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## THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS DILEMMA OF THE YASUKUNI SHRINE<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This article concerns itself with the relation of the Yasukuni Shrine with the state in prewar and postwar Japan. It focuses on the agencies involved, that is, on organizations and individuals that represent this institution or relate to it in other ways. Its main goal is to clarify the situation of the Yasukuni Shrine, particularly the dilemma it faces. Being rooted in a diverse Shinto tradition and established by the imperialist Meiji Government, the prewar Yasukuni Shrine was a representative institution of state-Shinto. Its situation alters drastically after WW II, when Japan was induced to shift its politics toward a democratic parliamentary state. The core of the Yasukuni problem is that this shrine is a memorial for all Japanese war dead that provides exclusive Shinto memorial services, within which religion, patriotism, and nationalism coalesce into one and the same attitude. Yasukuni's dilemma concerns the adoption of either a religious or a political ideal, but the Yasukuni authorities apparently want both. The paper briefly relates the origin of the Yasukuni Shrine and discusses the religious nature of state-Shinto, the translation problem of the word religion into Japanese, and finally, Yasukuni's postwar development, highlighting the role of various actors in this social practice.

**Key words:** agency and structure, Yasukuni, state-Shinto, shrine-Shinto, non-religious Shinto, 'religion' as a translation-word, separation of state and religion, Bereaved Families Association (izokukai).

This chapter raises two series of questions concerning what is called the Yasukuni controversy. First and foremost, why is it that Yasukuni continues to act as if state-Shinto was not abolished after World War II? In other words, since the separation of politics and religion has been defined by the Constitution, why is it that Yasukuni cannot resolve the dilemma of giving priority either to religion or to politics? Secondly, who supports Yasukuni, and who are the other agents involved in the controversy? What are the positions they have adopted and how can these be characterized? To understand what is at issue, we have to inquire into the nature of state-Shinto and how it relates to other religions. Furthermore, we have to see how religion in Japan is understood. We begin the article by tracing the origin of the Yasukuni Shrine and continue with clarifying the self-understanding of state-Shinto as well as how it differs with respect to Western religion. Finally, while tracking the main developments of

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Yasukuni in Japan's postwar politics, the positions of the main agents are introduced and discussed.

### **The origin of the Yasukuni Shrine**

Memorial worship for the fallen loyalists at the end of the Tokugawa regime was the original intention of a little shrine erected on a sacred mountain east of Kyoto. The first private memorial service was held there for the victims of what is known as the Ansei Purge, political leaders and samurai who opposed the shogunate's policy to open the country to the West. Soon to follow were the fallen troops of the imperial army that originated in South Japan (Satsuma and Choshu). This army launched a military campaign against Edo (Tokyo) and was instrumental in establishing the Meiji government. At that time, fallen followers of the shogunate were not included in the memorial even if they were to become vengeful spirits. Thus began a new tradition of honoring those who had sacrificed their lives in service of the emperor. They would become 'enshrined deities' (saishin) to be perpetually commemorated.

The place for Yasukuni was secured in 1869 in the Kudan district of the Chiyoda Ward in central Tokyo. Building started the next year and the shrine was completed in 1872. Six years later it was officially established as a national shrine with a special status under the Grand Shrine of Ise. That is, the Ise Shrine is dedicated solely to the imperial dynasty but at Yasukuni, the meritorious of imperial lineage as well as troops are commemorated together. Another special circumstance is that, in prewar Japan, jurisdiction of Yasukuni was held by the Ministry of the Military, while other shrines were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. As military conflicts grew in number, veneration became more and more common, and most importantly, it was the emperor in person who would pay his respects to the enshrined deities (Mitsuchi 2005: 74-6; Kobori 1998: 16-34).

When war casualties increased, the State began to feel the need for more worship at Yasukuni and other Shinto shrines. It began to meet out punishment to those who refused to take part. One incident that occurred in 1932 shows what was at stake. A group of students of Catholic Sophia University refused to join a Shinto ceremony. It was the time when the military invaded Manchuria, in north-eastern China (September 1931) and completed its conquest in the following year, declaring its independence of China. Tokyo students were summoned by military officers to attend a memorial for the fallen troops of the Manchurian Incident. One part of the students of Sophia, citing their Christian faith, refused to attend. The military took the refusal seriously and annulled the postponement of draft for these students. Sophia University thereupon checked with the Ministry of Education whether attending the requested Shinto ritual was considered to be a religious act or not. The answer was unequivocal. "Shinto reverence is intended as one aspect of education, and participation in ritual is an act of patriotism and loyalty to the country" (Murakami 1970: 200-1). Therefore, whatever one's faith, no nationals were allowed to refuse participation.

As time passed and the war heat intensified, the necessity of memorial worship increased, intensifying as well the link of Yasukuni with the war. Its rationale was not solely focused on war heroes but all victims of the war, common troops as well as civilians in military service and those performing clerical duties. All those who died

of any cause directly or indirectly related to the war were object of Shinto reverence (Kobori 2002 : 235-6).

### **Conceptions of state-Shinto**

The term state-Shinto was never used in prewar or wartime Japan. For the first time it appears in the Shinto Directive issued by the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Powers in December 1945, distinguishing it from popular sect Shinto. To quote:

The term State Shinto within the meaning of this directive will refer to that branch of Shinto (Kokka Shinto or Jinja Shinto) which by official acts of the Japanese Government has been differentiated from the religion of Sect Shinto (Shuha Shinto or Kyoha Shinto) and has been classified as a non-religious cult commonly known as State Shinto, National Shinto, or Shrine Shinto (Shinto Directive).

For short, whatever its name, the GHQ meant to eliminate that version of Shinto thought that became part of Japan's ultra-nationalistic ideology. The GHQ wanted to liberate Japan from the disastrous relations of state and religion, including any other religion or philosophy, so that Japan could rebuild its country democratically. However, this document did not clarify the nature of Shinto that wartime Japan misused.

What, then, actually was state-Shinto? Representative Japanese authors are not in agreement concerning its exact meaning. A representative author defines state-Shinto as a religious-political institution. In his words: "State-Shinto is a religious-political institution that, beginning from the second half of the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century, revived and reproduced the features of Japan's folk religion. The doctrine of the 'national polity' (kokutai), which represented Japan's basic educational principles at the time, was unconditionally imposed on the people. This doctrine of state-Shinto was equated with the soul of the people" (Murakami 1970: 223).

This is an authoritative statement but by no means generally accepted view. Another author mentions that "...present research on the relationship of politics and religion in early modern Japan has not yet produced a full-scale picture" (Nitta 1998: 2). Another one who acknowledges Murakami's view as valid—at least for the fifteen wartime years when the ultra-nationalist was imposed on the people—counters that this religious-political institution did not extend to the religious history of early modern Japan and that its religious features cannot be fenced off in that way (Yasumaru 2001: 194). Still another one mentions that it is necessary to review the broader meaning of the concept of state-Shinto, even though it cannot be denied that Shinto in early modern Japan, in other words, the practice of emperor ritual, emperor veneration, and the practices of national shrines as well as discourse about it, was extremely strong and therefore impacted the people to a great extent (Shimazono 2001: 11).

The above views imply that there is a narrow and a broad way of defining state-Shinto, which differ from each other in the extent of state-Shinto's impact on the society. Aizu Uzuhiko summarizes the narrow view.

"In 1900 the government established the Department of Shrines within

the Ministry of Home Affairs and thus firmly renewed religious administration, distinguishing public shrines from those that were not seen as public...In that understanding, the history of state-Shinto spans no more than forty years. If state-Shinto, according to the directive in question, designates 'one specific denomination,' it is only one part that operated during a short span of time that contrasts with [the greater whole of] Shinto that lived for generations and generations among the people" (Aizu 1987: 6).

Thus, according to Aizu, state-Shinto is defined as shrines under the umbrella of the State, distinguishing them from Shinto as [independent] religious organizations. He explained that the Department of Shrine Shinto (jinja-kyoku) established under the Home Ministry in 1900 managed Shinto affairs as non-religious ritual, forbidding ideological expression. The Home Ministry's executives ordered the Shinto priests, as if they were lower bureaucrats, to be moderate and compliant. Love and peace, non-spirituality and non-ideological stances were the characteristics of state-Shinto (Aizu 1987: 136).

Shimazono Susumu describes the broader meaning of state-Shinto as follows. "The formation of Japan as a nation, centering on the person of the emperor, was deeply concerned with the sacralization of the nation. It penetrated the lives of people in a new way. It is this development of Shinto that is called state-Shinto" (Shimazono 2002: 248).

Other authors, too, discussed the broader interpretation, implying that Shinto moved into a new direction. By setting Shinto apart from other religions, the state was able to give it priority over and against the other religions. Acknowledging the separation between politics and religion, the State allowed Buddhist and other denominations practical autonomy, but by endorsing the unification of the imperial State and state-Shinto, it sealed the submission of other religious denominations. Stated differently, it was the overarching nature of Shinto that became the basis for asserting its supremacy in the nation. Defining Shinto as a system of rituals allowed it to become a 'theocracy' (Koyasu 2004: 158). Another author observes the following. "By becoming a non-religious entity, state-Shinto was able to rule over the population and to function as an organ of national ideology. Moreover, Shinto eventually comes to play an unpropitious role in driving people in the direction of imperialist war aggression (Inoue 2006: 27).

The Yasukuni Shrine became the representative institution of state-Shinto. When war casualties began to increase, memorial worshipping at Shinto shrines began to be more and stronger imposed on the people. Kim Tae'chang (a Korean resident) mentions a telling, harsh anecdote. Being born in 1934, he remembers being impelled to participate in Shinto memorial services. Some of those who refused to do so were beaten by the military police (kenpeitai) and in the worst cases were killed (Kim 2006: 59).

Again, the difference between the two views depends on the extent of the state-Shinto's influence. In the narrow view, state-Shinto is a governmental organization. In the broader view, it is the system of thought supported by the government. The most problematic point concerns the emphasis or de-emphasis of religious nature of state-Shinto. The government maintained that Shinto in its relation to the State was non-religious in nature. Another equivocal point concerns the differences between

folk religion and salvation religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. Both points bear on the term 'religion' (shukyo) as one translation-word into Japanese. This term was used for the first time in the Meiji period.

### **'Religion' as a translation-word.**

Two terms referring to Shinto were distinguished in 1882 by a government ordinance: Shinto as ritual (saishi) and Shinto as religion. Roughly translated, the ordinance of January of that year went as follows. "Shinto priests are excluded from religious propagation and funeral rites." Thus, since that time, "[a]t least as a matter of definition, Shinto was no longer seen as a religion." (Inoue 2006: 20). As some examples show, religious shrine Shinto began to reorganize itself in May of the same year. Senge Takatomi reorganized the Izumo Shrine and Tanaka Yoritsune established the Shingu Shrine. Thus, the partition of Shinto into religious and non-religious organizations made the separation of state and religion possible. Yasumaru Yoshio refers to this development as "Japan's version of the separation of state and religion." Shinto apparently had no longer responsibilities for its dissemination, while at the same time it continued to function "formally" as a religion, that is, as custom and ritual in service of an institution of the early modern State (Yasumaru 1979: 208-9).

The disintegration of Shinto was a necessary measure to 'prevent' imposition of a specific religion on the people and to guarantee the 'freedom of religion' that the Constitution defined as follows.

"To say that religion is mainly a matter of conscience does not mean that, in order to guarantee peace and order, and seen from the point of view of the law and its enforcement, general limits have not to be respected concerning external matters such as worship, ritual, forms of dissemination and assembly. Thus, whatever religion one professes, the subjects of the State do not have the right to dodge duties towards the State or to stand outside the situation. This means that internal freedom of religion is unlimited and perfect, but freedom of religious worship and propagation, as external matters, are necessarily subjected to restrictions. The subjects of the State must comply with the law and fulfill their general duties" (Ito Hirobumi, 1989).

Religion in Ito's interpretation is understood as a private matter. Ama Toshimaro touches on its problematic point. Ito's interpretation assigns exclusive legitimacy of religion to the individual's consciousness, but in practice, that view is untenable. Though a matter of degree and differing according to the religion in question, propagation of the faith is the lifeline of religion (Ama 1996: 79-82). As the government was concerned, in order to solidify the country, it had to emphasize the non-religious nature of Shinto.

Here, we come to the problem of 'religion' as a translation word. Recently, the political implications have been discussed of the words that refer to religion in Japanese. In the Meiji era, the general term shukyo was adopted for the first time as a translation word for the English word religion. According to Isomae Jun'ichi, that word 'religion' could be understood as referring both to 'religious denomination'

and 'religious creed.' In other words, before the word 'religion' was standardized, two different conceptions were in use. One was 'religious practice' (shushi; saishi) in the sense of religious custom, and the other was 'creed' (shuho) as a system of religious beliefs. Gradually, around the tenth year of Meiji (1878), the word shukyo 'religion' took firmly root. This was occasioned by the retraction of the prohibition of Christianity in 1872. This occurrence affected the relationship of the Japanese religions with Christianity. It was monotheistic Christianity with its personalized God and socially respected ethical norms, which was referred to by the new word religion. This was an issue of considerable consequence. The Japanese traditional denominations, too, wanted to be called 'religion,' in a similar way as Christianity that had a clear-cut body of doctrines and that was at the same time the embodiment of Western civilization. However, around 1878, when this kind of religious revival and civilization-thought emerged, Buddhism, and Shinto in particular, were undifferentiated with respect to ethical and religious considerations as well as to ideas about the relationship between the sovereign and subjects, filial and parental relationships.

The problem of non-differentiation was cleared in the late 1880s, when the confrontation between the state and religion came to a head with the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 and the proclamation of the Imperial Rescript on Education the following year. In these documents religion was defined as a private affair and ethics (dotoku) as civil obligation in such a way that religion became a category subordinated to ethics.

The Japanese people were much reminded about this situation through the incident of lèse-majesté by Uchimura Kanzo in 1891. When the Imperial Rescript on Education was introduced to the Tokyo First High School, Uchimura, citing his Christian faith, refused to pay his respects. He was curtly dismissed from the school and an avenue to societal and state criticism came to an end. Also, the frame of national education based on the separation of the state and religion was established. At the same time, the imperial ideology was brought to 'perfection.'

To summarize the development, religious services of state-Shinto shrines were abolished after 1883, the constitutional freedom of religion proclaimed, and state-Shinto, based on the differentiation of ethics and religion, became non-religious public morality. Paying respects at Shinto shrines did no longer relate to personal religious feelings and, in that way, could become civil obligation (Isomae 2003: 34-54). The Japanese term for religion (shukyo), referring to personal religion as subordinated to public morality, became useful in the scheme of the government. Accordingly, the Constitution and politics stood above religion. Paradoxically, the Japanese interpretation of 'freedom of religion' made both the separation and the unification of the State and religion possible. From this it follows that, as referred in the previous section, the broad interpretation of state-Shinto is much more problematic than the narrower view, according to which Shinto shrines were considered as mere government institutions.

### **Postwar Yasukuni and the State**

Yasukuni's official status changed drastically on December 15, 1945. The General Headquarters (GHQ) of the occupation forces issued its Shinto Ordinance, introducing

a revision of religious corporations. It induced Yasukuni to become a juridical person, severing its relation with the State. Represented mainly by G.W. Burns, who was in charge of the Department of Religious Affairs, official consultations were held by the GHQ government. Burns proposed to let Yasukuni become a war-dead memorial, but the Japanese delegates requested to let Yasukuni become again a religious shrine (Nakamura 2007: 174).

Mitsushi Shuhei comments on this historical shift as follows. To summarize, Yasukuni's possibilities were threefold. Firstly, Yasukuni could have decided to close down its facility, reasoning that it had participated in propagating militarism as an educational institution. Secondly, since there are many public memorials for the war dead worldwide, Yasukuni could renounce its Shinto religious style and become a place where the faithful of all religions could pray. Thirdly, instead of keeping its character as a national shrine, it could become a common one under the provisions of the clause in the Constitution on the separation of state and religion. It is this solution that was adopted by both parties of GHQ and the Japanese representatives. Accordingly, in a Cabinet meeting on January 25, 1946, all state-related shrines were declared to belong to the Association of Shinto Shrines (*jinja honcho*) with the Grand Shrine of Ise at its head. The Yasukuni Shrine became an independent, popular religious corporation that could present itself as having a public nature for the purpose of holding services for those who sacrificed their lives for the good of the country. Consequently, becoming an independent religious corporation gave Yasukuni the possibility to autonomously perform religious ritual and thought as a matter of freedom of religion. For example, Yasukuni could claim without impunity that 'dying for the emperor is the highest virtue.' In other words, such a value perspective would be unassailable under the Constitution's principle of the freedom of religion. It is clear that, as a result, a state-Shinto belief was left intact (Mitsuchi 2007: 158-68). The staff of the GHQ "was caught in the middle between the ideal of the freedom of religion as its religious policy and the elimination of militaristic ultra-nationalism" (Nakamura 2007: 243). Again paradoxically, at the same time, the way was closed for the Japanese government to conduct memorials for the war dead.

The problem of Yasukuni's relation with the state came into the open as soon as the foreign occupation ended and a peace treaty was signed on September 8, 1951. When the Autumn Festival was observed for the first time after the war, Prime Minister Yoshida paid his respects to the Yasukuni Shrine, and the following year the emperor, who had become the 'symbolic' Head of the country, followed suit.

It was within this atmosphere that a bill, designed to allow state patronage for Yasukuni, was repeatedly introduced in the Diet. This bill represented a movement to revert the wartime relationship of Yasukuni with the State. Its aim was to change the status of Yasukuni from a religious juridical person to a state-sponsored 'special purpose religious corporation.' A core agent in this movement was the Association of Bereaved Families (*izokukai*) (for present purposes abbreviated to ABF)—it is said that the ABF is an influential organization, not only with respect to the Yasukuni Shrine, but also in political circles. The bill was defeated four times between 1969 and 1974 and also a fifth time in 1974, when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), introduced it single-handedly into the House of Representatives. Tanaka Nobunao mentions four reasons for its failure. 1) Opposition by Buddhist, Christian, and other religionists; 2)

the controversy originating from a lawsuit in Tsu city (Mie Prefecture) about paying a Shinto priest for a groundbreaking ceremony at the site where a municipal sports hall was to be built; 3) opposition of all other political parties and the failure of the LDP in the 1974's general election; 4) the views represented by the Bureau of the Cabinet Legislation (Tanaka 2002: 139).

The latter view of the Bureau of the Cabinet Legislation seems to have been decisive. The Bureau proposed to change some Shinto-style features of the ritual in use as well as allowing leeway of changing it freely. This met with strong opposition from the Yasukuni authorities, the ABL and Japan's Veterans Association (*zenkoku senyu rengokai*) causing the disintegration of the recommendation committee.

In the following years, Yasukuni and its supporting parties began a movement that insisted on official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by the emperor and prime ministers. The first Prime Minister to respond to this recommendation was Nakasone, who did so on August 15, 1985. However, due to opposition from inside and outside the country, he did so only once. The focus of that opposition and controversy was the 'combined worship' since 1978 of all war dead, including class-A war criminals. This remains the most crucial, unresolved problem until today. It is highly noteworthy that the emperor has not officially visited the Yasukuni Shrine since that problem came to the fore and became known through the 'Tomita Memo', a media scope by Japan's Economic Newspaper (*Keizai shinbun*) in July 2006. The Tomita Memo is note by a deceased former Head of the Imperial Household that had been 'discovered' and published. It revealed the former Emperor Hirohito's displeasure concerning the 'combined worship.'

Memorial services for the war dead, including war criminals also became a problem that caused a rift between Yasukuni authorities and the LDP. Around that time, the LDP-lead government requested decoupling the worship or its termination. They suggested that services for the spirits of the class-A war criminals could be performed at another facility, but this proposition too met with stiff opposition. Yasukuni refused to comply and so did the family members of Tojo Hideki [Army general and Japan's war time Prime Minister from 1941 to 1944]. The family expressed their reaction as follows. "The Tokyo Court Judgment was delivered unilaterally by those who won the war. Thinking of Japan and all its families, the decision that befell the 2,400,000 war dead is too sorrowful" (Tojo 2002: 164). Matsuhira, a priest heading Yasukuni (*guji*), had expressed the same view long before. "The Yasukuni Shrine differs from all others. It has only one seat so to speak, where all those two million four hundred thousand spirits reside on. That seat cannot be divided (Mainichi Newspaper, October 1987). Presently, Yasukuni holds on to that position. "Even if the Association of the Bereaved Families (ABF) were to yield, decoupling the memorial is impossible (Ronza *henshubu* 2006:13).

As mentioned above, the main supporting group of Yasukuni is the ABF. However, this association is nearing a crossroad. For one thing, it is an aging group, but more importantly, there are families that are uncomfortable with their relationship to Yasukuni. Quite a number of them left the association and joined other groups. For example, members of the ABF of Asahikawa (Hokkaido) seceded and organized the Asahikawa Peace Association of Bereaved Families in 1982. The Hongaji faction of Shin Buddhism followed this example in 1986. It organized the Shin Buddhist Association of Bereaved Families that, presently, has many local chapters. Moreover, in the same year,

an anti-Yasukuni National Peace Federation of Bereaved Families was created, which is unconcerned about creed or any social thought. In other words, it differs considerably from the Yasukuni view about the 'spirits' (eirei) of the war dead (Tanaka 1995: 153).

Further, even the ABF itself has occasionally put pressure on Yasukuni. Koga Makoto, who headed the ABF in 2007 stated as follows. "It is legitimate to question the responsibility of those who lead the country into war that was lost. The Yasukuni Shrine is a unique place where the war dead are commemorated. We should leave it to posterity in such a way that the Japanese people, the emperor included, can worship there without ill feelings (Mainichi Newspaper October 6, 2007). Alluding to the Tomita Memo, Koga appeared to confirm that, in order to break the stalemate, separate worship is necessary. Former Prime Minister Aso, too, took a similar stance critical of Yasukuni. He observed that Yasukuni's name could be changed, e.g., to 'Yasukuni National Memorial,' and that, in order to make its nationalization more credible, a traditional but non-religious ceremonial could be devised (Aso 2006). The Mainichi Newspaper (January 29, 2006) reported him as saying: "The Japanese troops used to shout 'Tenno Heika banzai' (long live the Emperor). They did not honor Prime Ministers in that way. The best thing is that the Emperor would worship here."

However, Yasukuni opposes separate worship and refuses to admit a non-Shinto nature of their shrine. And they adamantly want government patronage. According to Yasukuni's Guide Book, its rationale cannot be changed, since the Yasukuni Shrine was established by Emperor Meiji for worshipping those who laid down their lives for the country (Yasukuni Shrine Supervision 2000: 98). The Guide Book is reminiscent of Ikeda Ken's claim (Yasukuni Head Priest) who expressed the same view in the Diet meeting of July 23, 1955, that the relationship of Yasukuni with the Emperor cannot be changed because the emperor Hirohito himself had commissioned a special memorial service on November 19, 1945 (Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan HP-The National Library Home Page). It is for these reasons that the emperor and prime ministers ought to worship at Yasukuni.

Thus, Yasukuni's view of the relationship of the state and religion remains the same as in prewar days. Clearly, insists on the unification of state and religion, which is prohibited by articles 20 and 89 of the Constitution. That is, the government can neither engage in religious activities nor can it support religious activities.

Some scholars like Kobori Kei'ichiro and Momochi Akira support the Yasukuni position by a lenient interpretation of the separation of state and religion. According to Kobori, there is no violation of the constitution when, for example the State financially supports religious art even though that kind of art at the same time serves the cause of religious faith. In the same vein, Yasukuni certainly has a religious character. It venerates the spirits that are enshrined there. The nature of this religious veneration concerns national ethics. It is a norm of public morality. Receiving support from public funds does not breach the constitution (Kobori, 2005: 471-2). Similarly, Momochi argues as follows. The Japanese constitution is basically the same as those of the USA and Europe. These constitutions define the separation of church and state, not of religion and politics. That relationship is a matter of degree and the separation of state and religion is not totally tight and absolute. This is explained by the 'object and effect standard.' Applying this standard to 'public worship' at the Yasukuni Shrine, its 'object' is a national ritual for consoling the spirits of the war dead and providing solace to the

bereaved families. Its 'effect' is neither support for Yasukuni nor pressure against or interference with other religions. Public worship therefore is constitutional (Momochi 2007: 119-21).

That Yasukuni memorial services are a matter of ethics has repeatedly been stressed by priests heading Yasukuni such as Ikeda Ken (cf. Tanaka 2002: 118) and Yuzawa Tadashi (cf. Yumiyama 2007:115-6). Also, many Japanese see being grateful to the war dead as a civil duty (Takamori 2007: 37-8).

Even though not exclusively, from the above it is clear that political and scholarly support for the Yasukuni position is extensive. Outspoken opposition is rare, but some voices of dissent can be heard on the backstage. As I have discussed elsewhere (Shinya 2008: 103-142), alternatives to the Yasukuni Shrine have been proposed several times. A committee assembled by Prime Minister Koizumi in 2002 suggested the building of a new national, non-religious memorial for the war dead, but sufficient consensus was not reached. Opposition from Yasukuni was strong. Another reason for shelving the plan was that an alternative facility existed already, the National Cemetery of Chidorigafuchi, only one city-block away from the Yasukuni compound, which was established in 1959 to accommodate the ashes of unidentified soldiers whose remains had been collected since 1953. Initially, the idea had been to erect a national memorial for 'unknown soldiers' as many other countries have, where also foreign dignitaries could visit. However, Yasukuni feared that it would interfere with its role as a national shrine. To avoid interference, it was named National Cemetery and dedicated exclusively for the unknown war dead found outside Japan.

The Chidorigafuchi memorial is located in a public park of 1,6 ha that has much greenery and a large open space in the middle of which stands a hexagonal open memorial hall, with a big brownish rectangular block placed in its center on larger black marble base. It represents a casket modeled after the earthenware coffins of noble families in ancient Japan. The casket contains a gilt bronze urn donated by the Emperor, holding ashes from unidentifiable soldiers of representative places where they were found. The total number of unknown soldiers exceeds 350.000.

Chidorigafuchi is a secular but dignified and very serene place without any religious symbolism. As such, official government events with representatives of the Imperial Household can take place here without breaching the principle of the separation of the state and religion. Year round, people visit here and offer flowers and little candle boxes like in Catholic churches. More importantly for present purposes, many religious denominations have been holding a yearly commemoration since its establishment, among others, Jodo Shinshu, Nichirenshu, the Federation of Christian Churches (Nippon Kirisutokyodan), and a federation of many new religions (shinshuren). Every denomination holds its memorial in its own religious style but with the same objective: praying for all victims of war, emphasizing praying for world peace. This amounts to an indirect critique of the Yasukuni Shrine that continues its tradition of imperial state-Shinto.

### **Yasukuni's politico-religious dilemma**

The lingering Yasukuni controversy may illustrate that not only Yasukuni itself but also the other parties involved face a similar dilemma: attributing priority either to

politics or to religion. A major reason for this situation appears to be that not only politics but also matters of religion and religious culture are deemed important in Japan. What makes the issue cumbersome is that religion and religious culture are equivocal. To clarify the issue, we will attempt a sociological explanation, focusing on the main partners of the controversy and summarizing what they stand for. For that purpose we first need a methodological note to show how this can be done meaningfully. In other words, what version of sociology fits this purpose?

Social action and structure used to be focal points in mainstream sociology, pioneered, among many others, by Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, and Anthony Giddens. Weber's version of social science can be characterized as interpretive sociology. A great part of his sociology of religion discusses relationships between religious beliefs and orientation to economic action. Parsons engineered systems theory. Parsons conceived of societies as aggregates of systems and subsystems that result from social action. In order to operate well, societies must meet four functional prerequisites. These he formulated concisely in his AGIL scheme of reference. Two of the prerequisites concern aspects of action (Adaptation to the environment and Goal attainment). The two others concern aspects of structure (Integration and Latency or pattern maintenance). Value orientations constitute one more central dimension of Parsons' theory of action. Value orientations evidently are properties that originate in the human mind but Parsons treats them as structural components that he called 'pattern variables.' Parsons' sociological theory therefore is aptly described as structural functionalism. Giddens modifies systems theory to a theory of structuration. In other words, Giddens shifted the focus of sociology to the interconnections of agency and structure, explaining how actors—which remained eclipsed as it were in earlier sociology—reproduce social structures by their practices and eventually change those structures. Giddens summarizes his understanding of social structuration with the phrase 'duality of structure.' In his own words:

The concept of structuration involves that of the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamental recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency. By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices that constitute those systems (Giddens 1979: 69. Italics in the original).

Weber's interpretive sociology of religious beliefs remains useful as well as Parsons' value orientations, but Giddens' structuration theory better suits our present purpose in that it explains the reproduction of societies, clarifying continuity as well as discontinuity.

Here we come back to our question: Who are the main players in the Yasukuni sociodrama and how do they relate to one another? In brief, there are protagonists, antagonists, and others who seek the middle ground.

Firstly, the proponents and defenders of Yasukuni are the following: 1) the Yasukuni authorities, represented by the heads of the Shinto establishment; 2) its supporting agencies: the Association of Bereaved Families (ABF), Japan's War Veterans Association, and lately created associations such as the supporters of revering the spirits of the war

dead: *eirei ni kotaeru kai* (2002) (club for responding to 'hero-spirits'). The chief position of the Yasukuni side is insistence on memorial worship for all military war dead with attendance of the emperor and prime ministers. To secure this position the Yasukuni parties want new legislation concerning Yasukuni as a government-sponsored special purpose religious organization or, eventually, change the Constitution accordingly. This stance can be characterized as political-religious conservatism. It has the same nature as Yasukuni's status in prewar Japan. It prioritizes a political point of view.

Secondly, the antagonists of Yasukuni are represented by religious denominations, particularly those who participate in separate memorial services (*Chidorigafuchi*) and by factions of the Association of Bereaved Families that have distanced themselves from Yasukuni. Even though not all share the same awareness, these groups prioritize a religious point of view that could be characterized as a religiously conservative stance. The socialist-inclined political parties, too, oppose the Yasukuni stance, but these remain aloof from the religious opponents.

Thirdly, prime ministers and the emperor on the whole represent intermediate positions. As introduced above, the Prime Ministers Koizumi and Aso, while basically supporting Yasukuni, have sought to introduce some changes, e.g., downplaying Shinto characteristics of war-dead worship and suggesting the decoupling of the worship or excluding the so-called Class-A war criminals. The emperor, too, can be said to keep the middle ground, which is by no means neutral in that he, like his father Emperor Showa, refrains from personally paying his respects to the Yasukuni Shrine. The intermediate position could be characterized as politico-religious liberalism, prioritizing politics.

When will the Yasukuni controversy be solved? Owing to the latent, peripheral nature of the conflict—it is not an open one—and owing to the complexities of Japan's religious culture, a solution is unlikely to be worked out soon. As I have argued earlier (Shinya 2008: 152-55), in order to make progress in the good direction, several developments are highly desirable. One is that the religious awareness of the Japanese people is thin and unfocused. The common people should develop a civil-religious consciousness and enhance their concern with respect to the war-dead memorials. Thinking about the meaning of death and the overall importance of world peace are religiously of great significance. Another point is that the position of the various religions is weak. They should engage in dialogue that has been lacking. To this we can add one more point. Scholars should come clear about the complexities of Japan's religious culture and the differentiation of religion and ethics.

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## **ПОЛИТИЧКО-РЕЛИГИЈСКА ДИЛЕМА ХРАМА ЈАСУКУНИ**

### **Резиме**

Овај чланак бави се односом храма Јасукуни и државе у предратном и послератном Јапану. Фокусира се на учеснике, то јест, на организације и појединце који представљају ову институцију или су на друге начине са њом повезани. Његов главни циљ је да разјасни ситуацију у вези са храмом Јасукуни, а нарочито дилему са којом се он суочава. Укорењен у разноликој шинто традицији и основан од стране империјалистичке Меиџи владе, предратни храм Јасукуни био је представничка институција државног шинтоизма. Његова ситуација драстично се мења након Другог светског рата, када је Јапан био упућен на промену политике у смеру демократске парламентарне државе. Срж проблема у вези са Јасукунијем је у томе што је овај храм споменик свим Јапанцима погинулим у рату у коме се дају искључиво шинтоистички помени, а то је религија у оквиру које се патриотизам и национализам стапају у један исти став. Дилема око Јасукунија односи се на усвајање или религијског или политичког идеала, али његови достојници, очигледно, желе оба. Рад се укратко бави пореклом храма Јасукуни и разматра религијску природу државног шинтоизма, проблем превођења речи „религија“ на јапански језик и, коначно, Јасукунијевим послератним развојем, истичући улогу различитих учесника у овој друштвеној пракси.

**Кључне речи:** Јасукуни, државни шинтоизам, обредни шинтоизам, нерелигијски шинтоизам, „религија“ као реч која се преводи, одвајање државе и религије, Удружење ожалошћених породица (izokukai).

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