Social Memory as Ritual Practice:

Commemorating Spirits of the Military Dead at Yasukuni Shinto Shrine

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Memory believes before knowing remembers.

William Faulkner (Light in August, 1932: 111)

For architects of citizenship and nationhood, there is no shortage of conflicts and wars from which to build modern myths about submerging individual suffering and loss to greater causes. The grief, anger, and despair of individuals can be integrated over time into collectively shared assumptions about the indebtedness of the living to their heroic compatriots and ancestors. To remember these conflicts and those who (depending on the political context) either "lost" or "gave" their lives has been throughout recent history a vital act of citizenship, both "affirming the community at large and asserting its moral character" (Winter 1995:85). Certainly from an American perspective, national identity remains "inexorably intertwined with the commemoration and memory of past wars" (Piehler 1995:3). This observation applies even more intensely elsewhere in the world (Russia, China, France, Japan) where the loss of combatant and civilian life has been far greater.***1***

Victory in a war makes one's personal loss more easily resonate with master narratives concerning patriotism, righteousness, and the value of sacrifice to the nation. But what happens to deeply instilled cultural epistemologies when the nation's noble cause--perhaps having claimed the life of one's own father, brother, or relative--goes down in defeat? Goals and policies once thought guided by destiny are revealed to be little more than resource-grabbing colonization, wrought by rapacious military force and terror. Does this now mean the participants' suffering and death was for nothing or, according to post-war international tribunals, for a criminal cause? How are they, and the leaders, policies, laws, and cultural values responsible for their deaths and accompanying misery, to be remembered and reconciled?

Enter social memory upon the floodlit stage of commemorative politics. This paper attempts to bring together a variety of perspectives on social memory and forgetting, not as theoretical codes to interpret so much as yardsticks for measuring highly emotional and contentious arenas associated with the loss of life in a military defeat. Contemporary Japan provides a particularly significant area of study, where the agency of departed spirits, coupled with the coercive and psychological pull of mortuary traditions, helps the state continue to justify religious veneration for the military dead. I hope to show how these commemorative rituals help to redeem both the nation and individuals from accusatory judgements associated with Japan's actions in World War II, how they bolster a sense of pride in being Japanese, and how they resist domestic and international pressures for apology and restitution.

During the summer of 1995, international attention focused on the causes and effects of the cataclysm of war in which the death toll alone is estimated to be over twenty million combatants and twenty-five million civilians (Snyder 1993). Projects of remembrance fifty years later seemed almost as numerous. Sponsoring agencies, municipalities, and political patrons of every sort

selected and emphasized historical events and themes from this fifty year old story in order to convey to popular audiences (most of whom, like those in the sponsoring agencies, had no direct experience of the war) what they considered most significant and enduring. In assessing these projects, it is easy to let our critiques about "invented traditions" or ideologies of memory obscure the personal as we assess the political and institutional. And yet, regardless of the manipulative politics involved, it is important to account for and acknowledge the struggle of individuals, and the considerable agency they exert, as they grope for ways to keep the memory of loved ones secure against the threats of pain, forgetfulness or, worse, of condemnation.

Processes involved in the construction of social memories serve to create a kind of "mapping" (Connerton 1989:37) especially relevant for navigating socio-political terrains contorted by pain, suffering, and loss. When individuals and organizations align themselves within a particular rendition of the past, they gain a positive sense of ownership and control. Routes of memory that were previously thought off-limits, because of the pain associated with the death of loved ones in a losing war, now gain resolution and become viable landscapes of meaning.***2***

Some of the most critical ways shaping the meaning of individual memories are those institutional, organizational, and political entities and processes imbued with (and often afforded an excess of) religious legitimacy. While religious orientations may of course be explicitly doctrinal, more recent studies have shown how they may also be diffuse networks of power relations that act on and often bypass individual consciousness, promoted through everyday sociocultural practices (Bell 1992, Fernandez 1986).

Throughout the anthropological and historical record, we find an abundance of social groups where the positioning of identity and morality within a religiously oriented universe is conditioned by a mediated relationship with guardian and/or ancestral spirits. Whether these are

Christian saints or the founder of a lineage, exalted Buddhas or irascible Shinto deities (known as *kami*), whether these spirits are benignly ancestral or (if unpropitiated) vengeful and possibly demonic, it is rare indeed to find societies that do not at some level and in some way promote a "nostalgic aura of sanctuary" (Friedman 1992:847) *if* its spirits can be properly managed and controlled. The interventionist and reactionary agency afforded these spirits empowers them both to sanctify and legitimate present day social and political orderings, or to challenge and, in some cases, disrupt them. At an abstract level, the spirits of the founding fathers and mothers of the nation are ever present as guides and coercive examples for correct policy and behavior. But in specific cases, such as we find in contemporary Japan, these spirits are more intimate and personal. The way they are referenced through social memory and commemorative rituals interacts not only with traditional religious values but also, as we shall see, with the nation's highest political leaders and their networks of alliance and power.

The Politics and History of Commemorating the War Dead

Since the end of World War II, diverse interpretations over how to represent, acknowledge, and atone for Japan's aggressive exploits throughout Asia and the Pacific have occasioned as much controversy and conflict as they have closure. Nowhere is this more evident than among groups and individuals promoting emperor veneration, recognition of the "rising sun" flag, nationalistic attempts to revise history curriculum for middle school students, and more recently, the deployment of Japan's Ground Self-Defense forces overseas. All continue to rally for inspiration as well as legitimization around one of Japanese society's most formidable and intimidating institutions: Yasukuni Shinto Shrine.

In many ways, Yasukuni is like other Shinto shrines in Japan, which honor their principal deities with seasonal festivals and entertainments, and offer a multitude of rituals that are thought to benefit both individual and community. What puts Yasukuni in a class all its own is its claim on the souls of Japan's 2.46 million war dead. Here they are not only enshrined and propitiated but also valorized and fetishized. While the shrine continues to make national and international news each time high-ranking government officials come to pay their respects, there has been little analysis regarding the audiences to whom these visits play, the general context of Yasukuni Shrine within Japanese political and social life, or the cult of the war-dead the shrine promotes through its rituals, numerous publications, affiliated groups, and last but not least, the leading war memorabilia museum in all Japan (see Eto and Kobori 1986, Kristof 1995, Iwai 1988).

How did the Yasukuni situation develop? Wasn't state support of Shinto to have ended with Japan's defeat, codified by various directives prohibiting further cooperation? ***3*** In assessing Yasukuni Shrine and its affiliated groups, we must of course understand their political agendas and the ways the military dead are thought essential to preserving the nation. But if we broaden the social and historical context and deepen our awareness of underlying cultural codes regarding death, we will be able to appreciate the influence of these factors regarding Japan's inability to come to terms with its aggression during and responsibility for the Pacific War, as well as the ways in which the Pacific War is both remembered and obscured from memory.

Yasukuni Shrine's origins begin in 1862 during a time of civil conflict between a slowly deteriorating shogunate and an insurrection led by forces from western Japan. The reigning emperor of that time was asked by the leaders of the rebellious forces (who, by 1862, controlled the imperial city of Kyoto) to sponsor a ritual for those soldiers who had died fighting against the Tokugawa shogunate. The first "modern," custom-made ritual for the military dead (*irei-no-saigi*)

was conducted by both Buddhist and Shinto priests at Kyoto Higashiyama *ryôzan* in December 1862 (Takaishi 1990:10).

After solidifying power during the next four years, in 1867 the fledgling nation's new leaders ordered a "hall for inviting spirits" (*shôkon-jo*) to be built in every region under their control.***4*** This was in addition to the yearly memorial services held at Buddhist temples in honor of soldiers who had died since 1853, the year the rebellion first took flight. But Buddhism was in eclipse among the new elite: throughout the roughly 250 years of the Tokugawa period, its priests and temples had served as extensions of the shogunate's administrative and coercive powers and was deemed inappropriate for a rapidly modernizing state. For a brief and volatile period (1854-1860), some temples were ransacked, priceless statues and icons were torched or dumped in rivers, and priests were stripped of their duties and titles in communities their predecessors had served for centuries (see Ketelaar 1990).

Shrines dedicated to *kami* veneration suffered no such fate. Since a radical break with the immediate Tokugawa past motivated much revolutionary policy, the new Meiji government announced in 1868 that it would follow the ancient principle of *saisei-itchi,* or a unity of governmental and ritual affairs. Historical precedents based on *kami* veneration reached back to the first Japanese state in the late sixth century and to mythical precedents even before that. ***5*** After all, it was argued, were not *all* the colonizing policies of the imperial powers (Britain, France, Holland, the United States, Russia) driven by the powerful spiritual engine of Christianity? If Japan were to compete and stave off encroachments on its territorial sovereignty, it could only adopt the rules of a game already in play. And so, the imperial court was overhauled, the Meiji emperor elevated to the status of a living *kami*, and a revamped "Shinto" was made the institutional

vehicle through which villages (each having one or more shrines) could be linked to state agendas--in much the same way the previous regime had done with local temples.

Chief among advocates for this revitalization of ritual affairs syncretizing politics and religion was Ômura Masujiro, leader of the acclaimed Chôshû infantry which suffered heavy losses during the civil wars (Takaishi 1990:13). As a way of honoring and appeasing the spirits of his soldiers who had helped create the new nation, the memorials he had observed at Buddhist temples were now to be centralized at an equally new Shinto shrine in Tokyo. Just north of what would become the imperial palace grounds, the location of the Tokyo *Shôkonsha* in 1869 (literally, "that place to which the divine spirits [of those who have made the great sacrifice] are invited") was favored by Ômura for many reasons. First, the area known as Kudan hill won out over the location at Ueno favored by Kido Kôin because the latter site had seen several bloody skirmishes, rendering it a *bokon no chi*, or place with lingering, unhappy spirits. The Kudan area was a perfect space to start an institution that would symbolize the future for a new "spirit of the land / *chirei*" (Tsubouchi 1999: 42). Second, not only was Kudan hill one of the higher elevations in the city, it also marked a division between two distinct cultures associated with the feudal era: the *shitamachi* or "lower city" where commoners lived in cramped conditions, and the *yamanote* region of upper- class officials and samurai. Constructing the shrine in this area would help to promote the new government's nation-building agendas by blurring status distinctions of their residents via communal activities at the shrine (ibid: 49-50). Although Omura was assassinated shortly after the shrine's initial construction, he is revered as the founder of Japan's Imperial Army. His huge bronze statue towers atop a pedestal at the shrine's northern entrance (see #12 on the map).

By 1890 (and before any of Japan's wars of colonization), the shrine had become one of Tokyo's premier public plazas and meeting spots. Its distinctive "lighthouse" lantern (*tômyôdai*),

its giant *torii* gateways, and its expansive grounds became known to the general populace through periodic festivals, sumo matches, noh performances, and exhibitions of every kind--all within precincts made sacred by the spirits of the military dead. Early in the shrine's development in 1872, a French circus entertained rather small crowds. The shrine's sponsorship of periodic horse races also began in this year, with the later Taishô emperor (reign years 1912-1926) recalling fondly how he used to attend these competitions as a child (ibid: 68-70). Shrine administrators booked an Italian circus in 1890 so as to further capitalize on record crowds already attending the shrine's annual festival (*reitai-sai*).

This brief history of the development of the shrine should indicate it clearly had a notable presence among the general public well before it came to be so instrumental to the state. But it was also during the early years of the Meiji government that a decision to institutionalize state-sponsored spirit enshrinement at this particular location helped to create what can only be called a new religion. Drawing upon long-standing traditions that linked state policies to religious practices and leaders (*saisei-itchi*), and privileging selected symbols, myths, and institutional trappings of a broadly and newly-defined "Shinto" tradition, emphasis was shifted in fundamental, strategic, and even radical ways.

The first innovation was to associate spirits of the dead with a tradition known for trying to avoid the impurity of death. Shinto ritual practices considered the impurity of death and the danger associated with unstable spirits of the dead a prime source of defilement (*kegare*) for human beings and their communities. Instead, priests and rituals emphasized the life-bestowing, generative, and beneficent vitality of *kami*, which were usually highly local and clan-specific deities or numinous entities thought to ensure (if treated properly) good harvests, healthy children, successful livelihoods, and victorious military campaigns (see Brown 1993:10-12, Nelson 1996). For

centuries, *kami* had been positioned alongside Buddhist bodhisattvas and other deities, which took care of those immediately dangerous sides of life such as sickness and the fate of one's soul at death. Together these interactive traditions provided complementary and pragmatic resources of great utility to generations of Japanese leaders and commoners.

One of Japan's leading researchers on death, the late Gorai Shigeru, asserted that every death creates an unquiet spirit that must be sublimated, controlled, and made into a benign and, in a best-case scenario, a benevolent spirit (*kami,* or in the Buddhist vocabulary, *hotoke*) as soon as possible (Gorai 1994:105).***6*** The death of soldiers creates special problems within this cultural tradition. Military casualties caused by war's untimely and violent circumstances take the lives of vibrant young men or women in their prime. In this context, a heightened threat emerges: that of "unquiet spirits" (*onryô*) which transcend the bonds of loyalty or kin. It's thought these spirits--confused, lost, and neglected--might just as readily seek retribution from the nation (once they find their way back to Japan) instead of those now-distant enemy soldiers actually responsible for their deaths. While ancestral veneration was by and large exclusivistic--worshipping the souls of individuals through kin, occupational, or territorial affiliations (Smith 1974)--it may be argued that some acknowledgment was required in exceptional situations to propitiate and quiet *all* the spirits of the dead, friend and foe alike, before focusing more intently on those closer to home. One perspective might consider this a deeply Buddhist, humanistic sympathy about the death of a human being, but it can also be seen as a pragmatic design which attempts to alleviate a fear of spirit reprisal (Murakami 1974:53).

The second innovation of Meiji-period spirit-veneration reconfigured this same tradition. For the first time only "our" spirits, and only "heroic" ones at that, would be honored and invited to the *shôkon-jo*. Those of the enemy were simply ignored by the military leaders who, instead of

priests, served in the rituals as celebrants (*hyôbu-shô*). In addition, rather than a clan or family leader sponsoring the service, the agent initiating the ritual was now the nation-state. The country as a whole was embodied in the emperor who served both as patron and benefactor of the self-sacrifice of the "heroes" (Oe 1992:53). When the general public came to pay tribute to these spirits and acknowledge their noble deeds, they would of course be led directly to the nation (Murakami ibid: 111, Antoni 1988). ***7*** Thus, the *shôkon-jo* can be thought of as a kind of crucible wherein unstable spiritual entities with negative potential could be purified, soothed, and transformed into *kami* that are both benevolent and fundamental to the nation.

When the inner sanctuary of the Tokyo Shôkonsha was constructed and periodic rituals for the spirits of the dead began to be regularly performed, it came under the control of the army and navy ministries in 1872 (the same year the French circus performed). (By the end of the Second World War, the shrine was controlled by the Internal Affairs Ministry (Naimusho), and its priests held rank equivalent to a colonel within the armed forces.) Two years later in 1874, the Meiji Emperor attended the shrine for a major ritual (*reitai-sai*), another significant departure from established custom. For possibly the first time in Japanese history, an emperor paid respects to the spirits of commoners who were said to have died for his and the nation's sake. But it is also true that the young emperor, only twenty-two at this time, benefited from and gained legitimacy through this act of acknowledgement. ***8*** Japanese politicians and patriots have been following his lead ever since.

With the new government centralizing its administrative powers in Tokyo, it announced in 1875 that all the spirits of the military dead, until then cared for at the regional shrines established earlier in 1867, would be brought to Tokyo and unified at the Shôkonsha. Principal rituals of commemoration were to be held on May 6 and November 6, honoring the 10,880 individuals then

officially recognized as *kami*. I will mention later in this discussion incidents that challenged these new traditions, but for now this brief history sets the stage for another important and transformative event. On June 4, 1879, the emperor Meiji announced that the Tokyo Shôkonsha (the shrine to which "spirits are invited") would henceforth be known as "Yasukuni" (the shrine of the "peaceful country"). It was reasoned that, owing to the "meritorious services of the spirits of the deities worshiped," the nation enjoys peace and security (Yasukuni Shrine brochure, n.d.). The title change is significant, according to Eric Wolf, because, "the ability to bestow meanings--to 'name' things, acts, and ideas--is a source of power." Once they are named, however, considerable power is required to "keep the meanings so generated in place--names must, as the Chinese say, be 'rectified'" (Wolf 1982:388).

A series of armed conflicts and wars kept Yasukuni Shrine as a key referent for the new nation's growing military and the accompanying obligations of citizenship. As Japan modernized and expanded its overseas interests (following models of colonial imperialism supplied by England, Spain, France, Holland, and the United States) a spiraling number of conscripts were channeled into the military (most dramatically 103,784 in 1912 and 136,000 in 1929 [Tanaka 1996:210]). The lives of those who became war casualties and ultimately "heroic spirits" helped to lessen dissonance between the "peaceful nation" celebrated in the name of the shrine with those state policies hungry for new resources and territory.

Patriotism, Resistance, and Redemption at Yasukuni Shrine

The political and institutional contexts for Yasukuni's development should be clear by now, but what of the internal process by which spirits were enshrined (*gôshi*)? The priests I interviewed were unwilling to supply this information, but according to a 1941 article written exclusively for

army officers by the head priest of Yasukuni, we learn how human spirits (*jinrei*) become divine spirits (*shinrei*) belonging to the shrine and, by extension, its key patron and sponsor, the state.

The head priest of the early war years, Suzuki Takao, was troubled by the intimacy commoners felt towards the shrine once their sons or relatives were made deities. He wanted officers to impart to their consignees (and they to their relatives) the basic process of enshrinement. Within the shrine are several distinct areas, each characterized by the specific activity of spirit transformation occurring there. The *shôkon-jo* (within the *honden*, or inner sanctuary; please see nos. 1-3 on the map) is still a vital part of this process because here human spirits are first invited to the shrine. A ritual called the *hôkoku-sai* announces to the spirits that they will be combined with other spirits within the shrine (*gôshi*). Finally, they are moved to the *reijibo hôanden*, literally the "sanctuary of enshrined spirits," and worshipped there for the first time as *kami* of the shrine and nation. The priest writes,

> "You really have to think about this (process) and understand it. A person who has lost a son can't think about him as separate and their own; you have to make them understand that their son has become a *kami*. Bereaved families are wrong to feel intimacy to the shrine and behave in casual and inappropriate ways. To equate the human spirits (*jinrei*) with the divine spirits (*shinrei*) shows a wrong orientation: these spirits now belong to the nation (*kokka*). The only will that survives is that of the nation-state" (Oe 1984:136).

In practice, however, we find considerable variations with this all-spirits-are-one ideology. Even within the shrine, there are two categories of spirits: those of imperial lineage and those of commoners (Nojiri 1995). Both are considered to be the heroic war dead (*senshisha* or *eirei*) but

commoners are clearly subordinate to those spirits of imperial descent. All the same, despite the unprecedented situation of, for example, the deceased son of a poor farmer receiving tribute from the emperor, enshrinement alone was not always sufficient to sustain ceremonial propriety along class lines.

A struggle ensued over possession of the spirits of the dead between bereaved family members and what I have called the state's new religion. Following the reasoning of the chief priest just mentioned, worshipping the spirit of one's own son could be done correctly only at Yasukuni Shrine. Letters written from the front lines before death in battle, especially those from *kamikaze* pilots, instruct their descendents to come to Yasukuni to visit their spirit. Speaking to his young daughter, a pilot writes, "If you wonder what I look like in the future, tell your mother so and ask to come to Yasukuni Shrine..." Similarly, from the pilot Matsuo Isao to his parents,

> "Thank you... for the twenty-three years during which you have cared for me and inspired me. I hope that my present deed will in some small way repay what you have done for me. Think well of me and know that your Isao died for our country. This is my last wish, and there is nothing else that I desire. I shall return in spirit and look forward to your visit at the Yasukuni Shrine (both from Matsuo 2000).***9***

To families in any region outside the Tokyo area, the enshrinement of their loved one and the accompanying rituals conducted in his honor must have been ennobling on the one hand--linking that family to a community of military heroes venerated by the emperor and nation--but agonizing on the other. One could still pay respects to the departed spirit at the household Buddhist altar, but the emphasis was different and occurred away from the national stage where the spotlight shone so brightly. Nonetheless, the tension between obligatory enshrinement and the older

traditions venerating ancestors at home or at local temples is obvious in this popular song of the early 1940's (approved by the authorities of course) with its politically correct way to mourn the spirit of one's own child:

"(Mother came to Yasukuni from the country),
kneeled down and started to pray
the prayer to Amida Buddha,
but realizing her error said,
'Son, please forgive this country person.'"

"Ryôtei awasete, hizamazuki,
ogamu hazumi no nembutsu,
hatto kizuite, urotaeru,
'Segare, yuruse yo,
inakamono."
(Tsunoda 1977:60-63)

Another popular song carried a poignant protest, yet was subtle enough in its carefully worded challenge to escape suspicion from patriotic neighbors or the feared "special police" (*kenpei-tai*):

"Your spirit is settled in Yasukuni
but sometimes it returns home
in your mother's dreams."

Yasukuni no miya ni
shizumaru mo, oriori kaere
haha no yumeji ni. (ibid)

As the war progressed, and increasingly frequent enshrinement rituals mirrored mounting losses at the front, the patriotic pressure to conceal personal feelings could not always be managed. Tsunoda Saburo, a writer who lost two brothers in the war and became a Christian minister afterwards, reports a radio announcer confiding to him that during broadcasts from Yasukuni on the occasion of spirit enshrinement ceremonies, anguished cries were difficult to shield from the

microphone. With the central walkway flanked on both sides by the relatives of those being enshrined, cries of "Murderer! (*Hitogoroshi*!)" and "Give me back my child! (*Waga-ko kaese*!)" were often hurled at the procession of priests and military officials solemnly approaching the inner sanctuary. Although exclamations like these were clearly seditious, orders to the special police on duty followed a "hands-off" policy, deferring to the families' grief rather than to what had become the norm of stoic patriotism (Tsunoda 1977:51).***10***

In a high-profile case over enshrinement and religious freedom argued before the Japanese Supreme Court in 1988,***11*** attorney Kumano Katsuyuki compared the coercive policies and ideologies of State Shinto during the war years to an internal combustion engine designed to run on fuel provided by the youth of Japan. Conscription into the military became the "compression" of this cycle, providing docile bodies for the "combustion" of many military conflicts around Asia. Finally and most critically, the violence of the combustion phase and the "exhaust" it produced was mitigated and celebrated by enshrinement at Yasukuni and at local war memorial sites (O'Brien 1996:131). Chapters in textbooks of the 1940's even dealt with topics such as how to regard one's elder brother after he became a "glorious spirit" enshrined at Yasukuni (Wada 1974:53).

To many in those parts of Asia once occupied by Japanese forces, the veneration of all those killed while in military service, including "class-A" war criminals executed after the war (such as Tôjô Hideki, enshrined in 1979), glorifies Japan's late 19th and mid-20th century conflicts (Sakamoto 1994). Yet from a perspective shared by many veterans and bereaved family members, the degree of the war-dead's guilt and compliance of all those once in the military or who supported the nation's cause is rendered less problematic by a simple shift in historical perspective. "I know there are class-A war criminals enshrined here," said one former Navy officer, "but they

had to follow the national policy at that time. In a wide perspective, they might also have been victims of the war" (Japan Times, 1996d).

Yûshûkan: the Museum of Memory and Repose

Nowhere does the sanctimonious perspective of victimization gain a louder voice than at the shrine's war memorabilia museum, the Yûshûkan. Located some fifty meters to the west of the shrine's central walkway (see #10 on the map), the building itself is an impressive example of European-style architecture. What catches one's eye on approach, however, is the area in front of the museum where, on what is designated as "sacred ground," stand a vintage machine gun, howitzer, torpedo, and a tank. Closest to the museum's stately entrance is a statue of "Mother" surrounded by the children she bravely raised in the absence (or loss) of her husband.

The museum's alignment of personal valor and sacrifice within a sacralized martial context is evident from these exterior displays alone. Once inside, a visitor travels through the military exploits of the Meiji, Taishô and Shôwa periods (see the museum link within Yasukuni's website, http://www.yasukuni.or.jp). The narratives that accompany the exhibits are actively evangelical, extolling the commitment, loyalty, bravery, and self-sacrifice of those who died in service to the nation and emperor. Here, as patriotic songs emote softly in the background, the shrine and nation's anonymous spirits once again become tangible human beings. Murakami, in his otherwise excellent account of Yasukuni, follows the shrine's policy of stating that the war dead have no personality or individuation (1974:3), and thus misses entirely the complementary role provided by the museum. Displayed within well-lit glass cases, their faces look out hauntingly at the visitor from photographs, accompanied by detailed life stories, the circumstances of their "heroic" deaths, and a variety of personal effects (helmets, blood-stained uniforms, field pouches,

letters, and so on). Whether commanders, soldiers, pilots, sailors, or field nurses--all casualties and all enshrined as divine spirits--stressed repeatedly is the spiritual bond between the Japanese family and its nation, one surviving even the finality of death.

In 1995, fifty years after the war, the Yûshûkan's exhibits were designed so that a visitor's last impression came from a display of (what is usually called in English) the military's "suicide squads." Ranging from *kamikaze* pilots, to one-man speed boat-bombs, to the bizarre bomb-on-a-pole divers sabotaging harbor-bound ships, the technology of destruction and personal sacrifice it required references the obligatory relationship of citizens to their nation and emperor. The museum, shrine, and conservative politicians argue that Japan has survived intact precisely because of these individuals so willing to take literally the imperial directive to "(should emergency arise)...offer yourself courageously" (Hardacre 1989:122). The priest guiding me through the museum noted, "That's the problem with using the English word 'suicide' to describe these actions. These people were not desperate or mentally unbalanced; they freely surrendered their lives that the nation might live" (Nojiri 1995). The photographs of young men juxtaposed with the one-man submarines, light weaponry, and fighter planes displayed within the museum's rotunda (used "with love and care" by the "deities of the shrine" according to a shrine brochure [Buruma 1994:222]), celebrates a community of idealistic heroes and heroines, one standing in stark contrast to the selfishness and materialism of contemporary Japan awaiting just outside the shrine's precincts. (see Fig.2)

A number of people I spoke with upon exiting the museum felt the least they could do is to honor the spirits of the war dead enshrined at Yasukuni. As a man in his late twenties put it:

> "I read about the situation when the enemy's aircraft carriers were attacked by *kamikaze*, but right now I can't imagine how they could do it. Personally, I don't

have that kind of courage. But, on the other hand, I would like to know more about the young people's thoughts and feelings of that time.." (Nelson 1997)

It is precisely this feeling to acknowledge more fully the sacrifices of the military dead, and educate oneself about the circumstances of the time, that can lead a motivated individual to encounter other parts of the Yasukuni community. In this regard, an array of political-action groups labors to convert curiosity and empathy into activism and patronage, subsumed within a more broadly encompassing redemptive process about the war, its legacy, and the shaping of social memory among the Japanese people.

Moral Communities of Memory

Since at least 1967, postwar Japanese governments have been engaged in promoting and acknowledging this sanctified and richly symbolic community of spirits despite Constitutional injunctions prohibiting these attentions. Article 20 of the Constitution stipulates that a representative of the state cannot pay tribute at a religious institution without violating the principle of separation of religion and state (Hardacre 1989:144). All the same, every year on or before August 15 (the day of Japan's surrender) a number of Prime Ministers, members of the Cabinet, and elected officials have paid their respects at the shrine despite the international and regional uproar these visits cause. On April 22, 1975, Prime Minister Miki became the first post-war prime minister to visit Yasukuni; after that, Prime Ministers Fukuda, Ohira, Suzuki, Nakasone, Hashimoto, and most recently Koizumi have followed. Not only do their visits flaunt Constitutional restrictions, they evoke pre-war days when the shrine was a state-sponsored institution and received visits from Meiji, Taisho, and Shôwa emperors (72 times in all), members of the Imperial family (over 1000 visits), and top governmental and military leaders (Nojiri 1995).

Thus, worship at Yasukuni is never "simply" personal as some politicians occasionally claim as they sidestep the Constitution.***12*** In 1990, as had been attempted numerous times before, then Socialist party chairperson Doi Takako proposed a binding referendum to acknowledge the nation's wartime responsibility. Repeatedly stalled, Prime Minister Murayama's coalition government tried to pass the resolution in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, only to meet considerable opposition from an alliance that joined leading LDP politicians with the Central Association of Shinto Shrines, the Bereaved Families' Association (*Izoku-kai*), and numerous veterans' organizations. The apology was finally issued from the Prime Minister's office without Diet approval. Even without consensus, phrases like "acts of aggression" and "colonial rule" were edited out at the insistence of right-wing politicians (Green 2001: 95-96). Forces opposed to the apology from outside the government, spearheaded by people like Mori Yoshinari, the assistant head priest at Meiji Jingû (where the spirit of the Meiji emperor is enshrined) and endorsed by 70% of LDP members in the Diet, collected more than five million signatures (The Economist 1995:31). Their reasoning was that since the war was fought in the emperor's name, to apologize for it is unthinkable because of the chain of associations this one acknowledgment would initiate. To use their own words, "individuals can apologize, but not nations." The anti-apology coalition was also present at the mass rally for the "Asian Symbiosis Festival" in Tokyo on May 29, 1995, which "thanked the war dead and praised Japan for its contribution to the independence of Asian countries" (McCormack 1996:274).

Further subverting the (Social Democratic) Prime Minister's efforts to pass the apology referendum, a number of LDP Cabinet officials not only visited Yasukuni Shrine but the party issued its own statement one hour after the Prime Minister's highly-anticipated press conference during which he apologized for the considerable suffering Japan had caused to its Asian neighbors.

The LDP statement, while acknowledging the need to learn from the "lessons of history," conveyed no direct apology (using instead the word *hansei* / to "reflect upon" past actions). Neither did it raise issues of compensation or mention aggression in any way. Echoing the Meiji emperor's words when he gave Yasukuni its name, the LDP statement expressed gratitude to the nation's "war heroes, upon whose sacrifice Japan's modern prosperity was built" (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1995).

When looking for key players and strategists in the 1995 commemoration and apology controversy, and in the ways social memory is engaged at the highest levels of state, we find one of Japan's former prime ministers (1996-1998), Hashimoto Ryûtaro, standing head and shoulders above the crowd. During that summer, he was already positioned to assume the post of prime minister, moving from powerful positions as head of the International Trade and Industry Ministry and as LDP party chairman. Often overlooked, however, was his third position: chairman of the Bereaved Families' Association. Hashimoto's 1995 visit to Yasukuni played to a predictable crush of reporters and television cameras (see Nelson 1997) but this was nothing compared to the media attention given to his visit in July 1996 after becoming Prime Minister.

Well-known for his intransigent style and tough talk in Japan, and for a 1994 statement that the question of Japan's aggression in the war was a matter of "delicate definitions," he answered a reporter's question about the legality of the 1996 visit with the following statement:

> "Why should it matter any more? Surely it's time to stop letting that sort of thing (Yasukuni visitation and worship) complicate our international relations. Will you ask the same question if I should attend a Christian-style wedding ceremony? I also observe Buddhist rituals when I take part in funerals at temples..."
>
> (Japan Times, 1996a)

By playing the "religion card," he referenced the pragmatism of religious practices in Japan, where specific situations take primacy over fuzzy doctrinal or theological boundaries. His visit also fulfilled a vow to the Bereaved Families' Association and became the first official visit by a Prime Minister since Nakasone's controversial visits in 1983 and 1985 (Nojiri 1995).***13*** A former governor of Ehime prefecture, Shiraishi Haruki, noted with surprising candor that there is no cheaper, more effective campaign strategy than to profess sympathy for and promote the interests of the Bereaved Families' (Kitahara 1993; see also Morioka 1987, Nelson 1999). What he's really pointing to is how a politician can easily exploit the continuing emotional and psychic pull exerted by the spirits of the war dead through the medium of Yaskukuni Shrine and other memorials.

The recent uproar over Prime Minister Koizumi's August 2001 and March 2002 visits provides another case study in this ongoing relationship between religion and the state. Koizumi announced on May 15, 2001 (a little over one month after being named prime minister) that, "No matter if I will come under criticism from other nations, I must pay my respects to those who were forced to go to war for their families and for the country . . . and make it clear that (Japan) will never again wage war" (Japan Times, 2001). On July 11th, he followed a familiar tradition, one referencing official social memory about the war, by explaining that, "I need to make a visit as prime minister because Japan's return to prosperity was helped by the sacrifices of our soldiers" (Mainichi Shimbun, 2001a). Coming at a time of considerable controversy over a proposed textbook for middle-school students long on nationalistic pride and revisionist views of history (see Nelson 2002), criticism from both domestic and international sources grew so heated that Koizumi fulfilled his vow with a "surprise" visit on August 13th. But by doing so he appeared to irritate everyone. His conservative backers felt he capitulated to foreign demands to abandon the official visit on the 15th, his foreign and domestic critics were furious the visit occurred at all, and even the

priests at the Yasukuni were angry that he did not follow standard ritual protocol by permitting a purification as well as making the proper number of claps and bows common to venerating deities at a shrine (Karasaki 2001). Finally, in what will prove a very interesting case testing legal precedents set by the Supreme Court in 1997, the Prime Minister was sued in October by a group of 639 plaintiffs for violating the constitution (Mainichi Shimbun, 2001b). Koizumi's visit, as well as Hashimoto's in 1996, verify that, despite the controversies year in and year out, Yasukuni Shrine receives greater deference and tribute from members of the LDP elite than does the nation's Constitution.***14***

Performers and Patrons for the "Circus" of August 15th Commemorations

On August 15th every year (the day of Japan's surrender), Yasukuni braces for (and, I think, embraces) what the head priest described to me as "our annual circus." The added resonance of the Buddhist holiday *obon* also works in the shrine's favor: a time at the end of summer vacation to acknowledge a family's relationship to their ancestral spirits, coupled with a homeland nostalgia evoking the cultural and spiritual essences of what it means to be Japanese. As we noted earlier in this discussion, calling August 15th a "circus" evokes the shrine's history and status as a place of spectacle--from its huge festivals, to its tradition of hosting pageants and parades before 1945, to its sumo matches.

This is the day when most Cabinet Ministers and other politicians pay their respects (usually in mid to late afternoon), when media from all over the world come to verify how militaristic the Japanese still are by filming aging veterans-in-uniform marching raggedly to bugle calls and barked commands, and when the trucks of right-wing groups equipped with stadium speakers converge on the shrine blasting patriotic music and slogans. (The portrait of right-wing paramilitary members

seen in Fig. 3, standing before the central hall of worship, includes a range of fashion, ages, and gender.)

But these are sideshows compared to the main event: when over eighty organizations, from the Society Honoring the Glorious War Dead (*Eirei ni kotaeru kai*) to the Bereaved Families' Association, file in and out of the shrine's inner sanctuary for private services to commemorate particular communities of war dead. Protests from opposition groups also occur on this day, but they are not allowed on the shrine's precincts. They must position themselves at the shrine's public entrances or attempt to badger ritual proceedings using loudspeakers from the rooftop of a nearby university (Nelson 1997).***15*** The shrine attempts to ignore all criticism from organizations such as the Japanese Christian Church or the Communist Party that contest or seek to undo the "conditions of felicity" that legitimate the shrine's sacralizing performances (Bourdieu 1991:116).

A juxtaposition of somber and festive moods comprise the atmosphere of the day, but I was duly impressed by the number of special-interest organizations permitted by the shrine along its wide central approach (beginning at #13 on the map). Each dispensed information related to "new" historical perspectives about the war in the form of books, biographies, pamphlets, newsletters and so forth, with one group showing its colors via original paintings of battle scenes by veterans. The visitor's center (#11 on map), where groups assemble before entering the inner shrine for memorial rituals (*irei-sai*), also offered an abundance of free literature from supporting groups as well as the shrine itself.***16***

Foremost among these memorializing communities is the Bereaved Families' Association. Founded in 1947 (as the *Nihon Izoku Kôsei Renmei* or Association for the Welfare of Families of War Casualties) for the express intent of repatriating remains and securing pensions for families who lost relatives, the group has become more policy-oriented since 1956.***17*** Though ostensibly a

private organization, the Bereaved Families' Association has occupied since 1957 a building owned by the Welfare Ministry and leased to the group free of charge (Hammond 1995). That was roughly the same time the leadership of the 1,300,000-household Izoku-kai began calling on the Emperor, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, as well as generals from the Self-Defense forces, to attend Yasukuni's spring and fall festivals, just as they did before the war. In 1969, working in close concert with the Izoku-kai and the Central Association of Shinto Shrines, the LDP introduced a bill (*Yasukuni hôan*) to again grant state support to the shrine, specifying that although the shrine's purpose was to offer rites for the souls of the war dead, its service to the nation should place it above being classified as a religious institution, which would then permit official visitations from the Emperor and Prime Minister (see Murakami, 1985, O'Brien 1996). Though this bill was defeated five times (1969-72, 1974), the Izoku-kai has not changed its goals but rather developed new tactics and working relationships in the 1980's to further these and other agendas.***18***

Another key organization in league with Yasukuni Shrine, and listed as a sub-organization within the Central Association of Shinto Shrines, is the Shinto *seiji renmei* (or the "League Promoting Ties between Politics and Shinto," usually called *Shinseiren*). Begun in 1967 to help facilitate passage of the *Yasukuni hôan* legislation, the Shinseiren is anything but secretive about its goals. The first one is to respect and honor the Imperial household. Next, they want to "correct" the relationship between politics and religion. Within the Shinseiren, the "Group for Correct Government" (or *Seikyô kankei o tadasu-kai*) works to "enlighten" (*keimo suru*) members of the national Diet, national media organizations, lawyers, and local politicians (Shinseiren 1995). Like the other organizations, the Shinseiren also wants to create war memorials at shrines nationwide (in addition to the already extant "nation-preserving shrines"/*gokoku-jinja*) to serve as unofficial but symbolically powerful extensions of Yasukuni Shrine. Additionally, they believe the Day of

National Founding on Feb. 11 (*kenkoku kinen-bi*) should be an occasion complete with ceremonies attended by politicians at Yasukuni Shrine (similar to the pre-1945 *kigensetsu* [Ruoff 2001]). Finally, they want to create a new and specifically Japanese Constitution, to "correct" the national educational curriculum, and to promote prosperity and happiness among the Japanese people by contributing to the peaceful coexistence of the Japanese with other peoples in the world (Shinseiren 1995, see also Nelson 2000a).

Of course, cooperation between the Shinseiren and elected officials and bureaucrats is essential to further these goals. Rather than leave this to chance, another sub-organization nurtures these connections, the *Shinseiren Kokkaigin Kondankai,* which is basically all those Diet members who publicly subscribe to the above mentioned agenda. Representing both the House of Representatives and House of Councilors, the Kokkaigin Kondankai boasts of having over 135 members in this group who are, according to its December 1993 publication, the "pipeline for realizing our goals" (Shinseiren 1993).

It should come as no surprise that Japan's recent prime minister, Mori Yoshirô, was addressing Shinseiren's 30th anniversary celebration on May 15, 2000 when he delivered his controversial remarks (for which he apologized but never retracted) that Japan is "a divine nation with the emperor at its center." His late predecessor, Obuchi Keizô, had set the tone for bold statements of this nature, suggesting to *Time* magazine that emperor Hirohito should be nominated as "person of the century" (Symonds 1999).

Until his selection as foreign minister for the Hashimoto cabinet, Obuchi chaired the "Association of Diet Members Willing to Visit Yasukuni Shrine." Once in power, he named to his own cabinet three individuals who, like himself, were intimately associated with the movement to reposition the shrine within the nation's political consciousness: one served as chair of the

Shinseiren, another its secretary general, and a third as vice-chair of the Izoku-kai. After the solid victory of legislation recognizing the rising sun flag and *kimigayo* anthem as official, Obuchi then attempted to address the Yasukuni issue. In August 1999, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromu formally proposed to enshrine separately the souls of war criminals from the other military dead so that Yasukuni could once again be made a semi-governmental body (Mainichi Shimbun, 1999).

This proposal met with considerable opposition and was subsequently shelved, but we should not take this outcome as a final defeat. It was instead a repackaging of by now familiar objectives that can be traced back to the early 1950s. The proponents of these ideas are still active and motivated, and of course the Yasukuni priests (as well as shrine administrators at the Central Association of Shinto Shrines and conservative priests around the country) are ready and willing to permit affiliations with the shrine. If anything, new organizations (such as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform) and momentum (efforts to initiate constitutional reform, the emergency military preparedness bill [*yûji kanren hôan*], and even hosting and winning a preliminary game in the 2002 World Cup have sprung up that will further reshape the terrain of social memory and cultural identity within national contexts.

Commemorative Politics to Come

It might be assumed logically that organizations such as Yasukuni Shrine, the Bereaved Families' Association, and others listed above should have developed a more critical attitude toward state wartime policies. The staggering civilian and military losses alone, not to mention the destruction of Japan's major cities, would seem to warrant a detailed reevaluation of how the nation's defeat and the suffering of its people came about. But we have seen--through the intervention of spirit calming rituals and a social memory of redemption centered on Yasukuni--

how the loss and human cost of a war does not necessarily engender a widespread distrust of those policies and institutions responsible. More generally, the historical record regarding the Pacific War is decidedly *not* determinative in shaping crucial emotional, psychological, political, or religious referents needed to provide meaning about the war and its consequences. Individuals can and will believe what they want, or, perhaps more accurately, what they need.

Yasukuni's rituals of enshrinement, its commemorative events, and its sanctuaries holding the military dead help to recontextualize social memories and attitudes that redeem those who participated in the war and who supported the ideology behind its initial goals (including liberation from colonial powers and a vast co-prosperity economic sphere). This discussion has also noted how the shrine's religious practices summon loyalties to an imperially sanctioned nation-state and tweak culturally specific emotions and beliefs about agency and the spirits of the military dead.

Casting our gaze outward, we can recognize the Yasukuni visage in other global contexts where religious traditions are rendered serviceable to agendas of empowerment. The Christian Coalition in the U.S., Hindu nationalists in India, the Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria, or highly vocal war veterans groups in the United Kingdom, the U.S., and Australia infuse their positions with a blend of righteousness, victimization, and a higher calling legitimized by religious values. Though advocated by a relatively small percentage of the overall population, the trenchant positions of these groups are conveyed as representing the heart and soul of the contemporary nation. When their timing and tactics are right, they often succeed in stealing the media spotlight and reaching international audiences.

Yet, to generalize this defining and defending of values as backward-looking nationalism or religious fundamentalism clouds our understanding of a vigorous interaction with the present. In a religious sense, Caplan believes that all "fundamentalisms" are process-oriented. They are

consistently engaged with their conceptual adversaries and draw from them key unifying paradigms (Caplan 1987:5). Conversely, wrapping these groups with the generic flag of "nationalism" doesn't really work either, as this label obscures more than it reveals about target audiences for their messages, the complex interplay of symbols and their referents, and the cultural systems that preceded their self-consciously held political ideologies (see Anderson 1983:19).

Because disciplinary predispositions (and audience expectations) influence methodology and theory, researchers often privilege politics, economics, or social conflict as the primary factors which engage individuals in projects of self-definition, boundary maintenance, and cultural identity. While these approaches are all complementary with my analysis here, I would feel less than honest to say any method or theory helps me understand fully the anguish which results from the loss of relatives, neighbors, and colleagues in a war. Should the tears I saw streaming down the faces of men and women as they left Yasukuni Shrine's war museum serve as data verifying the coerced complicity of individuals in shrine and state agendas? Or would a young mother joking with her children upon exiting the same museum a mere five minutes later suggest other conclusions? Even with the fields of meanings, memories, rituals, and shrine affiliations positioned as I have suggested, the propagation of their messages is always a matter of conjecture. Individuals visiting the shrine (and bypassing the siren song of the Yûshûkan museum) can simply pay their respects as they might at any other Shinto institution. And, because no overt proselytizing occurs, they might also manage to stay clear of the essentializing webs of Yasukuni's religo-political network (see Gerholm 1988).

The active process of gazing upon a 20th-century past knotted with destruction and death (as well as accomplishment and success) encompasses some of the most long-standing and resilient symbols, values, and institutions in Japan, all dependent upon which perspective of memory one

chooses or is led into. In the example of Yasukuni Shrine, individuals can redeem painful personal memories from historical reckoning, affiliate with the some of the most active and powerful special-interest groups in the country, and have sacralized through ritual practices and events all of the above. Simply mention the imperial household or the "glorious war dead" and the discourse further transforms into a moralistic fortress protected by those same "divine" spirits. It is a neatly self-justifying and highly interwoven compact that has so far escaped any serious legal challenge.

The codependent relationship between social memory and the values and practices shaping its application is dynamic and in constant realignment as new political situations develop in Japan and around the world. Until the individuals and organizations affiliated with Yasukuni Shrine discover alternatives of an equally empowering or emotionally satisfying scope, we should not be surprised that the shrine continues to provide solace and legitimacy through its seductive embrace of nation, social memory, and the moral certitude of ritual practices.

Notes

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assistance during my several visits and the filming of “Japan’s Rituals of Remembrance: Fifty Years after the Pacific War.”

1 An anonymous reader of this article notes that France is “overrun” with sites of memory and museums offering new ways of memorializing its 20th century wars. “With the gross incompetence that caused untold loss of life in WWI, the question of collaboration with the Nazis in WWII, torture and murder in Algeria, (and) the loss in Vietnam, France’s wars are hardly less problematic for that nation than the second world war was for Japan.” It would be difficult to assess comparatively just how and in what areas a war is more “problematic” for one nation than others, yet Japan’s war commemorations are burdened heavily by its defeat and unconditional surrender, the international condemnation of Japan’s military actions, reparations paid to many nations, and of course the widespread destruction and death (caused by both conventional and nuclear weapons) in its major cities.

2 Borrowing from Althusser and Burridge, Catherine Bell suggests a kind of personal redemption is at work in these politically charged, personally empowering movements to reclaim the past (Bell 1992: 84). Bell takes pains to point out this may not be an explicit ideology or doctrine to which individuals or institutions adhere. Rather, it is a strategic and practical orientation for acting, involving both accommodation and resistance to externally imposed conditions and accepted cultural meanings (see also Roseman 1996:837). Through commemorations, rituals, or daily practices imbued with the aura of new meanings, this stance encourages certain actions to be seen as efficacious within that ordering (Bell: 84). For example, a person's understanding of the place, purpose, and implications of commemorating the military dead empowers them to "discharge their obligations in relation to the moral imperatives of the

community" to which they now ascribe (Burridge in Bell 1992: 84). While a more fully developed ideology may be "subtle and delayed," it is also "ultimately vindicating in that it provides a type of closure of effort and result, attempt and reward, belief and fulfillment" (Bell, personal communication, 1996).

3 A Supreme Court decision rendered on April 2, 1997 finally called into question the use of tax revenue for ritual offerings (*tamagushi*) made by politicians at regional nation-preserving shrines (*gokoku jinja*). The case involved offerings presented on behalf of the governor and administration of Ehime prefecture. Though the amount at issue was small (¥166,000 or $1,400 US) a coalition of private citizens sued the governor and prefecture, with appeals reaching the Japanese Supreme Court. In a landmark decision, one remedying nearly thirty years of oftentimes tortured logic that justified shrines as “non-religious” and thus able to receive these offerings (see O’Brien 1996), the Supreme Court ruled 13-2 that the practice was illegal, prohibited by the post-war Constitution. For the first time, though by implication rather than direct involvement, Yasukuni Shrine stood revealed as a religious institution that had, until this decision, received special favors and attention from the Japanese government (see Nelson 1999).

4 For readers unfamiliar with the Shintoritual process, deities are always “invited” to participate in rituals held in their honor. While it is common to assume particular deities reside at shrines, priests consistently inform me it would be too difficult and dangerous to manage a prolonged presence; thus the deities are called on to participate and then invited to depart at the end of the proceedings (see Nelson 1996a, 2000). To my knowledge, Yasukuni Shrine is exceptional in that the spirits are thought to be continually housed at the shrine. From a priestly perspective, this creates a rather volatile spiritual dynamic requiring constant vigilance and ritual propitiation. See the shrine’s website at: http://www.yasukuni.or.jp

5 See Ketelaar's discussion about the official pronouncement made by the new Meiji government: "In restoring Imperial rule, which began with the emperor Jimmu's founding of the nation, all things have been renewed. The Ministry of Rites will once again be established, and we will thereby return to the practice of the unification of rite and rule" (Ketelaar 1990:92).

6 It is interesting to make a cross-cultural comparison here regarding views of the dead in traditional Chinese and Japanese societies. From a Confucian perspective, many Chinese see the dead as beings that can return to the world when the proper rites are performed by their descendents. The Japanese, on the other hand, labor to convert unstable spirits into buddhas or kami, yet they hold the dead can return to this world (as at midsummer Bon and on death anniversaries) and assume agency to affect the living. As Kaji notes, "While it should not be possible for the spirit of someone who has gone on to nirvana to come back in response to a summons, the Japanese complacently believe it happens" (Kaji 1996:75). Without this kind of agency on the part of the departed spirits, it is possible the Yasukuni issue would lose some of its salient emotional pull.

7 Rather than using terms evoking the military nature of the conflict in which these individuals died, the word frequently used was *kokujijunansha*, translated roughly as "national martyrs" (see Murakami 1974:i). During my tour of the shrine's museum, also discussed in this article, the young priest guiding me said that it was "the sacrifice of individuals (which) established the nation". Antoni argues that, based upon folk traditions regarding vengeful spirits, the country must be protected *from* these spirits rather than *by* them (Antoni 1988:133), but I prefer to see *both* these conditions as essential to the shrine's rituals and institutional positioning. In fact, I would suggest that virtually any *kami* at a Shintoshrine in Japan has this dual propensity, evidenced in its *nigimitama* (benevolent spirit force) and *aramitama* ('rough' or violent spirit force). Only through

carefully conducted rituals, some of which must involve (symbolically at least) the entire populace, can appropriate offerings, sentiments (primarily gratitude and acknowledgment), and activities keep the *aramitama* in check.

8 I am grateful to Carl Freire for bringing this reciprocity of empowerment to my attention.

9 Two letters from *kamikaze* can be found prominently displayed and discussed in the New History Textbook (2001), sponsored by the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform. Coming at the end of a problematic discussion on the war in the Pacific, they help sway young readers towards feelings of victimization and revenge for what is termed the "indiscriminate bombing" of Japanese homeland by Allied planes in 1944 and 1945. One letter speaks openly of crashing his plane into the main ship of an enemy fleet to avenge the destruction occurring in Japan, while the other employs poetry to convey the writer's desire to become both a blooming mountain cherry tree and a demon (*oni*) protecting the nation (see Nelson 2001 for an overview, Nelson 2002 for a translation of these poems).

10 We can even find resistance among the so-called *kamikaze* squadron pilots (the preferred term is either *shinpû* or *tokkôtai*, both abbreviations of *shinpû tokubetsu kôgekitai*, the official term for these special attack forces). Writing to a journalist shortly before his final mission in 1945, Lieutenant Uehara Ryôji, a graduate of Keiô University, said he was honored to have been chosen to participate in the *tokkôtai* but believed that the victory of democracy over fascism was obvious. "Tomorrow, one believer in democracy will leave this world. He may look lonely, but his heart is filled with satisfaction." Other writings from Uehara indicate that his satisfaction may have stemmed from his belief that he would go to the Pure Land (of Amida Buddha) and meet up with his brother and the girl he loved, rather than the forced march of military souls to Yasukuni (Sasaki 1994).

11 The Nakaya case became an important benchmark in testing the legality of what Hardacre calls "spirit apotheosis" ceremonies (*gôshi*, Hardacre 1989:153) in which a spirit is enshrined within regional "nation protecting" shrines (*gokoku jinja).* This can be done independently of Yasukuni Shrine, just as Catholic communities in Europe may venerate local saints not recognized by the Vatican in Rome. After Mr. Nakaya's 1973 death in an automobile accident while on duty in the Self-Defense forces, a regional Veterans' Association wanted to enshrine his spirit over the protests of his Christian wife. Eventually, a ruling by the Japanese Supreme Court in 1988 came out in favor of the "religious human rights" of the Veterans' Association (Hardacre 1989:157; see also O'Brien 1996, Field 1991).

12 In 1995, despite then Prime Minister Murayama's plea to distance themselves from activities at Yasukuni, eight Cabinet ministers used state-provided transportation and six registered at the shrine using their official titles. The ministries they represented were some of the most vital organs in the governmental body: International Trade and Industry, Transportation, Construction, Home Affairs, Management and Coordination, Environment, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Defense. The Education Minister would also have attended had he not been embroiled in controversy over a remark made August 3rd to the effect that it "depended on one's way of thinking" whether or not the war was one of aggression.

13 To those Asian nations once occupied by the Japanese military, Hashimoto's visit was, in the words of one Chinese editor, "gratuitously offensive" (Japan Times, 1996b). Such is the coercive pressure on politicians to pay an official visit to Yasukuni, one scholar likens it to a 17th century test of faith which forced Christians to step on an image of Jesus or Mary (a practice called *fumie*). Official visits to Yasukuni have become a similar test of loyalty and allegiance for many ambitious LDP politicians (Oe 1984:9).

14 Koizumi received a green light for his "surprise" visit on August 13th from the head of the Bereaved Families' Association, the *Izoku-kai*. The reasoning was simple: the Buddhist holiday of *obon* runs from the 13th to the 16th, and so any acknowledgment to the departed spirits during this period was acceptable to the Izoku-kai constituency. The advice came from the deputy president of the Izoku-kai, Makoto Koga, formerly the Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party. Koga also attended a delegation to China in early August, led by Former LDP Secretary General Hiromu Nonaka, to try and explain to the Chinese leaders the rationale and importance of Koizumi's visit (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2001).

15 Kobayashi (1979:108-110) lists a number of religious groups that have traditionally opposed any kind of Yasukuni-centered movement. For the record, these include the following: The United Shinshû Association, Rinzai shû, Myôshinji wing of the Rinzai Zen, Sectarian Buddhist groups including Nichiren, Jôdô, Tendai, sect Shintogroups such as ômoto-kyô and Tenri-kyô of Tokyo, newer religious organizations PL Kyodan and Risshô-kôsei-kai, Japanese Christian and Catholic Churches, Lutheran and Japan Baptist Churches, the YWCA, plus the Japan Association of religious leaders. An anonymous reader has also pointed out one of the oldest secular and politically active groups: the Hahaoya Taikai (Mothers' Congress) formed in the1950s. (See also Sakurai and Ohama 1991.) At the 1995 commemoration, the shrine countered an amplified tirade from the roof of a nearby university building with equally ear-splitting (though appropriately somber) patriotic music.

16 As a representative but by no means exhaustive list, here are a few of the titles of groups permitted to affiliate with the shrine: Citizens' Council to Preserve Japan (Nihon o Mamoru Kokumin Kaigi, now called Nihon Kaigi), The Association of Believers in the Marvelously Revealed Teaching of the True Buddha (Hongei Myôshu Kaiken Doshikai), The Association to

Awaken the Japanese Public (Nihon Minzoku Kakusei no kai), The All-Japan Alliance of War Comrades (Zenkoku Senyû Rengôkai), The Memorial Foundation of the Sacred and Virtuous Shôwa Emperor (Shôwa Seitoku Kinen Zaidan), The Association of the Japanese Homeland (Sôkoku Nihon no kai), The All-Japan Association of Navy Veterans (Kaikokai Zenkoku Rengôkai), and The Association for the Promotion of the National Flag and Anthem (Kokki Kokka Suishinkai).

17 Murakami (1974:209-210) notes several turning points often overlooked for increased interest in reviving what he sees as a kind of postwar state Shintô. In each example, the Izoku-kai played significant roles. The first was the 59th periodic rebuilding of the Ise Grand shrines in 1953 (the year the Occupation ended) which awoke and help focus the fervor of the Central Association of Shinto Shrines, religious lay groups, and the right wing. As a by-product of this event, the Izoku-kai increased its organizational capacities. In 1955, the chief priests of all nationwide war memorial shrines (*gokoku-jinja*) had a meeting at Yasukuni to devise plans for the shrine becoming a public rather than religious institution, supported in 1956 by an Izoku-kai conference. In 1962, the Emperor attended an Izoku-kai meeting, a precursor to his participation in a huge commemoration ritual for the war dead in 1963 on the grounds of Yasukuni (Large 1992:173). Norma Field notes another landmark piece of legislation, the reign-name law of 1979, where the years are known by the reign name of the current emperor. "Sovereignty may reside with the people," she writes, "but time is measured by the lives of emperors" (Field 1991:154, see also Ruoff 2001).

18 One of these vital relationships is with the Central Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja Honchô*) whose overt business it is to manage Japan's 80,000+ shrines and certify priestly

promotions, from the most junior to the most senior head priest. At the level of appearances, Yasukuni Shrine is not a formal member of the *Jinja Honchô* because of Yasukuni's advocacy of renewed state support for its religious activities (Murakami 1970:219). Nonetheless, all priestly appointments are made with the tacit coordination of the *Jinja Honchô*, and I believe nothing happens at the shrine without its acquiescence and consultation. Through its weekly newspaper, the *Jinja Shinpô*, the Central Association attempts to orchestrate not only the religious and social agendas of shrine Shinto institutions nationwide but also to direct national shrine policy so as to support political conservatism and the continuity and stability it promises (Creemers 1968). These policies aim to protect the interests of the overall shrine community, especially regarding proposed revisions in the Religious Juridical Persons Law which would compel religious institutions to publicly reveal their finances. Aum Shinri Kyô and the its sarin gas attacks in 1995 can be partially blamed for this, but without Aum and the tangible threat to the national polity it provided, neo-conservative organizations such as the *Jinja Honchô* would not have gained the support from politicians and the general public that they did.

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