals to his generosity and goodwill. Wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, the ex-Sergeant states, "40 years after the war, the dead soldiers sleep in peace."

Okuzaki and the relatives explicitly refute this. Sakimoto cries: "My brother appears in my dream. I see him in the air, too. They aren't sleeping. They visit us."

The pressure increases on the veteran. Sakimoto refuses to leave until Haru Toshio tells the truth about the executions; she even threatens to follow him to his home. Okuzaki acknowledges his tactics: "It's a case of illegal confinement, that I don't care. I hope you understand how we feel. It was impossible for our soldiers to shoot at him. But I did. After I did this, my business increased 300% and people began to call me Senator!"

Although often inarticulate, Okuzaki occasionally emanates a level of eloquence in his arguments, as when he says to ex-Sergeant Masa, "Perhaps you want to return home. but the two soldiers you shot at, can never return home from New Guinea."

As the atmosphere becomes more heated, several members of the Justice Police suddenly arrive on the scene. Pounding on the door, Okuzaki invites them in the room. "Sit down here. You may arrest me. Come in. Who are you? You should learn more about life, about the war as a real story." Introducing himself, he bow deep to the officers who, of course, respond in kind. When one policeman inadvertently blocks the view of the scene, Okuzaki instructs him to move out of the way of the crowd. "I want the camera. We came here to shoot." Astonishingly, the two young officers slide over so as not to obstruct the sight line of the cinematographer. Referring to Okuzaki as "Senior", one of the policemen politely asks, "Can you tell us your schedule?" In response, the eccentric veteran outlines his investigation into the murders of Yoshizawa and Nomura. As a result of Okuzaki's incredible self-righteousness, the police once again serve a comic function. He shockingly uses them to restate his case against Haru Toshio.

As abruptly as they arrived, the officers, seemingly reassured, disappear, and the interview continues. Surprisingly, the sequestered ex-Sergeants have not taken advantage of their presence to put an end to the confrontation. Sobbing, Nomura implores the veteran to tell the truth on behalf of his last father. Haru Toshio often to discuss the matter privately with the relatives. Okuzaki, sensing his purpose undermined, rejects this arrangement. He gestures towards the crew, stating: "If it were the truth, you could say it in front of the camera."

Pouting towards the photograph on the table, Sakimoto Rinko says: "My brother is here. His spirit. Consider he's here. Speak for him."

The accused veteran tried to turn this reference to ancestor worship against her: "If people knew they were actually for desertion, you'd have to bear the shame as their families."

Pointing towards the lens, the ex-Sergeant adds, "The camera's rolling. People will see the film and look down on you. Okuzaki retells this gambist and returns, similarly nothing to the filmmaker. "They'll think you're hiding the truth." The camera becomes a quieter but ever-present witness to the conspiracy of silence. Ultimately, Haru Toshio's resistance falters, and he admits that Privates Yoshizawa and Nomura were shot for desertion well after the war had already ended. Furthermore, the veteran confirms that he was a member of the execution squad, and expresses his deep regrets to Sakimoto and Nomura. The exhaustive interview ends with the confession.

Without pause, scene 16 pushes the investigation deeper into the madness of the New Guinea campaign. Okuzaki and the relatives track down ex-soldier Hidemichi Misachi at a restaurant owned by his family in a shopping mall in Nagoya, Kobe. They wander through the mall to find an appropriate place to talk. Once they are seated around a table in the Koushaku restaurant, Hidemichi provides the most dramatic testimony in 'The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. Finally, after endless denial - in a crucial scene placed at the centre
of the film and chillingly set in an elegant restaurant - one of the accused veterans answers questions without equivocation. The viewer's worst fears are confirmed. Speaking of captured Allied soldiers and New Guinea natives, Hamasuchi admits, "We had to test them to survive. We could be as brutal as that. Men are horrible."

The revelations of annihilation fulfill a cathartic function for veterans, victims, relatives and viewers. Contradicting Sakimoto's line of questioning, however, Hamasuchi denies that Japanese privies, such as Yosiura and Nomura, were eaten.

In Hijygo, in scene 17, Okuzaki and the relatives encounter ex-doctor Maruyama Tak. With those who acknowledge their responsibility in the executions, such as Maruyama, the interviews remain cordial. The ex-Sergeant concludes: "After all, I think Kashimizu was to blame." In scene 18, Nomura and Sakimoto visit the graves of their brothers without Okuzaki. Their comments are picked up - through a series of jump cuts. Framed sitting beside the cemetery, they summarise the results of their inquiries:

Sakimoto: They talk different. All different stories. So I think they were all lying.

Nomura: Our brothers were executed for something they didn't do. They were killed just because the officers wanted to annihilate them to survive.

Sakimoto: I think so, too. I think privates were the first to be sacrificed for officers to survive. The area was four square kilometres. No food supply. The easiest way to eat was to prey on low-ranking soldiers. The weakest fell victim first. The officers survived that way.

Seemingly satisfied or simply fed up with the tangle of lies and half-truths, the relatives abandon their investigation, as an intertitle notes: "The two never accompanied Okuzaki again."

On the phone with ex-Sergeant Kojima Shichirō in scene 19, Okuzaki redoubles his efforts to bring ex-Captain Kashimizu to justice, even without the cooperation of the relatives. The sequence reaffirms Okuzaki's dogged pursuit of the guilty. Of the irrepressible ex-Captain, Kojima flatly states, "He deserves death". As the camera pans down from Okuzaki's face to the telephone wiretap and the tape recorder in the foreground, Kojima adds, "As the war ended no one should be punished for desertion". The Emperor's Naked Army

March On exhibits some of the paraphernalia of detection - tape recorders, newspaper headlines - common in investigative documentaries such as Fred Morris' The Thin Blue Line (1988) and Michael Apted's Incident at Oglala (1991). For the inevitable confrontation with Kashimizu, Okuzaki had hoped to have the assistance of the two relatives. In scene 20, he explains how hard he tried to convince Nomura, Jinpei's brother, to come with him. Not to be undone by their refusal to accompany him on further interviews, Okuzaki simply recruits his own wife and a teacher, Kuwasa Hiroshi, for the encounter with the ex-Captain.

Smiling, the veteran laughs when he tells Shinzumi, "Today you'll be acting not as my wife but as Yoshizawa's sister. You're the relatives of the two victims. Act well. Let me do the talking." Okuzaki appears to appreciate not only the deception involved, but also the understanding implicit in his remark that, under ordinary circumstances, Shinzumi acts as his wife. Scene 22, therefore, reintroduces a comic note in the grim progression of Okuzaki's investigation and its worded revelations. As usual in The Emperor's Naked Army March On, the humour carries a sharp edge. Even more than his decision to resort to violence, this use of deceit undermines the viewer's confidence in Okuzaki. How can he demand complete honesty from the other veterans when he himself is not above lying on behalf of his cause?

Whereas Okuzaki seems religiously attached to literal facts in his investigation, he reveals himself as an opportunist in his search, willing to stage certain actions in his pursuit of the truth. In scene 24, Okuzaki gets support from another opponent of the emperor system, admitting, "I asked Mr. Oshima to act as the victim's brother. I think his appearance will make the ex-Sergeant talk." These scenes mirror Han's collaborative method of documentary filmmaking in which characters perform their lives - and others - for the camera. This casting also substantiates Okuzaki's assertion that he is the author of the film. The knowledge that the so-called relatives are merely stand-ins complicates the viewer's reactions to the encounters that follow. The distinctions between documentary and fiction are effectively blurred.

Together with his wife and Mr. Kuwa, Okuzaki confronts Kashimizu Masao at his house in Osaka, Hiroshima. Scene 21 provides the first glimpse of the man who ordered the murders, although the ex-Captain refuses to shoulder any guilt, "You may
blame me, but I'm not ashamed of myself. Although he admits to having authorised the executions, Koshimizu, too, claims that he was under orders from his superior officers, and furthermore that he was not there when the shootings took place. Okuzaki's subsequent frenzied accusations — including his inflammatory comment that "The most cowardly man in Japan is the Emperor. You're loyal to him, like other officers" — fail to perturb the elderly veteran. This interview ends without any meaningful resolution.

A relentless narrative momentum builds over the last third of the documentary. The next scene, 22, takes place the "following day at five in the morning", according to an intertitle. Once again, Okuzaki ambashes Sen Yuki at his home. This time, shaken by the presence of the fake relatives, the ex-Sergeant capitulates and admits his participation in the killings, providing a gruelling account of the shootings. "Death should be instantaneous," Sen comments, his face flushed with tears. "I aimed at the heart of one of them. But they didn't die instantly. Koshimizu shot them with his gun, so they wouldn't suffer any longer." Using a handful of oranges from a basket on the table, the two veterans meticulously reconstruct the relative positions of the firing squad, the victims and the Captain. Overcome with emotion, Sen apologises to Okuzaki's companions.

Scene 23 takes place, as another intertitle states, at "2.00 pm the same day", Okuzaki again confronts Takami Minoru at his home. This encounter prolongs the catharsis of the previous scene, as the ex-Sergeant confesses and begs forgiveness. "I'm sorry for what happened today. I apologise," Takami says, bowing deeply to the so-called relatives. "I understand why you are doing this. I'm ashamed of myself. I have done nothing for the victims, or their families. I'm sorry."

These moving confessions fail to satisfy Okuzaki's extraordinary appetite for justice. In the following scene, he calls upon Oshima Eiaburu to impersonate the brother of another dead soldier, Hashimoto Gichi. According to Okuzaki's jumbled summary, Hashimoto was murdered when five starving soldiers drew lots to decide who among them would be killed and eaten by the others. In the subsequent encounter with Yamada Kishitaro — at 22 minutes by far the longest scene in the film — Okuzaki provides an explicit rationale for his protests: "To reveal the misery of the war will keep the world free from war. They killed a man but reported that he died from disease. The world doesn't know the real face of war." In the ensuing melee, Okuzaki kicks the ex-Sergeant repeatedly. Yamada says angrily to the film-maker behind the camera, "You forgot I helped you," to which his wife replies, "Don't blame them." Eventually Okuzaki himself, having earlier phoned the police, calls for medical assistance for Yamada and the scene ends with the departure of the injured veteran in an ambulance.

Scene 26 shows Okuzaki and his wife standing in front of the hospital. After thanking Shizumi for restraining him, thereby sparing Yamada greater injury from his assailant, Okuzaki reassesses the appropriateness of his methods: "Mr Yamada's son-in-law told me that I must not hurt people. But if the result is good, violence is justified. So as long as I live I will use violence, if it brings good results to me and mankind, by my judgment and my responsibility." After a brief scene in which Okuzaki again prays to the souls of his dead comrades, and an intertitle which mentions the trip to New Guinea and the sortie of the footage shot there, the unstable veteran proves true to his promise of violence.

The sound of gunfire follows a brief flashback to a shot of Koshimizu. A quick montage of newspaper headlines and articles, dramatically spotlighted, details the protagonist's final direct action: "Attempted Murder", "Ex-Officer's Son Wounded", "Okuzaki Kenzo", "Victim Seriously Wounded", "Criminal At Large", "His Superior Officer's Son", "The Son Will Die!", "Wanted Okuzaki Kenzo" and "Okuzaki Apprehended in Kobe". Even behind him, the elderly veteran continues to issue pronouncements on his activities. In the next scene, Okuzaki's wife, Shizumi, announces her husband's intentions over the loudspeaker of the sound-track.

In order to prove divine punishment, he wanted to kill Koshimizu. He told the plan to his friends. He carried it out on December 15. But he couldn't kill Koshimizu. Instead, he shot Koshimizu's son. But the son didn't die. He thought it was Providence. In the police station cell, he shed tears of gratitude three times. He wants Koshimizu to tell in court about the murder he committed in the Army. His testimony will condone the dead and help prevent the breakout of another war.

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On moves inexorably towards its violent conclusion. The director does not disclose that the attempted
assassination took place some nine months after the principal location filming was finished. As depicted, it appears that Okuzaki goes immediately from his confrontation with Yasuda to the murder attempt. The sequence of the newspaper headlines echoes the convictions listed at the opening of the documentary, answering the implicit question set up at the beginning. After a series of direct actions, the veteran has returned to prison, convicted of attempted manslaughter, as the final in-court site: January 28, 1987. Okuzaki was sentenced to 12 years at hard labour.  

Reception: History: Japanese memories of the war

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On provoked substantial controversy when it was released in Japan in 1987. Commercial distributors refused to handle the film, fearing it would trigger attacks from violent right-wing quarters. Hara remembers meeting with executives in the film industry:  

I was wondering if some of the large companies, like Inagami, Shochiku, Toho, or Shochiku, would show it. I went to meet their representatives. For example, the Shochiku people told me that they would like to show the film, but if they did the right-wing would visit them, that they would protest with their sound trucks in front of the theaters. They all said the same thing — we'd like to show it, but we can't.  

During the early months of 1987, the film was screened in public halls in Tokyo for short runs of several days. Word-of-mouth publicity and a torrent of positive reviews sparked audience interest. In August, an 80-seat art theatre in Tokyo, Yurakuzaue (Eurospace), began showing the film. It played there for three months, filling the theatre daily with standing-room-only crowds. Eventually, it was shown in most cities in Japan and released on video, reaching an audience estimated at one million. In spite of being censored by mainstream distributors, The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On came to enjoy considerable commercial success for a non-fiction film.  

Okuzaki's political views defy easy classification, and this resulted in some unexpected responses to the documentary. While many, including the director, were convinced that The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On would draw the anger of extremist groups, a few right-wing actions apparently found a kindred spirit in Okuzaki. As Hara recalled, "members of a right-wing group came to see the film in Kyoto in autumn 1987. The film was shown in a hall for about three days. I was told that when the right-wing members emerged from the film, they were afraid. I was told that they bought Okuzaki's book, and said they understood his feelings." The reaction of political parties and official government agencies to the film were also somewhat unpredictable. The Inland Emperor Household Agency, while keenly aware of it, withheld comments. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party, whose representatives had been targets for assassination by Okuzaki, also chose to ignore the scandalous documentary. Newspapers affiliated with the Nihon Shisakai (Japan Socialist Party) recommended the work. But it was the reaction of the Japan Communist Party that surprised most people, including the director. While the Japan Communist Party has been a longtime critic of the monarchy — and especially of the Showa Emperor's role in the Pacific War — nevertheless, the party's newspaper, Akahata, criticized The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On.  

The reception of the film, therefore, was as diverse and complicated as the documentary itself. Film critics who recommended the work were nevertheless faced with the problem of what to call it. Was it, in fact, a documentary? If so, what type of documentary? Or was it better to call it a dramatic film? Hara could not have been more pleased with the confusion, for his goal has long been to make 'action documentaries' that call into question clear genre distinctions. The director energetically joined the debate about his work, demonstrating a forthrightness rare for producers. His first essay on the film appeared in the June 1987 issue of Ine no Ikkatsu, a leading Japanese film journal. This created a stir which led to further debate. Later that year, Shosho Productions published a transcript of the finished film, along with Hara's 119-page account of the making of the documentary.  

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On raised — and still raises — numerous issues for intellectuals, from the legitimacy of Okuzaki's indictment of the Showa Emperor to the question of historical memory. There is also the problem of Okuzaki's methods. Does the seriousness of the crimes committed in New Guinea justify Okuzaki's own use of violence and disregard for the law in the context of
Another disturbing question remains about The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. If Okuzaki had not been the subject of the film, would he still have shot Koshimizu's son, who committed suicide? Did the making of the documentary contribute to the wounding of an innocent man? Hara only inflated the argument by candidly admitting that he considered filming the murder attempt after Okuzaki proposed it.38 Disturbed by his own morbid curiosity, Hara has asked himself, "Is film God for me?"39 Hara's confession and the debate it sparked formed only one of the stories that developed parallel to the film's popularity. In the same year that The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On was released, Okuzaki's trial was completed, and his appeal worked its way through the Japanese judicial system. His trial ended in January 1987, with a sentence of twelve years' hard labour for attempted manslaughter. (Hara edited this verdict into the end of the film shortly before public showings began.) Okuzaki immediately appealed against the decision, and his lawyer introduced The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On to the Hiroshima Court of Appeals as evidence. The presiding judge agreed that a video of the film could be shown as part of the appeal, prompting Hara to quickly produce one. On 4 September 1987, the defendant, several lawyers, three magistrates and an additional twenty spectators sat down in the courtroom for a viewing. Film reviewer Matsuda Masao noted that the judges took the best seats for themselves and remained spellbound for two hours.39 This was also the first time the imprisoned veteran saw the film. The screening did not help Okuzaki's case, however, as the higher court upheld the lower court's ruling.

While benefiting from unusual publicity when first released, the film owes its popularity to its startling subject matter and engaging protagonist. Many found the elderly veteran one of the most thrilling and exotic characters they had ever encountered in a film, fiction or documentary. Okuzaki's unorthodox methods and the unsavoury memories he churned up even produced a feeling of physical shock in some reviewers. The renowned film critic, Satō Tadashi—who began his review of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On with the simple statement, "This is an incredible film!"—admitted that after seeing the documentary he felt as though he had been struck a blow.71

For Japanese viewers, the most inflammatory part of the film—more than the confessions of cannibalism—was Okuzaki's
stubborn insistence on condemning the Shōwa Emperor as a coward for refusing to accept responsibility for the war. None of Ha's controversial films has been shown on television in Japan, and Ha's explanation in 1992 why The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, in particular, will likely never be broadcast: "Because it is a film about the emperor system, about Okazaki, a movie about the man who shot pachinko balls at the Emperor." Unlike scholarly essays printed in journals with limited circulation, The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On provided an accessible and entertaining indictment of the Shōwa Emperor as a war criminal. Reactions to this indictment ranged from distaste to delight. Viewers from the war generation were generally stunned by the film, shocked by the audacity of Okazaki's actions. Many young Japanese, less supportive of official attempts to regulate the dignity of the Imperial House, were probably thrilled to watch a film that contradicted all they had been told about the Emperor.

When The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On was released in 1987, most Japanese—including the Japanese government—still had not undertaken the soul-searching about the war often said to characterize German Vergangenheitsbewältigung, the attempt to come to terms with the Nazi era, or even similar efforts by the French beginning in the 1970s, to address the tainted history of the Vichy period (1940-44). Selective memory of the Pacific War continued to shift attention away from the brutality of Japan's imperialist expansion. Many Japanese saw themselves exclusively as victims of the war, a phenomenon which historians refer to as sugata no shikai (victims' consciousness). In 1945, after all, the Allied forces, led by the American military, waged a bombing campaign against civilian targets that concluded with the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The suffering experienced when the conflict was brought home to Japan displaced memories of Japanese aggression. After the war, Japanese people preferred to identify with the civilian victims of the A-bomb, rather than with their own soldiers who committed atrocities across Asia. Similarly, the myth of the Shōwa Emperor's pacifist nature remained intact until the late 1980s, when a variety of factors, including The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, strongly questioned it.

In sum, The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On was controversial precisely because it subverted official attempts to gloss over Japan's responsibility for the conflict. The documentary rejects the notion that the Japanese were only victims. It leaves the Imperial Military no dignity and offers no justification for the war. The film beholds the concept of a national community officially engaged in a logistic war to free Asia from Western imperialism. Starving in New Guinea, Japanese soldiers cannot catch the natives whom they have liberated, so they are reduced to cannibalising each other. The reception of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On bears comparison to reactions in France to Marcel Ophuls's epic documentary about the Vichy era, Le Chagrin et la pitié (The Sorrow and the Pity, 1971). State-controlled stations in France declined to broadcast Ophuls's film, although it was produced with funds from European Television. Instead, The Sorrow and the Pity opened in a small art theatre in the Latin Quarter in Paris, gradually reaching a sizable audience in the capital. The documentary offended almost all of the established power bloc in France; the Communist Party complained that their contribution to the Resistance was under-emphasized, while the Gaullists felt that simply raising the issue of collaboration was "unpatriotic." In the aftermath of the 1968 uprisings, however, a substantial audience of students, disaffected workers and intellectuals appreciated Ophuls's film because it overturned accepted versions of French history. The 3½-hour documentary—through brilliant juxtaposition of interviews and archival footage—shattered the myth of a unified French Resistance fighting to the last against the German occupation, and at the same time raised the issue of French complicity in the Holocaust. As the historian Henry Kronen shows in The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944, Ophuls's work had a tremendous impact on the historical image of France during the Nazi occupation, encouraging fiction filmmakers of the 1970s to look back on the dark years of the war.

Like popular films in France that glorify the Resistance, portrait features in Japan often portray the Japanese as helpless victims of the war. Films condemn the horrific atomic bombings but provide no context, leaving the viewer with the impression that the Fifteen Years War began in August 1945, instead of in 1931 when Japan first began aggressively to expand its empire in China. Recent films by Kuronawa and Imamura have reinforced this image of the Japanese as victims, by focusing exclusively on the atomic bombings and the aftermath of the destruction. Both Hachigatsu no kōbikyoku (Rhapsody in August, 1991) and Kamui (Black Rain, 1989) tell of
the lingering effects of the bomb on families in the postwar period. Kurosawa’s film, in particular, was criticised in Japan for reinforcing the victims’ consciousness. One of the few recent features that looks at wartime atrocities committed by Japanese authorities, Kurosawa Kō’s Sea and Poison, lists Hara as an assistant director. Kurosawa’s film details medical experiments on prisoners of war performed under military supervision at Kyushu Imperial University in spring 1945.

The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On marks a breach in representations of wartime Japan. By chronicling the activities of a protester who attacks the status quo, it remains one of the lone voices challenging established myths about the war years. Hara’s film indicates the Shōwa Emperor, and both Hara and Kobayashi, the producer, have expressed their desire to tell a different history of the era. After the film’s release, Kobayashi remarked: “I feel angry that we are not informed what exactly happened in the war. And the ministries and those concerned are reluctant to give information. When I think of the feelings of the people of Asia, I regret very much to see too many movies which praise the war.” 67 The current crisis in the Japanese film industry may conspire to keep others from re-examining the conflict in the light of recent revelations. 68 Like Oshima’s landmark film, however, Hara Kazuo’s brilliant documentary, The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On, may embolden other directors to confront the sorrow and the terror of Japan’s activities during the Second World War.

Notes
7 Several essays are collected in Shissa purodakushon (ed), Sayama CF (Tokyo: Shissa purodakushon, 1972).
8 According to Kobayashi Sachiko, in an interview with Kenneth Ruoff on 10 May 1992, Sayama CF cost about 1 500 000 yen (or $15 000 or 100 yen to the dollar).
9 See, for example, Kobayashi Sachiko, “Atte mo ii sonai nan de”, Film May 1973: 5; and Hara Kazuo, “Shintai no kahō ni koso”, Gendai tenkō July 1973: 166-173.
10 Jeffrey K. Ruoff, “Family Programming, Television, and American Culture: A Case Study of An American Family” (PhD dissertation, Department of Communication Studies, University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1995).
11 Ruoff and Ruoff: 112.
12 Ibid.
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Mekas' autobiographical journey to his native land.

14 Ruoff and Ruoff: 108.


16 Ruoff and Ruoff: 108.


18 "Tenno botanogen e no Nitomonjiru 20-nin no ikoku", Shukan Asahi 10 October 1974: 16.

19 Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F Cook, Japan at War: An Oral History (New York: The New Press, 1992): 277. Japan at War was published five years after the release of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. The eyewitness accounts in the book echo and confirm the horrifying testimonies given in the film. For example, Ogawa Masanori, a veteran of the New Guinea campaign, recalls his fear of being pressed upon by fellow Japanese soldiers: "Near the end we were told not to go out alone to get water, even in daytime. We could trust the men we knew, but there were rumors that you could never be sure what would happen if another of our own soldiers came upon you." (273).

20 Ibid: 363.

21 Ibid: 376.

22 The term was made famous by Studs Terkel's "The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985).

23 The adviser was Kido Kiuchi, who held the office of Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. Quoted in Dalkichi Irokawa, The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan, translated by Mikiso.

24 Hane and John K Ueda (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Tokyo; Singapore: The Free Press, 1993): 90.


26 Cook and Cook: 267.


30 Reprinted in Jōtō shin 938 (15 July 1989): 176. The report focuses on the decision to attack the United States in 1941, and does not address Japan's military actions against China and other Asian countries.

31 For a study of the Emperor's tours, see Sakamoto Köjiro, Shichi ni moshi e no pfujunsho (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1989). The Emperor was welcomed by crowds of supporters on virtually all of his trips.

32 After the Shōwa Emperor died in 1989, numerous documents were released that shed new light on his pre-war and wartime political role. These sources show that the Emperor, far more often than the orthodox interpretation suggested, was a hands-on monarch. Bix and Irokawa, both cited above, employ these new sources to criticize the political role of the Shōwa Emperor.

This exchange between two of Japan's famous postwar prime ministers took place in the Budget Committee of the Lower House of the Diet on 31 January 1952. See Dairikyuoksunai kokkai skagin no naka no naka (Tokyo: Asahi shubunkan, 1990): 209-210. Nakasone was a nationalist even when it was unfashionable to take pride in being Japanese. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1947, Nakasone wore black ties in the Diet to express his mournful feelings about the foreign occupation of his country. He was chastised by American authorities for flying the banned Japanese flag in front of his house.

For one example of Prime Minister Nakasone, in the Diet, defending the Shōwa Emperor's role in the war, see Dairikyuoksunai kokkai skagin no naka no naka 20 (8 March 1986): 32-34.

Miyanori, 50.

Okazaki Ken'ichi, Hikosumi Okazaki Ken'ichi wa uta wara (Tokyo: Shinshobunsha, 1987).


Rowett and Rowett, 107.

Ibid: 110. This chronicle of the making of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On draws extensively from our published interview with the director in Iris, as well as from Han's own account, "Seisan no naka", in Han Kazuo and Shinsō purukashō (eds), Yakuzaikun shingen seisan no naka (Tokyo: Shinshō purukashō, 1987): 3-12.

Dower (43) writes: "It was in 1937, with the Rape of Nanking, that the killing of noncombatants escalated to a massive scale. Nanking fell on December 12 after heavy shelling and bombing, and for the next six weeks Japanese troops engaged in the widespread execution, rape, and random murder of Chinese men and women both in the captured city and outlying communities. The total number of Chinese killed is controversial, but a middle-range estimate puts the combined deaths from both the shelling and subsequent atrocities at two hundred thousand."

Rowett and Rowett, 105.


Hara (1987): 120.

Ibid: 47.

Rowett and Rowett, 109.


Rowett and Rowett, 108.


Rowett and Rowett, 108.


Kurosawa Akira's Rashomon (1950), adapted from two stories by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, recounts the events of a rape and murder from the separate perspectives of four characters. "The audience is left with the feeling of the essential relativity of truth", in the words of Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie,
The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On


Ruroff and Ruroff 110.


Claude Lantmann, "From the Holocaust to the Holocaust", Telos 42 (Winter 1979-80): 141.


For a collection of 55 essays about the film, see Matsuda and Takahashi (eds).

Ruroff and Ruroff 111.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Kuroko Kazuo, among other reviewers, addressed this issue. See Kuroko, "Nichijō o usu shingon, soshe hitosu no wakakamari", in Matsuda and Takahashi (eds): 23-32.


On 14 March 1992, Karazani Kōjirō lectured on the films of Hara Kazuo - and, in particular, reaction to The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On - at a conference entitled "Image Theory, Image Culture, and Contemporary Japan", hosted by the Institute for Cinema and Culture at the University of Iowa. Organised by Dudley Andrew and Michael Raine, the conference brought together leading American and Japanese film scholars for four days of presentations and film viewings. A fascinating discussion with Hara followed a packed screening of The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On. We are grateful to the organisers for bringing the director to Iowa City and for encouraging us to write about his work.

Ruroff and Ruroff 109.


Ibid 120.


On the topic of Vergangenheitsbewältigung ("working through, or coming to terms with, the past"), see Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior (New York: Grove Press, 1975).


77 General Charles De Gaulle, France’s pre-eminent postwar figure, established the myth of unified resistance to close the Vichy era. Henry Rosso’s has traced its origin to De Gaulle’s speech on 25 August 1944, announcing the liberation of Paris from the Nazis: ‘Paris! Paris humiliated! Paris broken! Paris martyred! But Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, by its own people with the help of the armies of France, with the support and aid of France as a whole, of fighting France, of the only France, of the true France, of normal France.’ Quoted in Henry Rosso, The Vichy Syndrome: Fact and Memory in France since 1944, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: London: Harvard University Press, 1991): 16. In seeking to resurrect la gloire de France, De Gaulle not only exaggerated the French role in the liberation, but, more importantly, ignored active French collaboration with the Nazis in the deportation of French Jews and other unflattering details of the occupation years. The Sorrow and the Pity was released one year after le Général died.

78 Rosso: 100-114.


80 For more information on the structural transformation of the Japanese film industry in the 1980s, see McDonald.
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Sengo wa, Modal CS "

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