INTRODUCTION
A YASUKUNI GENEALOGY

John Breen

The Kyōdō news agency reported on 8 May 2007 that the Japanese Prime Minister, Abe Shinzō, had dispatched an offering to the Yasukuni shrine on the occasion of its Great Autumn Rite a fortnight earlier. Abe, who stayed away from the shrine, paid 50,000 yen (c. £250) for a bunch of flowers which Yasukuni priests then offered on his behalf to the kami venerated in Yasukuni's Main sanctuary.¹ The kami are, of course, the apotheosised war dead; and at Yasukuni they are also referred to as eirei or 'glorious sprits'. Why was this newsworthy not only in Japan, but throughout the Asia Pacific and beyond? Because it was the latest episode in the ongoing saga of the post-war Japanese state's patronage of the Yasukuni shrine. It is a 'saga' in that controversy attaches to state patronage: on the one hand, there are grounds for regarding Prime Ministers' visits, like those of Abe's predecessor, Koizumi Jun'ichirō, as breaching the Constitutional provisions for the separation of state and religion; on the other, there is the fraught issue of the Class A war criminals. The Class A war criminals were enshrined in 1978, a generation after the war ended, and are now venerated at Yasukuni shrine along with the war dead. This fact is controversial, above all, in the context of Japan's twenty-first century relationship with China, Korea and even to some extent the USA. The Chinese insist that when Prime Ministers visit

¹ Kyōdō tsūshin 8.5.07.
Yasukuni they are tacitly approving the actions of such Class A war criminals as General Matsui, executed for his responsibility for the Nanking Massacre, not to mention those of Prime Minister Tojō who led Japan to war in the first place.

This latest episode saw Abe innovating: he honoured the war dead, and let it be known he did, but in such a way as to sidestep the opprobrium he would have attracted, domestically but especially internationally, had he followed Koizumi, and gone to the shrine in person, especially if he had done so officially, in his capacity as Prime Minister. Abe’s act of ‘remote veneration’ also risked censure from other quarters, namely from those of a more conservative disposition, who insist he should head boldly to Yasukuni regardless of Chinese views. What appears to explain Abe Shinzō’s cautious patronage of Yasukuni in spring of 2007? First, from the start of his premiership Abe went out of his way to cultivate the Chinese, whom Koizumi had alienated and offended. Second, in April 2004, the Fukuoka district court deemed that Koizumi’s visit to the shrine in 2001 did, indeed, breach the state-religion separation provision and was, therefore, unconstitutional; the Osaka High Court issued a similar ruling in September 2005. Neither ruling stopped Koizumi returning to Yasukuni in 2005 and again in 2006, of course, and it is unclear whether they had any greater influence over Abe Shinzō. There is one other possible reason for Abe’s caution; it concerns recent revelations about the last Emperor, Hirohito, and his relationship to Yasukuni shrine and Class A war criminals.

Fragments: Emperor, Yasukuni and Class A War Criminals

On 27 April 2007, the Asahi newspaper published two fragments of the diary of Urabe Ryōgo. Urabe was Chamberlain to Emperor Hirohito from 1969 till the latter’s death twenty years later. Urabe himself died in 2002, and in his will he entrusted his diary to his heirs, who sold it to the Asahi newspaper. The Asahi plans to publish all thirty-three volumes, but in April it released two tantalising fragments, both of which relate to Emperor Hirohito and his relationship with Yasukuni. Hirohito was known to be devoted to Yasukuni, which he visited for the Great Rites of Spring and Autumn during the war, and on eight occasions after the war. His last visit was in 1975, and why he never returned to the shrine became thereafter a matter of great public interest. The Urabe diary fragments reveal why. The first fragment, dated 28 April 1988, appears somewhat cryptic. It reads: ‘[His Majesty] finished eating so we went to [the] Fukiage [quarter of the palace grounds]. After Chief Steward [Tomita Tomohiko]’s audience [with Him there was over], I entered [His presence]: the Yasukuni enshrinement of the war criminals; Chinese criticisms and Okuno’s statement’. That Urabe underlined the entire section of his diary in red suggests this was for him an especially memorable day. It seems clear enough that Hirohito discussed with Tomita, and then with Urabe himself, both the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals and the diplomatic row that erupted with China following an inflammatory statement made by Okuno Seisuke a week or so earlier. Okuno, a member of the Tateshita cabinet, bemoaned the fact that Japan was ‘still haunted by the ghost of the Occupation forces’, and demanded to know ‘in precisely what sense’ it might be said that Japan was ‘the aggressor’ in the last war. It took Okuno’s resignation before Chinese criticisms of his effective denial of Japanese aggression abated. Of still greater interest are the emperor’s views on the Class A war criminals, and their enshrinement in 1978. Urabe failed to elaborate in this fragment, but Chief Steward Tomita himself wrote a highly revealing memorandum after his audience with the Emperor on that very day. The Tomita memo, as it is known, was published in 2006 by the Nihon keizai newspaper, but was dismissed as insufficient proof by some commentators. The Urabe diary fragment seems to corroborate the Tomita memo, the burden of which was this: Emperor Hirohito told Tomita he had stopped visiting Yasukuni after 1975 because he disagreed with Yasukuni’s enshrinement of the Class

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2 As I read the proofs to this manuscript, the Japanese press reports that Abe has decided to stay away from Yasukuni on 15 August, 2007.

3 Asahi shinbun, 27.4.07.
A war criminals. It now seems highly probable that Hirohito told
Urabe the same thing on the same day: Hirohito could not approve
the Class A war criminals' entering the Yasukuni pantheon alongside
the war dead.

The second published fragment of Chamberlain Urabe's diary is
dated July 2001, twelve years after Hirohito's death, and it leaves
no doubt this was indeed the Emperor's position. 2001 was the first
year of Koizumi Jun'ichirō's premiership, and speculation was rife
that the new Prime Minister would go boldly to Yasukuni on 15
August, the day of the war's end. In his July entry, Urabe wrote: 'The
immediate background to the Emperor terminating his Yasukuni
visits was that he did not agree with the enshrinement of the Class
A war criminals'. Precisely why Urabe reflected on this matter in an
entry for July 2001 must remain unclear till the Asabi publishes the
diary in full, but this second fragment confirms that Hirohito did
indeed object to Class A war criminals' enshrinement, and his failure
to visit after 1975 was entirely on this account. The grounds for his
objections are a matter for conjecture, however. Did Hirohito believe
these Class A war criminals were responsible, and had to be held
responsible, for the war; that they should not therefore be venerated
alongside the men and women who died fighting on their orders;
that their enshrinement was a denial of the responsibility which Ja-

4 On the Tomita memo, see the chapters by Takahashi and Seaton in this
volume.
5 In fact Koizumi compromised at the last minute, and went on 13 August.
6 Asabi shinbun, 27.4.07
7 As I check the proofs for this manuscript, the Mainichi shinbun reports that
the emperor also told chamberlain, Tokugawa Gikan, that he was opposed
to the Class A war criminals' enshrinement. (Mainichi shinbun 4.8.07).

Japan should accept? Was he merely anxious to avoid conflict with
China? Or perhaps his greater concern was to deflect attention from
his own involvement in the war? Whatever the reason, the presence
of the spirits of the Class A war criminals in Yasukuni was clearly
offensive to the Emperor. Of course, whether this fact influenced

Abe's decision to stay away in spring 2007 remains like much else a
matter of conjecture.

Removal: the Japan Society for the War Bereaved

What impact this revelation of Chamberlain Urabe, and Chief
Steward Tomita before him, will have on Yasukuni in the longer
term, is difficult to judge at the time of writing, but some intriguing
suggestions of a shift in the position of the Japan Society for the
War Bereaved (Nihon izokukai) quickly surfaced. The Society has
been, in financial and numerical terms, the single greatest sponsor of
the Yasukuni shrine in the post-war period. It has a membership of
80,000 (as of 2006); many members are wealthy and influential, and
the society's President is invariably a distinguished public figure. The
President at the time of writing is former Liberal Democratic Party
(LDP) Secretary General, Koga Makoto. Koga responded instantly
to the Urabe diary fragments by setting up a Study Group to consider
the possibility of removing the Class A war criminals from Yasukuni
to some other site. Koga was motivated by a desire, shared by a ma-

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ever since it was first mooted by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro around the time of his controversial visit in 1985. Yasukuni priests insist that, in theological terms, spirits once enshrined can never be dislodged. Their favoured analogy is that of the candle and its flame: 'You can transfer the flame of one candle to another, but the original candle continues to burn'. They are also adamant that the state must never be allowed to interfere in its affairs: Yasukuni is after all an independent religious juridical person in law.

Koga's Study Group met for the first time on 8 May 2007, and the Mainichi newspaper estimated that eight of its twelve members were in favour of actively exploring how removal might be effected. As one member told the Mainichi, 'Our ultimate aim is to clear the way for the present emperor to return to Yasukuni. It is now apparent that the impediment to the previous emperor's visits to Yasukuni was none other than the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals. The [Tomita memo and the Urabe diary] have added impetus to earlier proposals for removing the [war criminals' spirits] elsewhere.' Should the Study Group conclude that removal is, indeed, the way forward, and should they then persuade a majority in the Japan Society for the War Bereaved, Yasukuni priests will be in an impossible position. The Society will argue that removal conforms to the emperor's wishes, and even though the priests of Yasukuni insist now that there can be no removal, they are as devoted to the emperor and the imperial institution as they are to the enshrined war dead. The shrine itself can, moreover, hardly survive without Society's support.

State and religion: the immediate post-war

By a strange coincidence, April 2007 saw the publication of another set of historically important documents on Yasukuni. Compiled by the Diet library with the (somewhat limited) cooperation of Yasukuni archivists, New edition: a collection of Yasukuni shrine problem documents (Shinpen Yasukuni jinjya mondai shiryō shū) is important in the context of the aforementioned saga. The reason is that it attests to the vital role of the state in the post-war apotheosis of not only the war dead, but also of the war criminals. Government ministers always insisted that Yasukuni shrine priests had been the driving force behind the criminals' enshrinement; it now seems the role of the state, specifically Health Ministry bureaucrats, was pivotal. Indeed, Koga Makoto cited this New edition as a further reason for launching his Study Group: [The new Diet library collection has demonstrated the government played a positive role in the apotheosis of the war criminals] and so there is an increasingly strong feeling that now is the time to begin debates about all sorts of things, including the removal [of the Class A war criminals]. Koga's point here seems to be that, if the state was after all a key player in enshrinement, then it is incumbent on the state to assume a role in removal. The New edition disappoints, however, in its failure to reveal details of state-shrine negotiations in the critical decade of the 1970s. Information for the 50s and 60s is there in abundance, but there is a gaping hole for the years 1970-8. When the Diet library asked Yasukuni for documents on this period, a shrine spokesman responded that they had 'looked but were unable to find anything'. The Yomiuri newspaper pressed the shrine only to be told it had 'no plans to comment further on the existence or otherwise of any documents not included in the present collection.' The Health Ministry similarly claimed to have undertaken a thorough investigation in its archives, but to have come up with nothing either. The Health Ministry, it should be explained, was (indeed, it remains) responsible for the care of war veterans and the bereaved. It oversees the payments of war pensions, for example; it is also charged with recovering the remains of the war dead from foreign battlefields, and organises tours for veterans and the bereaved to overseas war memorials. This explains why its officials were so intimately involved.

8 Mainichi 6.05.07.
9 Mainichi shinbun 6.5.07.
10 Yomiuri shinbun 20.4.07.
The *New edition* does, however, reveal that, notwithstanding the Constitutional separation of state and religion, Health Ministry officials and shrine priests met frequently after the end of the Occupation. The enshrinement of those men convicted and then hanged as Class A war criminals was discussed for the first time in 1958. Tajima Norikuni of the Health Ministry broached the subject, but Yasukuni shrine priests responded with caution: ‘It all depends on how the media deal with this. The popular reaction could make of this a major issue.’ The Ministry’s position, it transpires, was that the war only ended with the departure of the American Occupation in 1951. The war criminals were executed during ‘war time’ and were technically ‘war-dead’. Tajima and other Ministry officials returned to the shrine to urge a decision on the Class A war criminals: ‘The bereaved are anxious that this should go ahead, and we in the Ministry need you to make up your minds as a matter of urgency.’ Nothing happened. When the matter was tabled again in 1961, the shrine insisted that, while the enshrinement of Class B and C criminals might proceed, Class A criminals should be ‘kept on hold’. The reasoning is far from clear. Four years later the shrine was still adopting a position far more cautious than the government’s, insisting once more that the matter of Class A criminals be put on hold. In 1966, the Health Ministry sought to apply further pressure by sending the shrine the personal details of the Class A war criminals, but still the shrine resisted and it was not till a decade later, 1978, that the war criminals were finally apotheosised. How is the position of Yasukuni to be explained? The answer may well lie in the different dispositions of Yasukuni Chief Priests during the post Occupation period.

**Post-war Shinto Orthodoxy: Tsukuba, Matsudaira and Ashizu**

Tsukuba Fujimaro was the Chief priest between 1946 and 1977, and he was a very interesting man. The longest serving incumbent in Yasukuni’s history, Tsukuba was the third son of Prince Yamashina Ki-

The Chinreisha is dedicated to the war dead of imperial Japan’s erstwhile enemies, none of whom are the object of veneration in those Yasukuni rites that take place in the Main sanctuary. Tsukuba’s Chinreisha accommodates two sites for two categories of apotheosised enemy: one is for those who fought against the imperial army in the civil wars of the 1860s; the other is dedicated to the British, American, Chinese, Korean and South East Asian war dead of the Pacific war. In the *Yasukuni* newsletter of New Year 1964, Tsukuba sought to explain the rationale behind the new shrine: ‘It is my belief that the kami of Yasukuni are active even now as harbingers of peace, standing hand in hand with the spirits of the war dead from all countries of the world. The [construction of the new Chinreisha] renders possible for the first time in Japan the veneration of the glorious spirits of the war dead of all the nations of the earth.’ Tsukuba ensured that priests made offerings to the foreign war dead every morning and evening, just as they made offerings to the Japanese war dead in the Main sanctuary; he also established 17 July as the Chinreisha annual festival.

It seems likely that the presence of Tsukuba, who believed the Chinreisha was ‘in accord with the wishes of the emperor’, explains why Yasukuni resisted Health Ministry pressure to enshrine the war criminals. The least that can be said is that, no sooner did he die in 1977 and the office of Chief Priest pass to former Imperial Navy officer Matsudaira Nagayoshi, than the Class A war criminals’ en-

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11 *Yomiuri shimbun* 20.4.07.
12 *Mainichi* 9.8.06.
13 *Yasukuni*, p. 2.
14 On the Chinreisha, see the chapter by Breen in this volume.
15 *Mainichi shimbun* 9.8.06.
shrinement went ahead. This same Matsudaira threw a steel fence around the Chinreisha, concealing it from view and rendering it impossible for anyone, except shrine priests, to pay their respects there. Matsudaira was also responsible for re-opening the controversial Yushukan war museum in 1985, for the first time since 1945. The Yasukuni problem as it is today is then to a considerable degree a legacy of the Matsudaira era from 1977 to 1992. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that Matsudaira was an outspoken critic of the post-war Japanese state; its interference in shrine affairs he was determined to resist at all costs. He was especially indignant at Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro’s interest in removing the Class A war criminals elsewhere. In 1985, when Nakasone made his historic, official visit to the shrine, Matsudaira refused to greet him, though for a different reason. Nakasone’s attitude was an insult, Matsudaira insisted, to the spirits of the war dead. In an effort to sidestep the state-religion dilemma, Nakasone declined to undergo Shinto purification by shrine priests, and he refused to bow and clap twice as Shinto etiquette demanded. Instead, he bowed his head and meditated quietly in front of the main sanctuary before turning round and heading back to his official residence. Nakasone’s naive hope was that his actions would somehow ‘put an end to the war’. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Instead, he not only antagonised the Yasukuni priesthood, he also stirred the wrath of the Chinese government for venerating Class A war criminals. Such was the Chinese outcry that Nakasone decided that, in the interests of good relations with China, he should never return to Yasukuni. 1985 was, indeed, his last visit.

It might be noted that the position adopted by Matsudaira, at least on the war criminals’ enshrinement, was out of tune with post-war Shinto orthodoxy; after all Matsudaira was not a Shinto man. No figure is more representative of that orthodoxy than Ashizu Uzuhiko. He was the leading Shinto intellectual till his death in 1992, and the Shinto establishment today still regards him, and his writings, with something approaching awe. He was, for example, the inspiration behind the National Association for Shinto Shrines (Jinja honcho), which has defined post war Shinto in its institutional guise ever since its foundation in 1946. Ashizu was determined that Yasukuni should become associated with Japan’s peaceful post-war recovery, and not the prosecution of aggressive war against Asia or the West. He wrote a position paper in Jinja shinpo in autumn 1946, in which he demanded that any features of Yasukuni that might be associated with ‘Fascists, militarism or aggression’ should be removed: ‘Anything that might lead to misunderstanding in this regard must be eliminated’. Ashizu adhered to this position until his death in 1992. He objected to Class A war criminal enshrinement before it happened, and then penned a protest in its aftermath. In his article, Ashizu insisted Yasukuni’s mission was to enshrine those who had fallen ‘on the formal orders of the state'; convicted war criminals were altogether different. He dismissed as vulgar theory those who insisted that anybody and everybody who served their country should be venerated in the Yasukuni pantheon. For Ashizu the line was to be drawn at the Class A war criminals. This was precisely the position Tsukuba appears to have adopted up until his death in 1977.

It is easy enough to be distracted by the multi-dimensional controversy in which Yasukuni has found itself embroiled, especially since the late 1970s, and forget that it is a sacred site. It is the place, even if it is not the only place, where veterans honour and mourn their comrades, fulfilling war time promises to ‘meet again at Yasukuni'; it is the place where the bereaved mourn their loved ones. Indeed, whatever one’s views on the Yasukuni shrine, only a cynic would suggest that Prime Ministers when they visit are not motivated, at some level, by a desire to honour the men and women who sacrificed their lives for Japan. It is important, in other words, to allow the possibility

16 On the war museum, see the chapters by Nitta and Breen in this volume.
that there are multiple Yasukunis. Adopting an historical perspective on the shrine is essential for underscoring this point. Yasukuni was, at the time of its creation in 1869, a site very different from what it is today.

Revolution: Yasukuni and the Beginnings of Modern Japan

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 effected a complete re-imagining of Japan's religious landscape. The leaders of the new imperial government disestablished Buddhism and its institutions, a process accompanied by much violence; they banned many popular religious practices, too, all in an effort to make space for the new religious construct which we now refer to as Shinto. The early Meiji state declared that all shrines in the land, from the great shrines in Ise dedicated to the Sun goddess Amaterasu, to the myriad local shrines in villages across Japan, were 'sites for the performance of state rites'; they and their priests were placed under the supervision of the modern state. The Meiji government then published a new annual cycle of rites; these were to be performed by the modern Emperor as 'priest king' at the shrine complex in the imperial palace in Tokyo, and emulated by priests at shrines across Japan. All these rites were designed to dramatise the ethnic myth of the emperor's descent from the Sun goddess. Modern Japan's national holidays were duly constructed around these ritual events, as pre-modern feast days were abolished.

The Meiji state in this way effectively legislated a new understanding of shrines as 'Shinto', as entirely distinct, that is, from the Buddhism with which they had been intertwined in both spatial and theological terms in pre-modern Japan. The Meiji state also now created several entirely new shrines, of which the best known are the Minatogawa shrine in Kobe, and Yasukuni in Tokyo. Minatogawa venerates the spirit of Kusunoki Masashige (1294-1336), a medieval warrior whose loyalty and self-sacrifice in the imperial cause were regarded by the new Meiji leadership as exemplary. Yasukuni shrine was similarly dedicated to the spirits of men whose loyalist credentials were beyond reproach: men who had sacrificed their lives on the emperor's behalf in the civil conflicts that accompanied the Imperial Restoration of 1868.20

Yasukuni was, from the moment of its creation, distinctive among these shrines either created anew or newly appropriated and transformed by the modern state. It was so in its relationships to the military, to the emperor himself and to society at large. Yasukuni, alone among modern Japan's shrines, was overseen jointly by the Army and Navy ministries, and they ensured that it never wanted for funding. They determined the rituals in the Yasukuni annual cycle, locating them in the first, fifth and ninth months, each marking famous victories of the imperial army over rebel forces in 1868-9. The early celebrants of Yasukuni ritual all bore arms; the first were selected from shrine priest volunteers who fought for the Hōkokutai band of loyalist warriors, and the first dedicated Yasukuni chief priest was a samurai from Chōshū by the name of Aoyama Kiyoshi who had no specialist knowledge of Shinto. Aoyama's appointment established a Yasukuni tradition of chief priests frequently hailing from a military background with no Shinto training.21 In 1879, the shrine assumed the name Yasukuni or 'country at peace', and was granted the status of 'Special state-funded shrine' (bekkaku kanpeisha). By this time, the Yasukuni pantheon comprised not only the loyalists from the civil conflicts either side of the Restoration, but also the men who fell in Japan's first overseas adventure in Taiwan in 1874. There were others too who died in the crushing of rebellions against the imperial government: the Saga rebellion of 1874 and the much more threatening Satsuma rebellion of 1877. By 1879, the military victories recorded by the imperial government were too numerous to commemorate, so the shrine's feast days were revised, and re-established as the Great Rites of Autumn and Spring.

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20 On the modern state's religious policies at the time of the Restoration see Breen, 'Ideologues, bureaucrats and priests'.

21 The aforementioned Matsudaïra Nagayoshi was the most recent example of this tradition in practice.
The imperial connection was from the outset more intimate and evident at Yasukuni than at any other shrine in Japan apart from the great shrines in Ise. This was a natural consequence of the fact that Yasukuni was constructed for the apotheosis, propitiation and honoring of men and women who sacrificed their lives in the emperor’s name. The Meiji emperor first progressed to the shrine to venerate the Restoration war dead in 1874; he returned in the aftermath of the Satsuma rebellion in 1877, when he presented to the shrine the large mirror that still dominates the main sanctuary today. Hereafter, the practice was established of the Emperor dispatching gift-bearing emissaries to Yasukuni every year on the occasion of the Great Spring and Autumn Rites. The Emperor himself venerated Japan’s war dead from the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 and he returned in 1907 to venerate his subjects who fell in the Russo-Japanese war (Fig. 1). Imperial princes were regular participants at the Great Rites of Spring and Autumn, and visitors to Yasukuni were left in no doubt of the shrine’s imperial connection: the main sanctuary was draped with banners, and the steps up to it decorated with lanterns, all bearing the sixteen-petal imperial chrysanthemum.

New Tokyo Flourishing

Yasukuni’s intimate connections to the military, to the imperial institution and so to death in battle on the emperor’s behalf meant that the shrine was identified with the virtues of loyalty, self-sacrifice and patriotism, which the Meiji leaders and their pre-war successors deemed essential to the construction of the modern nation state. In order to ensure the dissemination of these virtues to as wide a sector of society as possible, early Meiji leaders gave to Yasukuni a quality shared by no other state sponsored shrine in the capital or, indeed, the land: the combination of solemn apotheosis and popular entertainment. The very first rites of apotheosis, in 1869, were announced by booming cannon, accompanied by firework displays and concluded with sumo wrestling matches. In 1871, the space outside the main torii gate was converted into a race horse track. At the end of the same year, a lighthouse was erected adjacent to the main torii. It was intended as a guide for fishing vessels in Tokyo harbour, but it did much to transform Yasukuni into one of modern Tokyo’s most vibrant tourist attractions. In 1873, Hattori Bushō (1841-1908), lecturer at the government’s Kaisei institute, visited Yasukuni for the Great Autumn Rite and wrote about that event in his best-selling Tokyō shin banjō ki (A record of Tokyo flourishing anew), published the following year. Bushō conveys brilliantly the bustle and excitement of Yasukuni as a site of entertainment, as well as the ritual solemnity, without any sense that the two may be incongruous.

The [Great Rites of Autumn] take place over three days. Pilgrims mass at Kudan like clouds in the sky, rubbing shoulders and elbows. It is all so typical of the new flourishing Tokyo. Merchants vie with one another to set up shops, spreading out mats and lining up their goods; others set out stalls with food for sale; people push into one another and there is scarcely room to stand. On the first day, there is a firework display... They let the fireworks off one after another, from noon through till night. Imagine lightning streaking across the sky, or a golden phoenix spitting out fire, flying through clouds of smoke, or a bright red dragon with a pearl in its mouth charging through purple clouds...... Every firework is different; it is an extraordinary sight to behold. The second day they hold horse races.... They mark out a track using wooden fences, and set two horses to race against each other. What decides the winner are the skill of the riders and the innate talent of the horses, some fleet of foot, others sluggish.... Sometimes horse and rider stumble having just left the starting grid; some get half way round and fall off; some are overtaken just a few paces from the finishing line... They are like crazed lions as their hooves kick up the dirt with scuffling sound; they are like goblins in flight, as they race with banners flying.... The third day is sumo. This is the event that really pulls the crowds during the [Great Autumn Rite]. What is special is that the greatest wrestlers [yokozuna] compete with complete novices [fundoshi katsugi]. Sometimes the most powerful wrestlers of all compete with others from their own stable... On this day alone, a sekiwake wrestler from the east might be pitted against a [much stronger] ozeki wrestler also from the east. Often, the managers deliberately pit a weak wrestler against a much stronger wrestler. If an ozeki loses against

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22 For the imperial connection at Yasukuni today, see the chapter by Breen in this volume.
a sekisuki, he will be shamed for life; if a novice defeats an accomplished wrestler, it is glory for life!

Bushō was exhilarated by his experience of Yasukuni entertainment, but he was keen to dwell on Yasukuni's role as a site of mourning, and of national pride. He understood that the site of Kudan, with its remarkable vista of all Tokyo, was selected in order that the kami in the Yasukuni pantheon might more easily watch over the city. The main sanctuary and the chrysanthemum-embossed banners that bedecked the shrine persuaded him that the spirits of national heroes of the new Japan truly dwelt in the shrine’s building. Bushō was convinced that they would no longer be wandering ghost-like, lost on the field of battle. ‘Their spirits can not now be in the realm of hungry ghosts, suffering the pangs of starvation.’ Rather, ‘the spirits of the fallen are even now joining their pale hands together in the nether realm, thanking the emperor for his beneficence…..’ ‘Only the man who is envious of the manner in which these heroes died [insists Bushō] merits being called a citizen of the imperial realm’.23

Yasukuni’s Spaces

When Busho wrote of Yasukuni in the 1870s, it comprised the Main sanctuary, where the enshrined kami were propitiated and venerated and a ‘spirit garden’ (shōken saitei), an open area to which the spirits of the war dead were first summoned by a priest before being transferred to the Main sanctuary, there to be venerated as kami. The entrance to the shrine precinct, which comprised these two structures, was marked by a torii gate (Fig. 2). Steadily thereafter the shrine underwent a spatial transformation. The Yūshūkan war museum was constructed in 1881 on a site just east of the main sanctuary. In 1893, a towering statue of Ōmura Masujirō (1824–69), the founder of the modern Japanese army, was erected on the central pathway leading to the main sanctuary. Both these new structures helped enhance Yasukuni’s reputation as a major tourist attraction of mid-Meiji Jap-

pan. (Fig. 3). The Yūshūkan began by displaying weaponry, uniforms and other relics from the Satsuma rebellion, as well as swords of great pedigree; Ōmura’s 12m high statue, for its part, acquired renown as Japan’s first ever Western-style statue in bronze. But the shrine was to undergo further dramatic spatial transformation. Japan’s first modern war, the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5, marked an initial stage. In 1905, the Meiji Emperor progressed to the shrine to make offerings as the spirits of 1,500 Japanese officers and men were enshrined; many more were to follow. Fireworks, horse racing, sumo and the bustle reported by Bushō thirty years before were fully a part of these events, and indeed all others till the start of the Pacific war in 1941, but on this occasion the shrine precinct bristled with the spoils of victory. The Yūshūkan, too, displayed Chinese weapons, maps and uniforms.24 It was now that the Army and Navy ministries planned the construction of a new building, able to accommodate large numbers of bereaved pilgrims. The Worship hall, which stands today between the main sanctuary and the torii, was duly completed in 1901; eight hundred worshippers could kneel there, undergo ritual purification and then look across to observe the ritual proceedings in the main sanctuary (Figs 4 and 5). A stage for nō drama, performances of which henceforth accompanied major shrine rites, was erected in the precinct at the same time. So abundant were the spoils after Japan’s victory against Russia in the war of 1904-5 that an annex had to be built to the Yūshūkan to house them all. 88,000 new kami were added to the Yasukuni pantheon at the end of that war, which despite ending in Japanese victory exhausted and demoralised Japanese society. Widespread social unrest followed the end to hostilities, but Japan’s frequent wars and the continuous production of war dead meant that Yasukuni could only prosper: Japan participated in the First World War on the side of the Allies, and a decade later it began its costly war against China.

It was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the shrine’s foundation in 1929 that a new imposing torii, wrought of iron and bronze, was

23 Hattori, Tōkyō shin hanjōki, pp. 57-9.

24 On displays of Chinese weaponry see the chapter in this volume by Wang.
built at the foot of Kudan hill (Fig. 6). The torii, funded with a donation from the All Japan Sumō Association, stood 20 metres high and weighed some 90 tons, which made it the largest, and heaviest, torii in Japan. It served to mark the outer extremity of an expanded precinct of the shrine. In 1923 Tokyo was hit by a massive earthquake, but it left the shrine's sacred spaces and its several structures, new and old, relatively unscathed. The two torii gates withstood the tremors; the main sanctuary and Worship hall survived with only superficial damage. However, the Yushima, the only building in the precinct made of brick in Western style, suffered a major hit, and many of its treasures were lost. The museum was subsequently redesigned by the Japanese architect, Itō Chūta (1867-1954), but building work was not completed till 1931. Today one of the most distinctive features of the Yasukuni shrine precinct is the sacred gate or shinmon. This extraordinary wooden structure, with its distinctive thatched roof reminiscent of the imperial shrines in Ise, and heavy door embossed with an eye-catching gold chrysanthemum, was erected in 1934 as an offering to the Yasukuni spirits (Fig. 7). Japan was then mired in the early stages of a disastrous war with China, and the protective powers of the Yasukuni kami were needed more than ever before. At this time, too, the spirit garden was moved just outside the sacred gate (Fig. 8). With the completion of this gate, the re-siting of the old torii (which had to be moved back to accommodate it), and the relocation of the garden, the Yasukuni shrine assumed pretty much the appearance and the dimensions which it maintains to this day (Figs 9 and 10).25

In 1943, the massive iron and bronze torii was removed on the instructions of Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki, its raw materials put to military use; other statuary was also surrendered to the war effort.26

25 In 1985, the spirit garden and the torii and lanterns which had marked the site off as distinctive during the 1930s were paved over and turned into a parking lot. On this transformation, see Tsubouchi, 'Yasukuni', Chapter 1.

26 Kobori, Yasukuni jinjya, p. 119. The great bronze torii that stands at the foot of Kudan hill today was erected in 1978; at 25 metres tall, it is still the largest in Japan.

INTRODUCTION: A YASUKUNI GENEALOGY

Devastation again struck Tokyo in the firebombing; but, miraculously, Yasukuni once more escaped barely scathed. Ten days of bombing by American B29s in March of 1945 razed Tokyo to the ground; the firestorms claimed the lives of at least 100,000, but Yasukuni survived. The main sanctuary, the worship hall and the sacred gate, the most vulnerable structures, all avoided a direct hit.

Yasukuni: Post-War

During the war, Emperor Hirohito participated in the Yasukuni Great Rites of Spring and Autumn. By war’s end, he had personally witnessed the enshrinement of thousands upon thousands of men and women, but this was a tiny proportion of Japan’s total war dead. Yasukuni could only apotheosise those military personnel whose details—name, age, regiment, rank, place and date of death—it possessed, but the fate of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors and non-military personnel, that is the vast majority of those who died in the last year of the war, was still unknown in August 1945. Yasukuni faced a very uncertain fate at the hands of the Occupation forces; indeed, the Occupation contemplated razing the shrine to the ground. It nonetheless granted permission for a performance in November 1945 of a solemn, and possibly final, rite for all the Japanese war dead who were as yet unidentified. Prime Minister Shidehara attended, perpetuating a practice of Prime Ministerial visits to the shrine that traced its origins to the onset of the Pacific war in 1941; Shidehara’s cabinet were all in attendance, with senior representatives of the Army and Navy. Emperor Hirohito, too, visited Yasukuni on this occasion, to pay his respects to the war dead. In the following month, the Occupation issued the so-called Shinto directive which abolished ‘state Shinto’, effectively ending state support for all shrines. Yasukuni lost the special status it had acquired in 1879, and with it the funding it had been guaranteed since early Meiji. It was now reconstituted in law as an entirely independent religious juridical person. This status it holds today, its integrity guaranteed by the Constitution of 1946.
Yasukuni shrine was spared destruction by the Occupation, but its future depended on quickly generating very substantial funds. Immediately the priests set up a Yasukuni Worshippers' Society (Yasukuni jinja hōsankai) to this end. With an imperial princess as president, a former Foreign minister as vice-president and a former Prime Minister and company presidents as consultants, it is not surprising that fundraising proved highly successful; so much so that the shrine soon invested in a spacious new reception hall and a new shrine office. In 1953, the Japan Society for the War Bereaved was formed to raise awareness of the economic plight of many of the bereaved, and ensure the state did its duty by them; it also set out to pressure the post-Occupation government to 'renationalise' the shrine and revive state funding for Yasukuni rites. This proposal steadily gathered momentum, and led to the repeated submission of Yasukuni bills (Yasukuni hōan) to the Diet by members of the Liberal Democratic Party between 1969 and 1974. On each occasion, however, these bills were defeated. The post-Occupation practice of Prime Ministerial patronage of Yasukuni shrine rites began with Yoshida Shigeru's visit to the Great Rite of Autumn in 1951, and Emperor Hirohito returned to Yasukuni for the first time after the departure of the Americans in autumn of 1952. It was to be the best part of another generation before Yasukuni found itself at the centre of the domestic and international controversy that obtains to the present day.

The Yasukuni Controversy

It is this controversy with which the contributors to this book seek to engage. It should be said at the outset that this is a polemical book, but one with a difference. *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* sets out neither to attack Yasukuni nor, indeed, to commend it. Rather, it seeks to bring together authoritative voices from different points on the Yasukuni spectrum, and asks the reader to judge the merits of the arguments presented. In Japan and overseas there has been very little debate about Yasukuni. Scholars and critics each adopt their own more or less persuasive positions, but rarely

engage with one another; certainly there exists no single volume in Japanese or English in which a diversity of views is offered. In other words, the interested reader has had, till now, very little opportunity to assess the merits of both sides of the Yasukuni divide. Here Kevin Doak argues the case for Yasukuni from the perspective of a practising Catholic. He takes issue particularly with the objections that the Chinese have consistently voiced. Wang Zhixin articulates precisely that Chinese position, drawing on historical sources as well as contemporary perspectives to make his case. Seki Hei is a Taiwan Chinese academic resident in Japan, who is dismissive of mainland Chinese objections, as rooted in an all-too-narrow Marxist perspective. While Seki champions the Prime Ministers' right to visit Yasukuni, Takahashi Tetsuya, the most widely read critic of state patronage in recent years, sees the shrine as the symbol par excellence of post war Japan's denial of responsibility, and its fabrication of history. Nitta Hitoshi by contrast is the most prolific, and persuasive, writer of the pro-Yasukuni lobby in Japan. His chapter insists that hypocrisy infiltrates the arguments of anti-Yasukuni polemicists at every turn, and his contribution includes a sharp rebuke for the editor of this volume, John Breen, whose own chapter explores Yasukuni as a site of memory, and finds it seriously wanting. These polemical chapters are 'book-ended' by contributions from Caroline Rose on the international ramifications of the Yasukuni problem, and from Philip Seaton, who approaches Yasukuni in its domestic dimension through an exploration of Japanese media coverage.
Fig. 3 The precinct of Yasukuni, atop Kudanzaka. This is a nishiki-e painting by the artist Ikuhide and dates from 1889. The Yūshūkan war museum is the building just visible on the right of the picture. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.

Fig. 4 The honden or Main sanctuary, 1897. Prior to the building of the Haiden or Worship hall, the bereaved and other visitors to Yasukuni accessed the Main sanctuary directly. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.
Fig. 5 The bereaved enter the Main sanctuary, in this painting by Seta Sanshirō. The painting shows the bereaved accessing the Main sanctuary from the Worship hall, just visible on the left. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.

Fig. 6 The great Yasukuni torii. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.

Fig. 7 The Sacred gate or shinmon, circa 1934. This picture postcard from the second decade of the Showa period (1926-89) clearly shows the sacred gate and, through it, the chrysanthemum drapes of the Worship hall are just visible. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.

Fig. 8 The sacred garden or Saitei, 1936. On the evening of 26 April 1936, shrine priests offer up prayers to summon the spirits of the Japanese military who fell in China. The following day shrine priests transport the spirits to the central shrine within the Main sanctuary, and worship them as kami. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.
Fig. 9 Yasukuni shrine precinct, 1937. This illustration of the lay out the shrine in 1937 is by Uehara Furutoshi. It was designed as a wall chart for use in primary schools. The illustration shows (from the bottom up) the First torii, the statue of Omura Masujiro, the Second torii, the Sacred gate, the Worship hall and the Main sanctuary. Just visible to the left of the Worship hall is the Sacred garden. From the Yasukuni shrine archive; reproduced with permission.

Fig. 10 The Yasukuni precinct as it is today. The Main sanctuary, the worship hall, the Sacred gate, the statue of Omura Masajiro and the great torii are all visible.
In this sense, there will never be a solution to the antagonism and controversy between China and Japan surrounding the issue of the Yasukuni visits; for it is a clash of civilisations.

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**LEGACIES OF EMPIRE: THE YASUKUNI SHRINE CONTROVERSY**

*Takahashi Tetsuya*

Japan appears to have reached a crossroads today, such as it has not experienced since 1945. The Japanese government under Prime Minister Koizumi and his successor Abe Shinzō has set a revisionist politics in motion which, if realised, will usher in a new kind of pre-war situation. The possibilities that were contained within the settlement at the end of the Second World War and within Japan’s post-war condition seem to be receding fast over the horizon. Instead, we are faced with the real danger of new wars. This imminent turning point calls for an urgent and fundamental re-examination of the negative legacies of the Japanese empire that continue to affect contemporary Japan. This chapter attempts such a re-examination by focusing on the Yasukuni shrine and the controversy it has generated.

The nineteenth-century Meiji State created three essential institutions: the military, the Yasukuni shrine, and patriotic education. For a modern nation-state to be able to use war as a means of national
TAKAHASHI TETSUYA

policy, it has to do more than just maintain an army. It has to create a national consciousness such that people feel a strong sense of belonging to the nation, and are therefore willing to offer up their lives for the nation. To foster such national spirit among the people, the Meiji state established the Yasukuni shrine as the central locus of a national religion, and along with the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, it implemented a system of patriotic education that had at its core the cultivation of precisely this willingness 'to offer up one's life for the emperor and the country.' The Japanese Empire and its militaristic state were built upon this triadic base.

This system, based on the trinity of the military, Yasukuni shrine, and patriotic education, appeared to be dismantled in 1945 with Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. But I emphasise, that it appeared to be, for it continued to exist in an ambiguous form throughout the post-war era and it seems now to be reconstituted. Advocating a politics of 'breakaway from the post-war regime' (senge regime kara no dakkyaku), the current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō has set a clear agenda for his premiership. Already, he has succeeded in revising the Fundamental Law of Education, which is designed to reinstate patriotic education. On the strength of that wave, he is planning to tackle the revision of Article 9, that is, the 'no-war' principle of the post-war democratic constitution. According to the plans of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), this would make the Self-Defence Forces formally into an army to be deployed for purposes of self-defence, the maintenance of international peace as well as the upkeep of an ill-defined 'public order.' But whatever euphemism is used, this is nothing other than the revival of the Japanese military.

As for the Yasukuni shrine, despite intense criticism from within Japan and neighbouring China and Korea, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō officially visited Yasukuni every year for his six years in office, thereby establishing a record of 'real achievement'. Moreover, the plans of the LDP for a revision of the Constitution include a proposal to amend the constitutional principle of the separation of state and religious institutions. This amendment would permit off-

official, prime-ministerial visits to Yasukuni to participate in public ceremonies of mourning the war dead. Most ominous of all is the scenario whereby Yasukuni will be nationalised again, making it possible for the Emperor to pay visits to the Shrine. This plan has been voiced publicly by a number of influential politicians.

The triadic system of a Japanese military, the national shrine of Yasukuni, and patriotic education was established, as mentioned earlier, by the nineteenth-century government with war in mind. Sixty years after the end of the Second World War, a twenty-first-century Japanese government is seeking to reconstitute this system, albeit in a new form.

It should be added that these revisions are pursued within the framework of the U.S.-Japan Alliance and the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty which followed the end of the Cold War. Whether it is Japan's remilitarization, the reinstatement of patriotic education, or the re-nationalization of Yasukuni shrine, all of this can only be attempted with the implicit consent of the United States. In that sense the post-war condition has not ended. Under the post-war settlement, the emperor system was allowed to continue in the form of a constitutionally defined symbolic role of the emperor. In return, Japan's military strength was constrained through the 'no war' clause of Article 9, while Okinawa was offered up as a permanent military base serving US geopolitical and military strategy. The Japanese government came to perceive these arrangements in terms of the mutual benefits they would bring. The current reconstitution of the triadic system can thus be understood as a part of the global strategy of the US-Japan alliance and the reorganization of US bases in Japan.

In recent years, Yasukuni has become one of the biggest issues influencing Japan-China and Japan-Korea relations and has come to symbolize the frictions that derive from differences in historical consciousness between these nations. It has also received increasing attention in Europe and America. It seems, however, that reports and debates about the Yasukuni issue, whether within or without Japan, have so far failed to get to the heart of the matter. The Yasukuni issue
is a complex problem that can be examined from various angles; and
the angle chosen for analysis reveals a good deal about the historical
consciousness of the discussant. In this chapter, I shall examine the
Yasukuni shrine issue in terms of the continuing negative legacy of
the Japanese empire.

On 20 July 2006, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun (the Japanese equiva-
 lent of the Financial Times) scooped its rivals by publishing on its
front page the contents of a memorandum written in 1988 by the
Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency, Tomita Tomo-
hiko. In these notes, Tomita records that the Shōwa tennō (Emperor
Hirohito as he is known abroad) had expressed in a conversation
with him strong feelings of displeasure that Class-A war criminals
were enshrined at Yasukuni shrine and that for this reason he had
stopped visiting it.2 Hirohito had, of course, visited Yasukuni regu-
larly before and during the war. And even after Japan’s defeat in 1945
he had come to the Yasukuni shrine, but his eighth visit since the
end of the war in 1975 was to be the last. If Tomita’s notes are to
be believed, the Emperor ceased to worship at the shrine because
in 1978, Yasukuni shrine decided to enshrine those fourteen men
executed for Class-A war crimes as ‘glorious spirits’.

In the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, commonly
known as the Tokyo Tribunal, the top twenty-eight leaders of the
war effort were tried and convicted on charges of committing ‘crimes
against peace’, that is crimes of planning and executing a war of ag-
geression. From among these twenty-eight, seven, including Prime
Minister Tōjō were hanged, and another seven died in prison. After
the occupation, the Ministry of Health and Welfare determined that
these fourteen executed war criminals were equivalent to ‘ordinary’
war dead and they were, therefore, designated as having ‘died in the
line of duty.’ Yasukuni shrine took the matter further and declared

that these fourteen had ‘laid down their lives for national duty’ and
should thus be worshipped as ‘martyrs of the Shōwa era.’

The forerunner of the Yasukuni shrine was the Tokyo Shōkonsha,
the Tokyo shrine to the war dead, which was established in 1869, a
year after the Meiji Restoration. Its function was, initially, to hon-
our those men of the victorious Restoration forces who had fought
against the preceding Tokugawa regime and had given their lives in
these battles to establish the new imperial state. The shrine was built,
it is said, at the ‘divine behest’ of the Meiji Emperor who wished
those loyal men to be honoured in death. In 1879, it was renamed
Yasukuni shrine. All soldiers who died in wars since then were
enshrined at Yasukuni, beginning with the first overseas deploy-
ment of Japan’s modern military forces in the Taiwan Expedition
of 1874, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, the Russo-Japanese War
of 1904, the First World War, the Manchurian Incident of 1931,
the Japanese War in China starting in 1937 and, finally, the Asia-
Pacific War of 1941-5. All soldiers and civilians in military service
who lost their lives in those external battles in which the Japanese
empire engaged—2,460,000 war dead in total—were enshrined and
worshipped as ‘glorious spirits’ in the Yasukuni shrine.

During the period of the ‘Empire of Japan’, the emperor was not
only the sovereign, he also had a religious role as he was considered
to be a ‘living god’, that is, the incarnation of Japan’s ancestral de-
ity. At the same time, he was the supreme commander of Japan’s
armed forces. The Japanese people, including the peoples of Japan’s
colonies, were his subjects and as such were expected to adhere to
‘national morality’, which demanded that ‘in times of crisis of the
Japanese state, the subjects offer up their lives to protect the emperor
and the nation.’ Soldiers who perished in the imperial wars, that
is, the ‘sacred wars’ fought by the Empire, were regarded as having
practised ‘national morality’ and were thus considered to epitomize
national subject-hood. They would therefore be enshrined as ‘nation-
protecting deities’ at Yasukuni shrine, where they were revered and
honoured by Prime ministers, Army and Navy ministers, and even

2 ‘A kyō senpan Yasukuni gōshi; Shōwa tennō ga fukai kan; sanpai chūshı: 
“Sore ga warashi no kokora da”; Moto Kuniichō chōkan’, Nihon keizai
shimbun, 20 July 2006.
the emperor himself. This system was essential and instrumental in raising the morale of the Japanese military, and in the spiritual mobilisation of the entire populace for war.

Upon Japan's defeat in 1945, Yasukuni shrine was declared to be 'a symbol of Japanese militarism', a 'war shrine' and a 'shrine of military aggression' in order to neutralise its influence. With the Shinto Directive issued by the GHQ of the occupying forces in December 1945, Yasukuni, like all other shrines, was separated from the state. In line with the new post-war Constitution of 1946 that stipulated specifically the principle of the separation of state and religion, it was then turned, like Christian churches or Buddhist temples, into a private religious entity.

When the Tomita memorandum was published in July 2006, the debate over Yasukuni was poised to reach its climax in Japan, China, and Korea. For it was seen as highly likely that Prime Minister Koizumi would again pay his respects at Yasukuni shrine on 15 August, the anniversary of Japan's surrender and the end of the war. In China, the date is celebrated as the anniversary of victorious resistance against Japan, and in Korea as the day of liberation from Japanese colonial rule. After becoming Prime Minister in 2001, Koizumi visited Yasukuni shrine every year, so that in all, he visited six times. In the process, the Yasukuni issue became the biggest diplomatic problem undermining Japan's relations with China and Korea.

In 1985, when then Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visited Yasukuni shrine 'officially', the Chinese government filed a formal protest with the Japanese government. The criticism of the Chinese, consistently repeated ever since, was that a Japanese prime minister visiting a shrine in which Class A war criminals were worshipped raised doubts about the Japanese government's recognition of war responsibility. The Chinese went on to say that the Prime Minister's patronage of the shrine also grievously wounded the feelings of those Asian people who had been the victims of Japan's aggressive war. In acknowledgement of the Chinese government's criticism, Prime Minister Nakasone subsequently ceased visiting Yasukuni shrine.

However, Prime Minister Koizumi rejected the Chinese and Korean criticism as 'interference in Japan's domestic affairs', and instead presented his actions as a show of strength: he wanted to impress on the Japanese people the image of a leader who was not going to be swayed by foreign opinion. This strongman image proved also useful for maintaining Koizumi's public approval ratings. Prime Minister Koizumi did indeed visit the Yasukuni shrine on 15 August, the day of war's end, inciting, as was to be expected, vigorous protests by the Chinese and Korean governments. Subsequently, Chinese and Korean leaders refused on several occasions to attend summit meetings with Koizumi, and intergovernmental relations between Japan and China, Japan and Korea hit rock-bottom. Since Koizumi handed over power to his successor as prime minister, Abe Shinzō, Japan's relations with its neighbours have enjoyed a period of brief tranquility.

Insofar as the Yasukuni question is considered a diplomatic issue, one that is harming Japan's relationships with China and Korea, the problem is typically narrowed down to the question of the enshrinement and worship of Class A war criminals. The majority of Japanese media and politicians approach the problem from this perspective. Politicians taking Chinese and Korean protests seriously have hence thought of ways to get around the problem and proposed, for example, the removal of those Class A war criminals from the Yasukuni registers. Japanese commentators supporting friendly relations with Asian neighbours have made similar suggestions.

The Tomita memorandum has been used in similar ways: on the one side, those who support Yasukuni and prime ministerial visits to the shrine, have sought to downplay and contest the value of the memorandum as evidence, but these attempts have largely failed. On the other side, newspapers such as the Asahi Shinbun and the Nihon Keizai Shinbun, who opposed the official visits of Prime Minister Koizumi to Yasukuni, have used the Tomita memorandum to strengthen their own stance by arguing that 'since the Shōwa Emperor ceased visiting Yasukuni because of the enshrinement of
leading war criminals, Koizumi should not, of course, have visited the shrine either.' Of note was also the positive tenor with which the principal South Korean media, eager to see an end to Koizumi's Yasukuni visits, presented the Tomita memo. Thus, the memo raised various questions of historical consciousness as regards Yasukuni shrine, and it is to these that I shall now turn.

First, when a Japanese prime minister goes in his official capacity to Yasukuni shrine where Class A war criminals are honoured as glorious spirits, it inevitably invites the interpretation that the state of Japan is denying its war responsibility. Of course, none of the Japanese prime ministers who visited Yasukuni has ever publicly denied that Japan has a responsibility for the Pacific war. Prime Minister Koizumi himself affirmed the official position laid out in the statement made by Prime Minister Murayama in 1995, in which he spoke of his 'deep sense of remorse' and expressed his 'heartfelt apology' for Japan having adopted a 'mistaken state policy in the not too distant past.' Japan, Murayama stated, had caused through colonial rule and invasion extreme distress and suffering to the people of neighbouring countries, especially those in Asia.

On the one hand, prime ministers have not denied publicly Japan's war responsibility, but, on the other hand, the Yasukuni shrine which they have patronised states officially that the 'recent great war' was not a war of aggression, but a 'war of self-defence,' in which the very survival of Japan was at stake and which aimed, moreover, at liberating Asia from European and American colonial oppression. Accordingly, the charges of 'war crimes' whether of Class A, B or C were false indictments imposed unilaterally by the Allied victors of the Second World War. In other words, for Yasukuni shrine, these judgements of the Tokyo Tribunal were nothing but examples of victor's justice. As a matter of fact, the Yasukuni shrine has never been merely a place of mourning the war dead; it has always functioned as an apparatus of celebration, one that transfigures the war dead into a sacred, divine existence by enshrining them as 'glorious spirits' and eulogizing their meritorious deeds. In order to celebrate dead soldiers as 'glorious spirits', the war cannot, of course, be described as a war of aggression and invasion. Given this specific function of Yasukuni, it is unsurprising that the official visits of successive prime ministers generate mistrust in the Japanese state's recognition of its war responsibility.

If one reduces the problem of the recognition of history and war responsibility to the issue of the enshrinement of Class A war criminals at Yasukuni, this constitutes a serious diminution of the problem. If it was, indeed, only a question of the enshrinement of Class A war criminals, then the problem could be solved by simply removing those war criminals from Yasukuni's register of deities. To be sure, the government of China, looking for ways of improving diplomatic ties, seemed to hint that this could be the solution to the problem. However, if the Japanese government and media regard official visits of prime ministers or even the emperor to Yasukuni as unproblematic once the Class A war criminals are removed, and thereby implicitly accept Yasukuni's ideology of celebrating the war dead as 'glorious spirits', then this constitutes, either consciously or unconsciously, an act of denial of history.

A second aspect of the denial of history derives from the concept of 'Class A war crimes'. Class A war criminals are those judged by the Tokyo Tribunal to have been responsible for leading Japan into the war of aggression against China, starting with the Manchurian Incident in 1931, and the Pacific War of 1941. The Tribunal judgements took into account the preparations for the invasion of Manchuria, which began in 1928, and so the period covered by the Tribunal.

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3 The full statement of Prime Minister Murayama is available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html.
4 See Yasukuni daihyakka (Yasukuni Encyclopedia), undated pamphlet distributed by Yasukuni shrine.

5 In July 2001, immediately before Prime Minister Koizumi made his first 'official' visit to Yasukuni, the Chinese Ambassador to Japan stated that 'if the Prime Minister paid his respects to the war dead in general, there would be no problem. What renders his visit to Yasukuni problematic is the enshrinement there of the Class A war criminals.'
extends from 1928 to the surrender of Japan in August 1945. This means that the Tokyo Tribunal's framework for 'Class-A war crimes' does not cover, and in fact ignores, Japan's history of invading Asia prior to the Manchurian Incident. By 1928, Japan had already established a large colonial empire that included Taiwan and Korea. But, of course, there were several colonial powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Holland—among the Allies that formed the Tokyo Tribunal, and they apparently had neither the desire nor the legitimacy to indict Japan for its colonial rule.

However, among the war dead enshrined at Yasukuni are the military personnel who died in all of Japan's invasions of Asia since the Taiwan Expedition of 1874. Japan established its colonial rule over Taiwan by suppressing with military force both the resistance movement of Sino-Taiwanese and indigenous Taiwanese people. Likewise in Korea, Japan since the Kanghwa Island incident of 1875 continued to deploy military force against Korean resistance for the purpose of solidifying, in 1910, its colonial occupation. Japanese soldiers and civilian military personnel who died in those military campaigns designed to establish and maintain Japan's colonial rule, and the military suppression of resistance movements in those colonies, are venerated at Yasukuni. These 'glorious spirits' are worshipped for giving their lives to the 'sacred' mission of expanding the Japanese empire and the Emperor's divine rule. Thus, Yasukuni shrine forms an inseparable unity with the imperialism and colonialism of the modern Japanese nation-state. Given that Yasukuni is inseparable from Japan's modern colonialism, and given that these war dead continue to be honoured publicly in the same way as the executed Class A war criminals, the extent of the denial of Japan's responsibility for its colonial rule becomes fairly obvious.

It is not just right-wing revisionists who ignore or deny Japan's responsibilities prior to the invasion of China in 1931, that is, the responsibility for Japan's colonialism. Notably, there are also progressive intellectuals and journalists who are in a similar state of denial even though they otherwise recognise fully Japan's responsibility for

Class A war crimes. In their historical narrative, the grandeur of the Meiji state in achieving Japan's equal standing vis-à-vis the powerful Western nation-states is highlighted, while the Showa Empire is seen as Japan gone wrong. Likewise, the Japanese military is depicted as upstanding as far as the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars were concerned, but regarded as degrading into an ill-behaved army ever since the invasion of China. This type of historical consciousness is fairly widespread among Japanese liberals.6

Narrowing the problem to the enshrinement of Class A war criminals means also that the scope of Japan's war responsibility since the Manchurian Incident goes unrecognized, and leads to a third kind of denial of the past. Insofar as the alleged decision of the Shōwa Emperor to stop visiting Yasukuni is highlighted positively, the impression is strengthened that the blame for Japan's past aggression lies exclusively with the Class A war criminals. This perception is consonant with the political stratagem of the United States that granted the emperor immunity in the Tokyo Tribunal proceedings. Even though the Showa emperor was the supreme power throughout the war period and, more importantly, the supreme commander of the Japanese imperial forces and as such undeniably responsible for Japan's acts of aggression, he was nevertheless allowed to evade prosecution. Moreover, by redefining, in Article 1 of the post-war Constitution, the emperor as the symbol of the democratic Japanese nation and the unity of its people, the emperor system retained its exalted position. Meanwhile the Occupation forces used the figure of the emperor in accordance with American Cold War thinking, to thwart Japan from possibly turning Communist. Thus, by emphasizing the issue of the enshrinement of Class A war criminals, the emperor's war responsibility, which had been covered up by the United States and the Tokyo Tribunal, came to be denied altogether.

But the crucial issue of Japan's war responsibility post-1928 is not just minimized in terms of the emperor's role. Rather, the war respon-

6 Shiba Ryōtarō exemplified this trend. See, for example, Shiba, Meiji to iu kokka.
sibility of other elite figures at the time as well as the mass media, intellectuals, religious leaders, and educators—that is, the war responsibility of all levels of society—is thereby denied. If the Yasukuni shrine problem were to be regarded as resolved by simply removing Class A war criminals from the shrine’s register, the questions of responsibility for pre-1928 military campaigns and, indeed, for Yasukuni shrine itself would be stifled and allowed to be forgotten.

As I have endeavoured to explain how the Tokyo Tribunal gave rise to the perception that the Class A war criminals were scapegoats, whereas the emperor and the Japanese people not only escaped prosecution but were freed, as it were, from their responsibility for the war. Moreover, the war crimes committed by the Allied forces during the Second World War were not examined, which constitutes an important problem at the heart of the institution of the Tokyo Tribunal itself. The question of an unaddressed colonial past is not one to be asked of Japan alone. Take, for example, France’s stance on the complicity of the Vichy regime in the persecution of Jews. Only in 1995, half a century after the end of the war, did President Chirac acknowledge France’s responsibility and arrange for restitution. However, to this day, the French government has failed to recognize officially France’s responsibility for the atrocities committed during its colonial rule of Algeria and to arrange for restitution. I raise this example not to point the finger at particular nations or governments, but to suggest that the working through of the legacies of imperialism and colonialism is a tricky task shared by several nations.

It is not only that Yasukuni denies the aggressiveness of Japan’s war and the nation’s war responsibility, but it has also served to alter the very nature of ‘death in battle’ by casting it as a story of ‘glorious death’; in the process, it counterfeits history. That is to say, the bloody and merciless reality of soldiers dying on the battlefield is rewritten at Yasukuni into a sanctified narrative of noble, heroic, and thus ‘glorious death.’ Three cases will serve to exemplify how this history has been counterfeited.

The first and most obvious case is that of Korean and Taiwanese recruits to the Imperial Japanese army. Currently, close to 50,000 former colonial subjects who died in battle are enshrined at Yasukuni, of whom some 20,000 were Koreans mobilized for the Japanese war effort and around 20,000 were Taiwanese. Needless to say, Japan implemented its imperial education also in the colonies, in order that Korean and Taiwanese subjects might internalize absolute loyalty to the emperor and a willingness to offer up their lives for the sake of the imperial state. When the Enlistment Act was enforced in 1944, many Koreans and Taiwanese were forcibly drafted, but there were also those who enlisted voluntarily for military service because they hoped in this way to escape the ethnic and racial discrimination they had had to endure as colonial subjects. In other words, there is no evidence at all that their decision to enlist had anything to do with belief in the promises made by the Yasukuni ideology.

In 1978, well after the liberation from colonial rule, a Taiwanese bereaved family demanded for the first time that their war dead should be withdrawn from the enshrinement registers of Yasukuni. Korean bereaved families followed their example and put forward similar demands. A number of lawsuits were filed against the Yasukuni shrine and the Japanese government, which had provided it with the list of fallen soldiers in the first place. The representatives of these bereaved organisations have argued that ‘not only did we suffer the injuries of invasion and colonialism, but to be enshrined in a shrine that symbolizes more than anything the militarism of the perpetrator nation is an unbearable act of humiliation.’ Yasukuni shrine has consistently rejected all of these demands, arguing that:

since they were Japanese at the time of their death in battle, they don’t stop being Japanese after death. They fought and died in battle, believing they would be honoured through their enshrinement as Japanese soldiers when they died. For that reason, Yasukuni cannot withdraw their spirits. It is only natural that these men who helped the war effort in the same manner
and spirit as mainland Japanese, and fought alongside Japanese soldiers, are
honoured as glorious spirits at Yasukuni.  

What becomes apparent in the Yasukuni shrine’s argument is that the
c coercive force of colonial rule and the Enlistment Act is ignored, in
order to counterfeit a historical record of ‘voluntary, glorious death in
battle.’

The second example is that of Okinawa’s civilian war dead. Situated
between Japan and China, the islands of Okinawa originally made up the
independent kingdom of Ryukyu, but in 1879 the Meiji government
eliminated the kingdom by the use of military force and
established, in its place, Okinawa prefecture. Okinawa, along with
Hokkaido and its indigenous population of Ainu, were the first
targets of modern Japan’s colonial enterprise. They are usually
distinguished from Korea and Taiwan and termed ‘domestic colonies’,
but the assimilation policy which the Japanese colonial government
employed was no less forceful in these regions than the one imposed
on Taiwan and Korea. In the closing days of the Pacific War, the
Japanese army embroiled, in the name of the ‘unity of army and ci-
vilians’, non-combatant Okinawans in the savage battle against the
American forces as they landed. All this was in the name of the ‘unity
of army and civilians.’ As many as 100,000 Okinawan civilians lost
their lives in the Battle of Okinawa: some were executed for allegedly
spying on the Japanese military; others were forced to commit mass
suicide because surrendering and being taken as a prisoner of war
were forbidden, and not a small number fell victim to the military
actions of the Japanese army, who were supposedly friendly troops.

The majority of Okinawan civilians who perished in this way are
enshrined at Yasukuni. But how is it that civilians are enshrined at
Yasukuni, which is dedicated to military personnel and civilian
military employees? The answer is that in 1958, the families of those
who had ‘participated in the war at the request of the army’ became
eligible for survivors’ pensions and other benefits under the Law for
Relief of War Victims and Survivors. The Japanese administration
subsequently encouraged applications from the bereaved families of
the Okinawan civilian war dead, since with the change in legis-
tation they were now eligible to receive survivor’s pensions. Yasukuni
then decided to enshrine these war dead, who had ‘participated in
the war at the request of the army’, under the category of civilian
military employees. As a result, the residents of Okinawa who were,
as a matter of fact, victims of the war waged by Japan, ended up being
enshrined as collaborators of the Japanese forces.  Even children who
died in the forced mass suicides thus came to be enshrined in Yasu-
kuni’s pantheon of ‘glorious spirits’ for having sacrificed their lives
for the sake of the nation. This too we may term a case of ‘historical
fabrication,’ since it conceals the military’s responsibility for the atro-
cious realities of the Battle of Okinawa, and for the huge number of
civilian deaths to which it gave rise.

My third example relates to Japan’s own war dead and the way in
which Yasukuni ideology has sought to cancel out the violent
nature of death in war by re-imagining it as ‘glorious death.’ Of the
2,460,000 war dead enshrined in Yasukuni, over two million—the
great majority—died in the Asia-Pacific War. However, sixty per
cent of that number did not die from conflict on the battlefield, but
in a broad sense suffered death caused by starvation. The Japanese
military sent large numbers of soldiers to New Guinea and other
areas of the South Pacific knowing full well that there was a seri-
ous problem with providing adequate supplies of food and water to
these troops. Marching through the jungles, the troops ran out of
provisions and many starved to death, their corpses abandoned, and
left to rot until nothing but skeletons remained. The indescribable
misery and cruelty characterising death in war is converted by Yasu-
kuni shrine into the death of brave soldiers confronting the enemy,

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8 For contrasting views on Okinawa and Yasukuni, see the chapters of Nitta
and Breen in this volume (Ed.).
9 See also ‘Okinawa to Yasukuni (3)’ in Okinawa Times, 15.9.2005.
10 On death through starvation in the Pacific War, see Fujimura Akira, Gashi
and dying in the heroic mission of protecting the imperial state. Yet it was not just the horrific reality of death by starvation, but also the wretchedness of death in action that is rendered invisible by the transfiguration of the war dead into ‘glorious spirits’. The violence of dying in battle, the bloodiness, the putrefaction of corpses, all of that is effaced by the Yasukuni narrative and, in their place, death in war is sublated within the realm of the sacred, divine.

The significance of the ideology and practice of Yasukuni lies thus also in the management of the feelings of the bereaved families. For if the grief and pain of the bereaved families were to be left unaddressed, those feelings could potentially turn into doubts, criticism or even anger towards Japan’s leaders who were responsible for waging war. So the special ceremonies of honouring the war dead, which were regularly conducted at Yasukuni during the war, and in which the emperor himself participated, served the purpose of what I have called ‘the alchemy of emotion’, whereby the grief of the bereaved families was to be converted into feelings of joy. An article in the January 1944 issue of the magazine *Shifu no tomo* (The housewife’s companion) illustrates how this ‘alchemy of emotion’ was achieved.\(^\text{11}\) The article featured the case of Tsutsui Matsu, a woman from Kōchi Prefecture who lost three of her four sons to the war effort. She described her feelings, on receiving the news that her eldest and her second son had both died in battle, how she was driven to despair thinking how cruel the war was, and how tragic the loss of her sons’ lives. But when she, as mother to her sons, was invited to the state ceremony where the spirits of her sons were enshrined, and when she witnessed the visit on that occasion by the Emperor, she ‘experienced enlightenment’. ‘It was as if she had been struck by a bolt of electricity.’ Her thoughts were these: ‘The Emperor himself has favoured us with his visit precisely because [my sons] died for their country. It is such a blessing. Well done, my sons!’ Her pain vanished, and from then on, she felt nothing but happiness and pride.

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\(^{11}\) *Shifu no tomo*, January 1944, pp. 94-7. On the dynamics of emotional alchemy, see Takahashi, *Yasukuni mondai*, pp. 43-5.

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In this way, Yasukuni rites and the imperial presence played a crucial role in generating a positive attitude towards the war among the population as a whole. It was through a similar process that the deaths of military personnel and civilian military employees were, regardless of the actual historical circumstances, sublimated and rendered sacred as acts of self-sacrifice, of patriotic devotion.

The Tomita memorandum published in July 2006 was, as mentioned earlier, used by those criticizing Prime Minister Koizumi for his repeated official visits to Yasukuni shrine. In the medium to long-term future it is perfectly possible that this memorandum may be used for entirely different ends, namely to revive official visits to Yasukuni shrine by the emperor. Some leading political and intellectual figures argue that the current ‘abnormal’ situation, created when the Showa Emperor ceased his visits, should be ‘corrected’ so that in future not only prime ministers but also the emperor himself can worship at Yasukuni. For example, in summer 2006, Foreign Minister Asō Tarō and other influential politicians suggested that Yasukuni shrine should be nationalised again, in order to pave the way for imperial visits.\(^\text{12}\) Such a proposal by high-ranking, influential politicians ought not to be taken lightly. Between 1969 and 1974, the plan to re-nationalize Yasukuni shrine was presented to the Diet every year, in an LDP bill for the state protection of Yasukuni. At that time, opposition to these plans was strong, as it was feared that this might be seen as direct indication of a revived militarism. Consequently, the bill was never passed. Today, thirty years later, leading LDP politicians are again pushing for a re-nationalization of Yasukuni shrine to allow for the establishment of official visits by the prime minister and, crucially, the emperor. They suggest this can be achieved by removing Class A war criminals and finding an understanding with China and Korea for the re-nationalization of the shrine.

As I have laid out in this chapter, the triadic system of a full-fledged military, patriotic education, and a nationalized Yasukuni Shrine, now
stands a very good chance of being revived, in the following way. First, revision of Article 9 of the Constitution which will pave the way for the establishment of a military that is officially recognised as an army; second, revision of the Fundamental Law of Education already effected in December 2006, building in patriotic education and, third, the possibility of re-nationalizing Yasukuni shrine. This would mean that in future, if soldiers of the Self-Defence Forces or a new, full-fledged Japanese military died in military missions abroad—for instance in Iraq—they might be enshrined at Yasukuni and, if the shrine is renationalised, they could then be worshipped by both the prime minister and the emperor. Moreover, this scenario could possibly be realised without any objections coming from China and Korea.

Today Japan faces the risk of losing the opportunities it was afforded by the ‘post-war’ settlement. The danger of those opportunities vanishing before our eyes is symbolized by the slogan of Prime Minister Abe to ‘break free from the post-war regime’. He argues that without a revision of the post-war Constitution as put into place by the American Occupation, the Japanese people will never be psychologically free of their ‘Occupation mentality’. I believe the opposite to be true, namely that the possibilities seen at the end of the war still await full realisation. This in turn can only happen through a further consolidation of the principles embodied in the post-war Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education as they were originally formulated. Japan is truly standing at a crossroads and, in view of the hugely influential arguments put forward by conservative politicians, there is little reason for optimism. However, there are numerous citizen movements across Japan which have formed in protest against these political currents and which work tirelessly for strengthening of the principles and ideas of the post-war Constitution.

Popular resistance against a revision of the post-war democratic Constitution, especially its Article 9, is strong, and over six thousand citizen groups are now actively protesting against the LDP plans. As for Yasukuni shrine, there are seven ongoing lawsuits filed by citizen groups that charge that former Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the shrine violated the separation of state and religion as stipulated by the Constitution. The Japanese judiciary is notoriously reluctant to pass judgements when it comes to violations of the Constitution. However, two decisions supporting these charges have been handed down from the Osaka High Court and the Fukuoka District Court respectively, stating that Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni were indeed a violation of the Constitution. Finally, there are also several citizen groups which challenge the Yasukuni ideology itself, that is, the efforts by the shrine to transfigure death on the battlefield into the death of 'heroic martyrs'.

As mentioned earlier, the bereaved families of the Koreans and Taiwanese who fought and died for Japan have begun to protest Yasukuni’s enshrinement of their war dead. But the first movement for the removal of the war dead from Yasukuni took place as early as 1968. The instigator was a Japanese Protestant priest whose two older brothers had died in the war. He opposed his siblings’ enshrinement at Yasukuni on religious grounds, saying that he wished to commemorate them in accordance with his own Christian faith. Yasukuni shrine rejected his request for removal. Subsequently, numerous bereaved families demanded, on religious or other grounds, that the enshrinement of their war dead be revoked; since then some of them have filed lawsuits. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean bereaved families have begun to achieve a degree of cooperation in their protest movements and lawsuits against Yasukuni shrine and the Japanese government. In other words, we see emerging today trans-national collaboration among bereaved families of both the colonized nations and the colonizing nation to protest Yasukuni ideology and what it represents.

A fascinating example of such cooperation is featured in the 2005 film *Annyong Sayonara* (‘Hello, Goodbye’)—a Korean-Japanese co-

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13 The 2005 documentary *Annyong Sayonara* was co-directed by the Korean veteran documentary filmmaker Kim Tae II and Japanese filmmaker Katō Kuniko. It won the Woorip Award at the 10th Pusan International Film Festival in 2005, and the Seoul Independent Film Festival 2005 Grand Prize for best documentary.
production—which documents the experiences of Lee Hee Ja, a 62-year-old Korean woman, trying to have her father's name removed from Yasukuni's register of 'glorious spirits'. She is helped in her pursuit by Masaki Furuwaka, a former Kobe municipal employee, who dedicates every free minute of his life to supporting Korean victims of Japanese colonial rule and their families in their struggle to gain justice. He is joined by members of various Japanese citizen groups. While the film leaves the question of the Yasukuni problem inevitably unanswered, its moving portrayal of the process towards historical awareness, mutual understanding and reconciliation between individuals like Korean woman Lee Hee Ja and her Japanese supporters, conveys a strong sense of hope.

AND WHY SHOULDN'T THE JAPANESE
PRIME MINISTER WORSHIP AT
YASUKUNI? A PERSONAL VIEW

Nitta Hitoshi

The Yasukuni shrine, which was built in 1869, today enshrines around 2,470,000 war dead as kami or gods. Some of these men fell during the Meiji Restoration, effected to ensure national reformation and thus Japan's continued autonomy; others were victims of the Russo-Japanese war (1894-5) and the two Sino-Japanese wars of 1894-5 and 1937-45; still others are the fallen from the subsequent Second World War. The shrine takes its name 'Yasukuni' from historian Zuó's Chinese classic 'Commentary on the Annals of Spring and Autumn' (Chunqiu Zuozhuan) to mean 'protect the peace of the nation.' Its rites originate from the memorial services held by the loyalists at the time of the Meiji Restoration to enshrine their comrades who had been killed fighting for the imperial cause.

There has been much controversy both within and outside Japan over Japanese Prime Ministers' visits to Yasukuni, but it is my opinion that the Prime Minister should visit Yasukuni, and that doing so is not in any way a dangerous act. I wish to offer a fourfold explanation of why I believe this. First, it is my personal opinion that