

## The National Politics of the Yasukuni Shrine

**Takahashi Tetsuya**

**Translated by Philip Seaton**

*Takahashi Tetsuya's "The National Politics of the Yasukuni Shrine," is among the most important statements to emerge from the debate over Yasukuni Shrine, historical memory and war nationalism.*

*Japan Focus is pleased to present chapter seven of Naoko Shimazu, ed., Nationalisms in Japan. Philip Seaton is the translator.*

*Takahashi Tetsuya is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo. A philosopher and the author of the best-selling [Yasukuni Mondai](#) (The Yasukuni Problem). His current research interests center on problems of deconstruction, history and memory, and the Showa era.*

*Philip Seaton is Associate Professor, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Hokkaido University. He is currently researching war-related commemorative programmes on Japanese television and undertaking an oral history project focusing on how members of the postwar generations have reacted to knowledge of relatives' war experiences.*

*We thank Takahashi, Shimazu, Seaton and Routledge for their cooperation in publishing this article.*

*Find a podcast of Takahashi Tetsuya's lecture of March 6, 2007 on [Postwar Japan on the Brink: Militarism, Colonialism, Yasukuni Shrine](#). This was the inaugural lecture of The Tetsuo Najita Distinguished Lecture Series in Japanese Studies at the University of Chicago.*

Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō and Tokyo Mayor Ishihara Shintarō have repeatedly worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine since 13 August 2001 and 15 August 2000 respectively, and have expressed their intentions to continue worshipping in the future. In the face of this worship, there has been bitter criticism from inside and outside Japan. There are doubts over whether worship by public figures at Yasukuni Shrine, which is an autonomous religious institution (*shūkyō hōjin*), contravenes Articles 20 and 89 of the Constitution, the provisions concerning the separation of religion and the state. Furthermore, worship at the shrine where Class A war criminals, those found guilty as the leading war criminals by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, are enshrined, is seen as Japanese political leaders' neglect of Japan's war responsibility and causes distrust among the people of Asia, including China and South Korea.

Elsewhere I have criticized the prime minister's and others' Yasukuni Shrine worship both from the perspective of the constitutional issue of the separation of religion and the state, and from the perspective of war responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this chapter is to argue that the essential meaning of Yasukuni Shrine worship is to oppose the constitutional separation of religion and the state, by clarifying, from a philosophical and historical perspective, the political objectives held by the prime minister and others who repeatedly worship at the Shrine.

### The political nature of Prime Minister Koizumi and Mayor Ishihara's Yasukuni worship

In terms of the political objectives of Yasukuni Shrine worship, one aspect that has been widely examined is the influence of the *Izokukai* (War Bereaved Association), which has been politically active in demanding the official worship of the prime minister and emperor. If the prime minister worships at Yasukuni Shrine, the ruling party can obtain the votes of the *Izokukai*, which amounts to hundreds of thousands. During the Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter LDP) leadership contest in 2001, Koizumi used the promise to worship at the Shrine against Hashimoto Ryūtarō, a former prime minister and former chairman of the *Izokukai*. This study, however, is concerned with political objectives which exist above domestic politics, namely national objectives. 'National politics' (*nashonaru poritikkusu*), that is, an attempt to lead the country or the entire nation in a specific direction, merits a philosophical and intellectual analysis and is the focus of this chapter.

Prime Minister Koizumi attempts to give the impression that his Yasukuni Shrine worship is not political in nature, but that it stems from natural feelings of commemoration or mourning for the war dead. For example, in a statement made by Koizumi on the occasion of his first visit to Yasukuni since becoming prime minister, he commented as follows:

When I stand before the souls of the people who, believing in the future of their country, fell in battle during that difficult period, I think again how the peace and prosperity of today's Japan is built upon their precious sacrifice, and I have come here to renew my yearly pledge for peace.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, at a press conference following his fourth visit on 1 January 2004, he said:

I worshipped with many thoughts in mind: the thought that the Japan of today is built upon the precious sacrifice of the people who lived in a time of war and unwillingly had to give up their lives, with gratitude for peace, and the hope that from now on Japan will prosper in peace.<sup>3</sup>

From these comments, it seems at a glance as if Koizumi is simply expressing apolitical sentiments of commemoration or mourning and desire for peace. But the problem is that this act of 'commemoration' or 'mourning' is nothing more than the political act of state recognition of the souls enshrined at Yasukuni, hence, a political act with a national objective.

In the prime minister's statements above, he repeatedly used the phrase 'precious sacrifice' (*tōtoi gisei*). Saying that the 'the peace and prosperity of today's Japan' or 'the Japan of today' is built upon the 'precious sacrifice' of the Japanese soldiers and civilian employees of the military (*gunzoku*) enshrined at Yasukuni, is to praise, beautify and honour the soldiers and civilian employees who built 'the peace and prosperity of today's Japan' or 'the Japan of today'. Whether the 'Japan of today' is 'prospering' in 'peace' is not necessarily self-evident as witnessed, for example, in the Okinawan situation. There is a logical inconsistency with the proposition that the 'Japan of today' is only possible thanks to the war dead enshrined at Yasukuni.

Even without making this clear leap of logic, the prime minister's attitude of honouring the 'precious sacrifice' of those enshrined at Yasukuni further indicates the political nature of the act of his worship. Why cannot Koizumi Jun'ichirō and Ishihara Shintarō leave the commemoration

and mourning of the souls enshrined at Yasukuni up to the priests at the shrine? And if the prime minister and mayor of Tokyo want to commemorate and mourn for the enshrined, why do they not choose to worship quietly on their own as ‘private individuals’? When Japan’s political leaders worship at Yasukuni as prime minister and mayor of Tokyo and praise the ‘precious sacrifice’ of the enshrined, they send the strongest message to the Japanese people that ‘dying for one’s country’ is a ‘precious’ act and an act worthy of national honour.

In contemporary Japan, a political movement to make the Japanese state once again into an agent capable of prosecuting war (*sensō suikō shutai*) is gaining strength. While for the first time since the end of World War II, heavy armour from the Self-Defense Forces (hereafter SDF) is being sent to Iraq, a state of emergency is gradually being put in place. There is talk of the enactment of a permanent law to allow the overseas deployment of maritime SDF, and debates about revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

In democratic states, even if the constitution makes military action possible, that on its own is not enough for the prosecution of a full-scale war. For the state to undertake a full-scale war, the strong support, cooperation and participation of the people are necessary. On top of the inevitability of casualties, including soldiers and civilian employees in the military, it is necessary for the people to accept the sacrifice necessary ‘for one’s country’ (*okuni no tame*) in order to protect the ‘national interest’ (*kokueki*). The people must support war as a national policy, and in time, the ‘heart’ (*kokoro*) and ‘national spirit’ (*kokumin seishin*) of the people will come to accept sacrifices ‘for their country’.

In order for the people to accept the above sacrifice and support war, their sacrifice must be praised by political leaders as ‘precious sacrifice’. ‘Sacrifice’ must be praised, beautified (*bika*) and made the object of ‘respect and gratitude’ (*kansha to keii*). Even if the people remain unmoved by the suffering of the enemy, if they come to feel their own suffering and the suffering of family, friends and fellow countrymen as painful, empty and something that should not have happened, they will no longer be able to accept the sacrifice that accompanies war. The people will then lose their desire to support, cooperate and participate in wars that bring new sacrifice. While accepting the inevitability of death in war, if political leaders do not acknowledge death as ‘precious’ or express ‘thanks and respect’ in public, the state will ultimately be unable to mobilize the people for war.

Prime Minister Nakasone articulated this idea in 1985, arguing that

In America they have the Arlington Cemetery. If you go to the Soviet Union and other foreign countries they have Tombs of the Unknown Warriors. They have places where the people can *express their thanks* to those who have fallen in battle. This is perfectly natural. *Otherwise, who is going to give their life for the country?*<sup>4</sup>

Prime Minister Koizumi has repeatedly expressed his ‘respect and thanks’ to those enshrined at Yasukuni: ‘With feelings of *respect and gratitude* to the war dead, I expressed my feelings of mourning’.<sup>5</sup> If political leaders repeatedly express their ‘gratitude and respect’ to the fallen, the deaths of those who fell in war will be praised, beautified and honoured at the level of national politics as ‘deaths worthy of respect’ and ‘model deaths that should be learned from’. Therefore, ‘gratitude and respect’ became the most politically effective words for achieving the state’s political objective of being a war-prosecuting agent, stirring the ‘heart’ of the people and creating a ‘national spirit’.

At a press conference following the December 2003 cabinet decision to send the SDF to Iraq, Prime Minister Koizumi commented, '[t]he spirit of the Japanese people [*Nippon kokumin no seishin*] is being tested'.<sup>6</sup> This use of 'the spirit of the people' is connected with the meaning of the 'heart' of the people and the 'spirit of the people' mentioned above. It is possible that there will be casualties in action among the SDF personnel sent to Iraq. While this kind of sacrifice by the people is foreseen, what 'being tested' means is whether or not that kind of sacrifice can be accepted, whether the people can continue to support the dispatch of troops to Iraq, and whether 'the Japanese people' have that kind of 'spirit' regardless of the nature of the sacrifice. Therefore, if there is a situation in which there are casualties among the SDF personnel sent to Iraq, the prime minister can simply substitute the words 'war on terrorism' for 'war', and using exactly the same trick he has used on each occasion of his Yasukuni worship, he can honour the sacrifice of the SDF personnel. In other words, Koizumi would commemorate fallen SDF personnel with words like '[w]e live in the era of war on terrorism, and the Japan of today is built on the precious sacrifice of those who unwillingly gave their lives . . . '.

The role of education is important in creating the 'heart' and the 'national spirit' of a people that supports war. The Koizumi administration's proposal to revise the Basic Law on Education is related to the prime minister's repeated worship at the Yasukuni Shrine. Former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine arguing that 'if we do not extend our gratitude to the fallen, who is going to give their life for the nation?', stated in 2003 that '[n]ow, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the topics of Japan's national image and the *spirit of the people* are once again on the agenda', and 'it is necessary to start reform from a complete change to the Basic Law on Education as the mental backbone of the nation'.<sup>7</sup>

In 1999, Kawamura Tateo, then head of the LDP's Basic Law on Education Research Group, explained that 'we want to debate the issues with a Heisei Imperial Rescript on Education in mind'.<sup>8</sup> The Imperial Rescript on Education, proclaimed in Emperor Meiji's name in 1890, underpinned education during the era of the Japanese empire. It inculcated the following: 'in times of emergency, be of public service and help to support the imperial fortune in heaven and on earth', in other words, in times of war, resolve to lay down your life for the Emperor and the nation. The Imperial Rescript converged with the doctrines of the Yasukuni Shrine to mobilize the people for war. Since becoming Education Minister in October 2004, Kawamura Tateo has wanted to reform the Basic Law on Education by turning it into a 'Heisei Rescript on Education' with the aim of submitting it to the Diet in 2005.

At the February 2004 launch of the Committee for the Promotion of Reform of the Basic Law on Education, an LDP–Democratic Party of Japan (hereafter DPJ) cross-party group, DPJ member Nishimura announced that:

*We will create Japanese people who do not mind laying down their lives for their country. We will teach children that where there are people who lay down their lives for their country there is a fatherland. This I promise.*<sup>9</sup>

This sentiment precisely reflects the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, while at the same time, it also reflects the nature of the political objectives of worship at the Yasukuni Shrine.

### **Yasukuni Shrine as a device for the 'spiritual mobilization of the people'**

What effect does the worship of Yasukuni Shrine by the emperor, prime minister and mayor of

Tokyo have on creating a ‘national spirit’ which supports potential future wars? In order to understand this, we must look into the general mobilization of the ‘national spirit’ in the era of the Japanese empire.

At first, the Yasukuni Shrine was a device for creating a psychology whereby soldiers fought and sacrificed their lives in war for the emperor and the state. According to Yokoyama Natsuki’s *Shining Yasukuni Tales*, published in April 1943:

Death in war is undoubtedly a tragic thing. But, for ordinary Japanese, more than going to war and being sent to war, death in war is giving one’s life to the nation, so it is not just any death. It is the peak of shining honour. It is a boy’s ultimate dream. In Japan, boys are born to protect their country. They are born to create the brilliant history of Japan. Our ancestors were all like that. *And of course, our descendants must also be like that.* So, the eternal light of shining Japan is here in this shrine of Yasukuni. The passionate will of the people is a consistent and unflinching light, and the pure act of giving one’s life for one’s country is a light that shines in the world.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, ‘boys born in Japan’ must pursue death in battle for their country, and make being worshipped at ‘the shrine of Yasukuni’ their ‘ultimate dream’. But the Yasukuni Shrine not only has the function of mobilizing Japanese ‘boys’ to be Imperial soldiers. Elements of the ‘Yasukuni Doctrine’ (Yasukuni *shinkō*) and ‘Yasukuni Spirit’ (Yasukuni *seishin*) not only encompassed Japanese soldiers, they encompassed all the Japanese people, including women and children, and gave them equal value within the Japanese ‘national spirit’.

This was presented in an easy-to-understand form in references to the Yasukuni Shrine in the ethics textbook, *Shūshin*. The fifth edition of *Shūshin* (Elementary Second Grade) used from 1941 states:

On Kudan Hill (Kudanzaka) in Tokyo, a large bronze *torii* (shrine gate) stands tall. Inside one can see a marvellous shrine. This is Yasukuni Shrine.

At Yasukuni Shrine there are many loyal people enshrined who resolved to die for the emperor and the nation.

Every spring on 30 April and every autumn on 23 October there are Commemoration Ceremonies attended by distinguished people.

There are also special ceremonies when people who died loyally are enshrined. At these times, their majesties the emperor and empress attend.

On days with commemorative events, there is a continual stream of worshippers and, of course, military personnel, and the spacious courtyard becomes packed.

It is the desire of his majesty the emperor that the people who resolved to die for the emperor and for the nation are enshrined and worshipped in this way.

And in our home regions too, there are *Gokoku Jinja* [Nation Protecting Shrines] where the war dead are worshipped.

While being grateful for the many blessings bestowed on us by His Majesty the Emperor, *we must learn from the loyalty of the enshrined and pledge ourselves to the emperor and the nation.* (author’s italics)

The overwhelming majority of those who died in war and were enshrined at Yasukuni were soldiers who were meant to have internalized the ‘spirit of Yasukuni’ through education. However, since it was also targeted at all pupils regardless of gender, the ‘spirit of Yasukuni’ was not necessarily demanded only of male soldiers. Women, such as nurses, who were employed by the military and who had died and were enshrined, were also presented as calling out to young girls to ‘follow us and devote yourself to the emperor and nation’.

In *Women of Yasukuni*, published in August 1941 by the Society to Honour the Women of Yasukuni, the stories of the lives and deaths of forty-one women who had died while serving with the military (and seven who died in the Meiji Restoration) were told; their deaths were honoured and women were urged to ‘follow their example’. Ikuta Tatsuo wrote in his Introduction:

The over 200,000 gods enshrined at Yasukuni are the ancestors, fathers, brothers, leaders and children of our people, and their achievements are truly the incarnation of the Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*). Among these many gods there are a little over 50,000 female gods. These gods are in no way inferior to the male gods and are strong women like guardian angels (*oni*) protecting the country. We have established the Yasukuni Society to Honour Japan’s Guardian Angels, and have investigated the achievements of these loyal and brave women. Now we have completed the investigation, we have published *Yasukuni Retsujofu* (‘Yasukuni’s Female Gods’). We give great *honour* to their virtue. This autumn, with many incidents occurring, *the rise or fall of the nation depends particularly on the readiness of women*. We want them to be aware of the situation and to be loyal servants to the cause of domestic order and security.<sup>12</sup>

In the ‘spirit of Yasukuni’, it did not matter whether people were men or women, as long as they were Japanese, they were required to embody that spirit.

However, even more important was how to start manipulating the emotions of the bereaved families for whom the Yasukuni Doctrine had taken away family members. Accordingly, the Yasukuni Doctrine were particularly connected with the families of the war dead and had to make the families accept the war death of their relatives and even make them welcome bereavement. Here one can mention the way that the bereaved families, the ‘Yasukuni wives, mothers and children’, should behave. These were the essential structural elements of the Yasukuni Doctrine.

At this point, let us turn to *Yasukuni no Seishin* (The Spirit of Yasukuni) published in 1942 by Takagami Kakushō (1894–1948). Takagami was a Buddhist scholar of the Chisan sect of Shingon Buddhism, who published many works on Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy before and during the war.<sup>12</sup> After the war, he continued to attract a wide readership with works such as *Hannya shingyō kōgi*. Takagami’s writings on the Yasukuni Doctrine provide an interesting insight, because they were written from the perspective of a Buddhist scholar aimed at a general audience. The spirit of Yasukuni formulated in this work, as the subtitle ‘To the Families of the War Dead’ demonstrates, was addressed to bereaved families and aimed to convince them that:

The spirit of Yasukuni is not only a spirit that soldiers have in wartime. *It is a Japanese spirit that all Japanese people should adhere to identically in both war and times of peace*. But, how can we instil this spirit of Yasukuni? Ultimately I think we should use the following words.

Spill your blood with joy for the nation.  
 Shed tears of joy for the people.  
 Gladly make yourself sweat.

For truly, it is only through that blood, those tears and that sweat that we can bring about a spring of bright peace to heaven and earth in East Asia, and throughout the world.<sup>13</sup>

Here we can see the very same function of Yasukuni Shrine being expressed: it is a device for the general mobilization of the ‘national spirit’. In other words, the Yasukuni spirit is nothing more than the Japanese spirit that all Japanese people should adhere to identically in both war and times of peace.

However, it was particularly important that mothers who had lost sons, and wives who had lost husbands, internalized the Yasukuni spirit and became Yasukuni mothers and Yasukuni wives. According to Takagami, this was only possible if the sadness of the bereaved families could be turned into joy:

It seems there are many people who think ‘why only my child?’ or ‘why only my husband?’ There are also a considerable number of people who are distraught with grief as if their own children or husbands had sacrificed their lives; this can also be thought of as a somewhat mistaken way of looking at things. . . .

I think that there is a great difference between feeling joy at the wonderful service performed by children and husbands, and feeling grief at the unfortunate death for the country of children who were brought up with so much care. Whether one feels joy or grief, these are feelings for one’s own heart. However much one thinks of property as one’s own, in reality it is not one’s own thing. Everything belongs to the state. And it is not only property. Our bodies and lives too are all gifts from he who reigns over us. So in times of need, we must all ceaselessly and earnestly strive to be of great service. The bereaved families are the people who gracefully gave us the children they lovingly brought up and husbands they looked after as shields against harm. They have returned to the emperor what he has bestowed unto us. But, those sons and husbands are now enshrined at Yasukuni, and for all eternity they will be worshipped by the emperor and looked up to by the people as loyal defenders of the nation. I think there are no higher aspirations that a boy can have.

. . . When someone dies an ordinary death, we may feel sympathy, but not necessarily respect and gratitude.

. . . The bereaved families can receive considerable gratitude and respect from people they have never met thanks to their sons and husbands who gave their lives for the nation.<sup>14</sup>

Prime Minister Koizumi’s repeated use of the same rhetoric of ‘respect and gratitude’ every time he worships at Yasukuni Shrine is notable in the context of Takagami’s words. People who have died an ordinary death might attract sympathy, but just because they have died, it does not mean that they will be thanked or respected. However, the people who became gods at Yasukuni by giving their lives for the nation will for all eternity receive ‘gratitude and respect’ as ‘loyal spirits defending the nation’ (*gokoku no chūrei*). During the Pacific War, the emperor and empress, and successive prime ministers—Tōjō Hideki, Koiso Kuniaki, and Suzuki Kantarō—worshipped at

Yasukuni Shrine, thereby expressing ‘gratitude and respect’ for the ‘loyal spirits defending the nation’. Thanks to their husbands and sons, the mothers and wives whose sons and husbands became the objects of gratitude and respect as loyal spirits defending the nation, they themselves became the objects of gratitude and respect from people they had never met. Accordingly, their misfortune did not become grief. On the contrary, they should have felt joy at the glorious service of their sons and husbands.

The most archetypal verbal expression of the joy felt by ‘Yasukuni mothers’ at their husbands’ and sons’ glorious service, as opposed to grief over their unfortunate deaths, can be found in the June 1936 edition of the magazine *Shufu no Tomo* (Housewife’s Friend) in an article entitled ‘Tearful Meeting with Proud Mothers who Gave their Only Sons for the Nation’. The article contained a transcript of a conversation with several old ladies from bereaved families who had travelled to Tokyo from the Hokuriku region to participate in a special ceremony held at the Yasukuni Shrine to enshrine the soldiers who had died in the early stages of the fighting. There is a transcript of a conversation with several old ladies from bereaved families who had come to Tokyo all the way from the Hokuriku region to participate:

MORIKAWA: You raised him on your own from the age of seven, didn’t you?

MURAI: Yes, in between agricultural jobs, I worked hard making straw hats and mats. I had a boy so I tried hard to at least put him through school to the second year. It was not a very caring upbringing, but I did not want people talking about him behind his back because he only had a mother. I did all I could.

SAITŌ: When my brother was drafted, he was saying he wanted to give his life for the emperor as soon as possible.

MORIKAWA: On the evening when that white box [containing her brother’s remains] was placed in Yasukuni Shrine, I couldn’t stop saying, thank you, thank you. I was just so grateful this lowly boy was given the chance to be of use to the world.

MURAI: It is by the grace of the emperor, it is almost too much to bear.

NAKAMURA: Everyone cried, didn’t they?

TAKAI: They were tears of joy. We were just crying because we were so happy.

NAKAMURA: We are just truly grateful that people like us could have children who were of use to the emperor. A bugle call sounded, I think it was soldiers playing. And when the hearse arrived and the bugle sounded, I just can’t express it, I was thinking, thank you, thank you.

MORIKAWA: It was such a beautiful sound. My son was truly happy in that beautiful white box. Usually you cannot receive that kind of honour.

SAITŌ: And the emperor came and worshipped, didn’t he? We bowed in appreciation.

NAKAMURA: We truly appreciated it, it was too much to bear.

SAITŌ: It is just what we have been hoping for in our hearts since the beginning of the war. We have heard that because he cares for us, the emperor has been working so hard and eating humble food. We just thought we somehow had to pay back his

kindness, and when we bowed down to the emperor, we could not hold back the tears. Having worshipped at Yasukuni and bowed down to the emperor, I can have no more regrets. When the sun goes down today I will be satisfied; I can die happy. As a result of what happened today you know.

NAKAMURA: I have had the chance to see Shinjuku Gyoen [park] you know. I am so grateful. My son will be commemorated here, I have seen some wonderful places . . .

SAITŌ: There are so many flowers in bloom. Wherever you go it is a vast garden, it is like paradise.

TAKAI: My son is going to be happy in nirvana. He died a good death. If I show tears, I will feel bad for the emperor you know. Everything we do is for the country, so, if you think that, you always feel cheerful.

NAKAMURA: That's it. There's nothing I can do about feeling sad that my son won't come back, but he died for his country and if we think how he has been honoured by the emperor, I cannot think of any greater happiness and feel cheerful again.

MORIKAWA: I give thanks that my lowly boy could be of use.

This section was cited by Hashikawa Bunzō (1922–83), well known for *Nippon Romanha no Kenkyū* ('Research on Japanese Novelists'), at the beginning of his article 'The Establishment and Development of Yasukuni Thought' (*Chūō Kōron*, October 1974) with the comment 'I have not read such a fine expression of the Yasukuni Doctrine as this'.<sup>15</sup> When Hashikawa saw in these 'a somewhat primitive, eerie atmosphere', he said 'when you read the tragically sad words of the old women who had lost their sons in war at the prime of their lives, I feel a strange shudder saying, don't let me be thought of as part of that world'. And, what he loves in the 'words that showed absolutely no *protest* or [feminine] *weakness (memeshisa)*' is reminder of the type of woman he knew as a small child and who was brought up in the doctrines of attaining nirvana in the Hokuriku region. In other words, these were women who 'whatever the hardships, made no complaint and always lived modestly' and 'whose strength of belief astounded the full-blooded male'.

In the period 1937–45, many special ceremonies were held when tens of thousands of war dead were enshrined at a time. On each occasion, many bereaved families were chosen and invited to Tokyo—from Sakhalin in the north to Manchuria in the west to Taiwan in the south—at the government's expense to participate in these special ceremonies to enshrine the war dead as 'gods'. The bereaved families filled both flanks of the approach to Yasukuni Shrine, the list of the war dead (*eireibo*) was carried on a special carriage by the shrine priests to the main hall of the shrine, and the emperor, acting as principal mourner, passed up the same path and paid his respects. The bereaved families not only participated in this *shōkonshiki* ceremony, they also visited famous spots in Tokyo—such as Shinjuku Gyoen, the Imperial Palace and Ueno zoo—had commemorative photographs taken, and returned home as 'honourable war bereaved families' (*meiyo no izoku*).

These people were from the lower levels of society and if there had been no war, there would probably have been no chance of them ever leaving their home regions. But because these people had lost sons or family in the war, they were invited to Tokyo at the government's expense, praised as 'honoured bereaved families' and even got to see the emperor, the 'son of heaven'

(*tenshisama*), at close quarters. The emotions expressed by all the old ladies of ‘gratitude’ and ‘being too much to bear’ are not something to be dismissed as *tatema*: they reflect reality.

Saitō said, ‘Having worshipped at Yasukuni and bowed down to the emperor, I can have no more regrets. When the sun goes down today I will be satisfied; I can die happy as a result of what happened today.’ Similarly, Nakamura said, ‘[my son] died for his country and if we think how he has been honoured by the emperor, I cannot think of any greater happiness and feel cheerful again.’ These words reflect the psychological function of the ‘emperor’s shrine’ Yasukuni, namely that Yasukuni not only functioned to motivate men to go to war and become ‘heroic spirits defending the nation’ (*gokoku no eirei*), but also had the function of mobilizing women for the country’s wars as ‘Yasukuni mothers’ and ‘Yasukuni wives’.

The mother who lost the son she had struggled to bring up on her own did not feel grief-stricken; on the contrary, she felt joy at his ‘honourable war death’, shed ‘tears of joy’, and gave thanks, saying ‘I couldn’t stop saying thank you, thank you.’ Why was this kind of response possible? It is wholly because ‘*the emperor came and worshipped* [her son who had died for his country]’ and ‘*[the son] has been honoured by the emperor*’ (author’s italics). In sum, as a result of worship at the Yasukuni Shrine where their sons were enshrined by the emperor, their sons were revered, glorified and honoured. This made the old ladies ‘feel a sense of serene happiness’ which was ‘out of this world’.

In the 7 April 1943 edition of *Shashin shūhō* [Photography Weekly], there was a special report about the ‘Yasukuni orphans’, who came to the Yasukuni Shrine from Sakhalin in the north, Okinawa in the south and Manchuria in the west, to worship their fathers who had become gods. In an article following a large photograph whose caption read ‘Fathers’ Love for the Children of Yasukuni, Prime Minister Tōjō Encourages the Proud Orphans’, we discover that:

The Manchurian Orphan’s Brigade, which had come to Tokyo from all the way over the Kizankō, arrived in Tokyo on the 26th and on the same day visited the official residence of Prime Minister Tōjō and offered their greetings. Prime Minister Tōjō made time in his many important affairs of state specially for the orphans. The prime minister patted their heads, placed his hand upon their shoulders and said ‘Never be ashamed of what your fathers have done’. *The orphans were deeply moved at the prime minister’s kindness and tears ran down their cheeks at Prime Minister Tōjō’s consideration and at their fathers’ deaths.*

(author’s italics)

The back cover of the magazine contained a tribute to the orphans with the message ‘be like the Yasukuni orphans’. It read:

Bow your head in the direction of Yasukuni,  
The endearing sight of heeding a father’s dying wish,  
*Resolve to meet your fathers again by giving your lives to the nation.*

We pray that they will grow up healthy  
With one soul and with our joint strength  
We all hope to be like those fathers.

(author’s italics)

In this way, the Yasukuni orphans were destined to follow in the footsteps of the fathers who had

been honoured for dying for their country; and similarly, those that followed the orphans were also destined to follow the fathers' lead.

In this way, all the Japanese people—‘the glorious dead of Yasukuni’ (*Yasukuni no eirei*), the ‘strong women of Yasukuni’, ‘the mothers of Yasukuni’, ‘the wives of Yasukuni’, and ‘the orphans of Yasukuni’—were encompassed by the Yasukuni Doctrine. The spirit of Yasukuni was synonymous with the spirit of the Japanese people, a vital aspect of the general mobilization of the ‘national spirit’. Importantly, the emperor had to worship and honour the war dead, and the prime minister, army and navy ministers and others had to worship and express their gratitude and respect to the fallen.

Today, Prime Minister Koizumi repeatedly worships at Yasukuni Shrine because he knows that Yasukuni Shrine is where he can continue to express his ‘gratitude and respect’ to the ‘precious sacrifice’ of the enshrined. This is clearly a political act at the level of national politics with a view to making Japan once again a ‘state capable of prosecuting wars’. It is to show the people that when new war deaths among the SDF (or a reconstituted Japanese army) occur, these deaths will be praised as ‘precious sacrifice for the nation’ and the country’s top political leaders will express their ‘gratitude and respect’. Worship by the emperor at Yasukuni Shrine has been suspended since the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals came to light. Consequently, in order to recreate a ‘Japanese national spirit’ which can tolerate war and the sacrifice it brings, the prime minister’s worship is seen as particularly important.

At this point, let us look at an important historical document to make more explicit the meaning of Yasukuni worship by political leaders and the function of Yasukuni Shrine. Why does the state honour the war dead as the ‘glorious dead’ and make the bereaved families ‘proud bereaved families’? On 14 November 1895, just after the Sino-Japanese War, an article entitled ‘We Should Hold a Grand Ceremony for the War Dead’ was published in *Jiji shinpō*. Whether or not Fukuzawa really penned these articles published in *Jiji shinpō*, as has been debated, is not the problem which need concern us here.<sup>16</sup> Rather, the content of the *Jiji shinpō* article is of importance to the central theme of this study. The article lists the number of war casualties:

According to the reports up to 29 September, the number of our soldiers who have fallen in the Sino-Japanese and Taiwanese wars is: battle deaths, 851; death from wounds, 233; death from disease, 5,385; this is a total of 6,469 and there will probably have to be quite a few more deaths from here on.<sup>17</sup>

The Sino-Japanese war of 1894–5 was the first major international conflict fought by the modern Japanese state. Following its victory in the Sino-Japanese war, Japan and China concluded the Treaty of Shimonoseki and Japan succeeded in acquiring Taiwan as a colony. But Taiwanese resistance was fierce, and the Japanese army was dispatched to quell resistance, resulting in many casualties on both sides. The ‘Subjugation of Taiwan’ is given a distinct identity from the Sino-Japanese War in the Yasukuni Shrine. According to the current (17 October 2001) list of enshrined souls, there are 13,619 souls enshrined from the Sino-Japanese War and 1,130 souls enshrined from the Subjugation of Taiwan, a total of 14,749; so, at the time that the *Jiji shinpō* article was written, less than half of the people eventually enshrined had died. So, why was Fukuzawa taking issue with the fact that ‘there will probably have to be quite a few more deaths’?

According to Fukuzawa, the surviving soldiers were given the highest honours and received not

only the thanks of the people, but medals and rewards, too. But the war dead were unable to receive medals or rewards, to be welcomed home by the people, or to be showered in glory as the triumphant returning soldiers were. The bereaved families received meagre benefits and support, struggled to make ends meet and had already lost their fathers and brothers, whose safe return after meritorious exploits in the war they had prayed for. When the bereaved families looked across at the glory showered on their fallen families' 'comrades in arms', all they could do was cry. In contrast to the supreme honours and glory given to the triumphal returning soldiers, the war dead and their bereaved families had no honour and glory, and were forgotten by society. The article argued that the war dead and their families should be given as much honour and glory as possible.

Why so? To begin with, those who had fought and died did not make a lesser contribution to the country than those who had survived and returned in triumph. But it was not only this; the major reason why the war dead and their families should be offered the highest honour and glory was as follows:

The situation, especially in East Asia, is becoming more precarious by the day and we cannot predict when and in what way incidents will happen. In the unfortunate event that war breaks out, who should we rely on to defend our country? Since we have no other choice than to rely on the courageous, fearless souls that dare to confront death, to cultivate this spirit is the most urgent task for the defence of our country. To foster such a spirit, as much honour as possible should be given to the war dead and bereaved families so that people would never fail to feel a sense of happiness about falling on the battlefield.

In the case of another war, who could be relied upon to defend the country? The only solution was to foster a martial spirit among soldiers so that they did not fear death, and fight and give their lives. The cultivation of this spirit became vital for the defence of the country, and as a result, the highest honour needed to be given to the war dead so that 'people would never fail to feel a sense of happiness about falling on the battlefield'. In other words, it was necessary to make people feel happy to die in battle.

The state was neglecting the grief of the relatives of the war dead and, therefore, was unable to foster a martial spirit in soldiers who would fight and sacrifice their lives for their country in the next war. But by giving the highest state honour to the war dead and their families, mobilizing soldiers who wanted to have an 'honourable death' for their country became possible.

How were the war dead and their families to be given the highest honour? The article explained:

Although commemorative ceremonies for the souls of the war dead have been held at various locations to the present date, one should not think these are sufficient. I fervently hope that we will go a step further by building a national altar in Tokyo, at the heart of the empire, where relatives of the war dead are to be invited from around the nation to attend the ceremonies and feel the highest honour. His Imperial Majesty the Emperor would be graciously asked to lead the ceremony for those bereaved relatives, with hundreds of military and civilian officers in attendance, and to offer an imperial proclamation to commend the meritorious deed of the fallen soldiers and console their souls.

After the Sino-Japanese War and the Subjugation of Taiwan, commemorative ceremonies (*shōkonsai*) were held in every region, but this was not enough. Bereaved families were to be invited from all over the country to the imperial capital Tokyo, the emperor would lead the worship, the exploits of the dead would be revered, an imperial proclamation would commend the souls of the dead, the dead and their families would be given the highest honour, and the people would be ‘made to feel happy to fall in battle’:

When a commemorative ceremony was held in Sakura, there was an old man among the war bereaved. Saying that his dead son was his only child and as he was the only surviving parent, the father could not stop crying when he first heard of the unfortunate death of his son in the war. After attending the ceremony, however, he felt honoured and went back home content in the feeling that even the loss of his child was nothing to regret. *If his Imperial Majesty himself leads a special ceremony, the dead will appreciate the grace of heaven from their graves, and the bereaved relatives will cry in honour, find joy in the deaths of their fathers and brothers, and the people will be willing to die for their nation when demanded.* No expense should be spared. We sincerely hope for this kind of commemoration.

(author’s italics)

There is no simpler explanation of the logic of the state in honouring the war dead. The old man invited to the commemorative ceremony at the barracks in Sakura was deeply moved by his son’s death being praised as an ‘honourable death’ at the ceremony, and when he went home, he was very satisfied and cherished the death of his only son.

If the emotions of the bereaved relatives were felt as simply human beings, it could only result in grief. However, the grief became converted into joy as a result of the state ceremony. From grief to joy, from unhappiness to happiness, in what was akin to an alchemist’s trick, the bereaved relatives’ emotions had been turned around 180 degrees.

The author is saying that if the supreme commander of the imperial Japanese forces (the Emperor Meiji) and other leaders were the principal worshippers, and if a large commemorative ceremony was held, the war dead from heaven (*kōsen no kuni*), would feel grateful to the emperor for his grace. The important point is that if there was another war, people who were moved to tears and felt joy at the war death of a family member, and ordinary people who felt the same way, would give their lives for the emperor. The state that had mobilized the people for war had to prevent itself from bearing the brunt of the people’s dissatisfaction. Above all, it was necessary to make ‘ordinary people’ come forward of their own accord to give their lives for the state by honouring the war dead. ‘No expense should be spared’ – in other words, the war bereaved should be invited to Tokyo from all parts of the country, told how grateful the ‘nation’ and the ‘son of heaven’ were and go back home feeling deeply moved.

This is nothing more than ‘emotional alchemy’ based on the Yasukuni Doctrine. Fukuzawa (or his ghost writer) does not use the words ‘Yasukuni Shrine’ once throughout the entire article. The author only says the ceremony should be held in ‘the imperial capital Tokyo’. The Yasukuni Shrine had been built in 1869 as the Tokyo Shōkonsha (Shrine to Invoke the Spirit of the Dead) and, ten years later in 1879, it was renamed Yasukuni Shrine. After becoming a special government shrine (*kansha*), it began the enshrinement of soldiers killed overseas with the 1874 Taiwan Expedition and continued into the Sino-Japanese war. However, at this stage, it is not possible to say that the system of Yasukuni Doctrine had been established.

About one month after the article was published in *Jiji shinpō*, an enshrining ceremony (*shōkonshiki*) was held at Yasukuni Shrine on 15 December 1895, in the presence of Major General Ōtera Yasuzumi and 1500 people. As if in response to the arguments in the article, a special grand ceremony (*rinji taisai*) for the dead of the Sino-Japanese war was held from 16 December that lasted for three days. On the first day, an imperial messenger attended, and on the second day, the Supreme Commander Emperor Meiji and others worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine. In response to this, *Jiji shinpō* published a further article entitled ‘The Dead are Honoured’, which commented:

The recent special commemorative ceremony held at Yasukuni Shrine for the war dead was a glorious occasion held in the gracious presence of His Majesty the Emperor. People were moved to tears at the thought of becoming enshrined, and I suppose the feelings of the families and ordinary people will continue to be so. We desire that people recognize and reward the great service performed by the war dead and their families.<sup>18</sup>

In this way, Yasukuni Shrine gradually gained authority, and after the Russo-Japanese war, it had attained a definitive status as the central institution for the commemoration of the war dead. Imperial Japan gave special status to Yasukuni Shrine, and through its ceremonies, soldiers and civilian employees who had died in battle were continually honoured as *eirei* (glorious spirits). This was to soothe the grief of the bereaved families and prevent the state from bearing the brunt of any dissatisfaction, but more than anything else, by giving the highest honours to the war dead, it was intended to draft soldiers who would ‘follow in their footsteps’ and willingly ‘die for their country’. Fukuzawa Yukichi, as a leading intellectual at the time the Yasukuni doctrine was being established, wrote about the mechanisms of Yasukuni in *Jiji shinpō* from the perspective of those who were using the doctrine. As we have already seen from the extract from the ‘Tearful Meeting’, about forty years later, the mechanism had already become largely invisible and the ‘feeling of joy at falling in battle’ had mostly replaced grief at the loss.

### **Yasukuni Shrine as a place to honour the war dead, not to ‘mourn’ them**

At the 1936 ‘Tearful Meeting with Proud Mothers who Gave their Only Sons to the Nation’, grief at a family member’s war death had become joy, and sadness had been converted into happiness. The ‘emotional alchemy’ of the Yasukuni Doctrine was almost complete. But if one looks closely, one can see that it was not always necessarily the case.

Hashikawa Bunzō said that he loved the ‘words that showed absolutely no protest or [feminine] weakness (*memeshisa*)’. But were they really ‘words that showed absolutely no protest or weakness’? For example, in the last part cited above, Nakamura says, ‘[t]hat’s it. There’s nothing I can do about feeling sad that my son won’t come back but he died for his country and if we think how he has been honoured by the emperor, I cannot think of any greater happiness and feel cheerful again.’ Here we see that the sorrow for her son’s death briefly raises its head, but is then immediately shut out by the feelings of happiness that her son died ‘for the country’ and ‘for the emperor’.

Part of the meeting that Hashikawa did not cite reveals the conflict even more clearly:

MORIKAWA: I think about how my child is dead, but then when I see fit and healthy soldiers I think how he could still be alive. I’m all alone, so recently I have done nothing but complain. I’m a little embarrassed to say this but in the evening, in a

mother's heart there's this feeling of affection (*kawaii na, kawaii na*) for her children. Soon after I think that, I think of the honour, and I don't know how, but I manage a smile.

It is, therefore, not that case that the women's words 'showed absolutely no protest or weakness'. Hashikawa simply did not cite the section that revealed these emotions. Similarly:

TAKAI: Overall, parents don't want that sort of thing to happen to their child. . . .

MORIKAWA: When their boys go to the front, even if people say 'I don't want to know you if you come back', in their hearts of course they feel pity and really don't want them to die. But you know, we have given our son to the emperor. How could we have held him back? I just feel glad that our son could be of use to the son of heaven.

These comments by Morikawa are effused with the feelings of pity in their hearts for an only son lost in war. The unresolved grief for a lost son is very evident. What we see here is that as soon as the grief is expressed, it is psychologically repressed and shut out; and although it is replaced by feelings of honour ('giving a son to the emperor' and 'being of use to the emperor'), at the very least we can detect the conflict in the bereaved families between grief and honour.

For families that have lost members in war, the most natural emotion is sadness. When the death is not from old age but a violent death, and when it is a death in war where people must kill and be killed, it is normal to have strong feelings of sadness, emptiness and detachment. In psychological analysis, when something for which one feels a certain extent of love is suddenly lost, it is called *ushinai* – *hiai* (loss – sorrow). When a family member dies, the family experiences loss and sorrow; but as could be seen above when Morikawa said 'I think about how my child is dead, but then when I see fit and healthy soldiers I think how he could still be alive', it is very difficult to accept the reality of the loss of a family member who has been the object of love. When bereaved relatives repeatedly have to face the reality of their loss, they gradually learn how to bear and deal with the loss, and through the work of mourning (*trauer arbeit*) they can recover from the loss and sorrow. Through feeling adequate grief at the death of a family member, it is possible to evade excessive grief and distracted melancholy.

However, at the time when the bereaved relatives needed to be learning how to accept and face up to the reality of the loss of an object of their love, they were forced to avoid directly facing up to their loss. Instead of grief, they were provided with the emotion of 'honour', which can be thought of as an unnatural but speedy compensation for their grief. When state ceremonies honouring the war dead were held and the national leaders expressed their 'gratitude and respect', it is not surprising that through the strong authority of the state, the meanings given to the deaths by the state suppressed and shut out the natural feelings of grief.

In pre-war and wartime Japan, the meanings given to the authority figures (*zettaisha*) of the 'nation' and 'son of heaven' were not as strong as suggested. What Kawakami Hajime calls the 'national religion' (*kokkakyō*),<sup>19</sup> is nothing more than a system whereby 'the state as a god = authority figure' holds and aims to monopolize the highest authority, the meaning of Japanese people's death in war, or more generally the meaning of Japanese people's lives and deaths. But it was not so much an act of 'alchemy' but an act of violence by which people had to treat the deaths of family members with joy, honour and gratitude while natural grief was suppressed and they were forced to shut out pain. The creation of a 'national spirit' to support war, and to require

people to adhere to the spirit of Yasukuni, which makes war death a precious sacrifice and the object of gratitude and respect, are forms of psychological violence.

Mourning (*tsuitō*) is to follow the dead (*otte*) and feel pain (*itamu*); in other words, it is to feel sadness, and as the Chinese characters for the word ‘mourning’ (*tsuitō*) suggest, to feel pain at the death of the departed. Mourning and giving condolences (*aitō*) are ‘the work of grieving’ (*hiai no sagyō*). Honouring the dead is quite the opposite. The worship of the emperor, prime minister or political leaders at Yasukuni Shrine is to honour the consecrated war dead as gods (*kami*), and give gratitude and respect. As long as this is a political act which aims to create a ‘national spirit’ to support war, it is completely different to the normal forms of mourning for the war dead.

The way in which the Yasukuni Shrine completely ignores the feelings of mourning among the bereaved families demonstrates that the shrine is an institution where the state honours rather than mourns the war dead. This is clearly evident in the case of the demands made by bereaved families from the former colonies of Taiwan and Korea that their relatives be removed from enshrinement. According to figures published by Yasukuni Shrine, in October 2001 there were 28,863 Taiwanese and 21,181 Koreans enshrined at Yasukuni. The majority of these people died after being drafted from Taiwan and Korea into the Japanese military when the Asia–Pacific War was at its height.

This means that the Yasukuni Shrine has enshrined Taiwanese and Koreans who were victims of colonial rule by Japan in precisely the same way as Japanese people who died perpetrating the colonial rule and suppression of Taiwan and Korea as ‘gods who defended the nation’ (*gokoku no kami*). For the bereaved families from Taiwan and Korea who suffered colonial rule, this is an insult.

In the summer of 1977, the Yasukuni Shrine handed over a list of 27,000 Taiwanese soldiers and auxiliary staff enshrined at Yasukuni to a group of Taiwanese visiting Japan. This had the opposite effect to what was intended, and became the seed for the current controversy over the enshrinement of people from former colonies. The following year in February 1978, a group of Taiwanese residents in Japan who had learned about the list held a meeting and stated: ‘Our compatriots, who with a red slip of paper [*akagami*, draft papers] were rounded up and sent to their deaths, have not received compensation; it’s unacceptable that all we got was this white slip of paper [the Shrine’s list of enshrined souls].’ The Taiwanese group then started legal proceedings to get the Taiwanese removed from Yasukuni. In the same year, a grocer from Kaohsiung (Takao-shi) in Taiwan came to Japan and said angrily:

My father was drafted into the auxiliary corps and never returned. They say he died in the Philippines but I never even received official notification of his death. I have received a certificate saying he was enshrined at Yasukuni in 1970. My father held a grudge for being semi-forcibly taken away and he is probably bitter about being arbitrarily worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine which is part of a foreign religion. I want them to stop this kind of insult to Taiwanese people.

In the following year in February 1979, a group of seven indigenous Taiwanese (*Takasago zoku*, the name given to them under colonial rule) bereaved relatives came to Japan and, for the first time, demanded that their relatives be removed from enshrinement. The shrine, however, refused.

At the time, Priest Ikeda explained the reasons for Yasukuni Shrine's refusal to remove the souls from enshrinement in the following way:

At the time when they died they were Japanese, so it is not possible for them to stop being Japanese after they died. As Japanese soldiers, they fought and died with the feeling that they were going to be worshipped at Yasukuni, so they will not be removed from enshrinement as the relatives have asked. It is natural that they are worshipped at Yasukuni because they cooperated in the war in the same way as people from Japan proper (*naichijin*) and participated in the war as Japanese. In Taiwan, the vast majority of bereaved families are grateful for their relatives' enshrinement.<sup>20</sup>

Since then, the Yasukuni Shrine has consistently refused to consider the demands of people from former colonies for the removal from enshrinement of their relatives, including from Korean bereaved relatives.

As can be seen, Yasukuni Shrine's imperialist nature has not changed at all in the post-war era. The excuse that 'they were Japanese when they died' means that the war dead from former colonies will always remain Japanese people under colonial rule and prisoners of their former colonial masters. There is no more self-righteous or arrogant comment than '*they cooperated in the war* in the same way as people from Japan proper and participated in the war as Japanese' (author's italics). This is nothing less than the sort of self-righteousness and arrogance that colonial rulers held towards their subjects.

In June 2001, fifty-five members of bereaved families from South Korea filed a suit at the Tokyo District Court demanding the removal from enshrinement of their relatives. In their petition to the court, the plaintiffs said it was an unbearable insult that their relatives were worshipped as 'heroes who defended the nation' (*gokoku no eirei*) alongside those who 'plotted and actively participated in' the invasion and colonial rule of their own country. Yasukuni Shrine continues to enshrine the victims of colonial rule alongside the perpetrators and treat them as Japanese gods despite the fact that the people were semi-forcibly (*han-kyōseitekini*) drafted into the war. For a long time the bereaved relatives did not receive official notifications of death or have the remains returned to them. Moreover, the Yasukuni Shrine refuses to remove the dead from enshrinement despite the fact that they were arbitrarily enshrined without their relatives' knowledge.

In Priest Ikeda's comments cited above, the following section is particularly important: 'As Japanese soldiers, they fought and died with the feeling that they were going to be worshipped at Yasukuni, so *they will not be removed from enshrinement as the relatives have asked*' (author's italics). This comment reveals the true nature of the Yasukuni Shrine as an institution for the commemoration of the war dead. Pro-Yasukuni groups say that Yasukuni Shrine is the central institution for the mourning of the war dead. But, the people who feel the most pain at war deaths and have the most right to mourn are the bereaved relatives. Normally, nobody can refuse the rights of bereaved families to mourn their dead. There is an ongoing debate about the public mourning of the Class A War Criminals; but even with the Class A War Criminals, nobody can deny the right of the bereaved relatives to mourn the deaths privately. In Germany, the public mourning of Hitler is impossible; but even Hitler had relatives and nobody can stop them from privately mourning his death.

What should be done when the bereaved families, who have a privileged position concerning the mourning of their relatives, object to their relatives becoming the subject of special public

mourning? What happens when the bereaved relatives want to prevent their relatives becoming the object of worship by particular groups because it hurts the families? The Yasukuni Shrine bluntly ignores these kinds of thoughts and feelings and takes the position that ‘they will not be removed from enshrinement as the relatives have asked’.

This is not only the case with people from former colonies. Requests for the removal from enshrinement at Yasukuni were made by Japanese people even before people from former colonies. In 1968, a Protestant priest, Tsunoda Saburō, became the first bereaved relative to ask for his two brothers to be removed from enshrinement at Yasukuni, but his request was turned down. Following that, as part of the ‘Christian War Bereaved Association’ he requested removal from enshrinement again, but was again rejected.

The Yasukuni Shrine responded saying: ‘[r]eflecting the founding principles and traditions of this Shrine, we are physically unable to respond to the requests’. When discussing the issue with Father Tsunoda, Priest Ikeda said, ‘[t]he war dead are worshipped in accordance with the wishes of the emperor; enshrinement was carried out without concern for the wishes of the bereaved families and therefore it cannot be undone’. In other words, according to Yasukuni Shrine’s logic, enshrinement was carried out exclusively in accordance with the emperor’s wishes, so once somebody has been enshrined, even if they are Class A War Criminals, former colonial subjects or anyone else, and even if the bereaved families desire it, removal from enshrinement is impossible. The bereaved families’ feelings are irrelevant and completely ignored.

What are the emperor’s wishes? An excerpt from a shrine memorial (*saibun*) written when the Tokyo Shōkonsha was renamed Yasukuni Shrine and became a special rank governmental shrine on 25 June 1879 reads as follows:

from the time of the Meiji Restoration to today, whenever the emperor punishes tyrannical enemies inside and outside of Japan or subjugates rebels, you have no individual will but only loyalty; forget your family and lay down your life, and through the highest distinction of pursuing death in battle we can rule over a great imperial nation, and we invite you to think accordingly . . . from now on, let us ensure you will be tirelessly worshipped.

As one can see, there is not a single hint of mourning for the war dead or sympathy and empathy for the bereaved families. One can only see the thinking of how the great exploits of individual soldiers in the Imperial Army who died in battle against the enemy were to be revered and praised for eternity.

Earlier in the ‘Tearful Meeting with Proud Mothers who Gave their Only Sons for the Nation’, some mothers had said ‘I gave my son to the son of heaven’ or ‘I am just so grateful to have had a son who could be of use to the emperor’. In *The Spirit of Yasukuni*, Takagami Kakushō addresses the ‘bereaved relatives of the loyal dead’ and states that they should not be sad but happy because the bodies and lives of the Japanese people are ‘gifts from the emperor’, and the families whose sons and husbands died in battle have ‘returned to the emperor what he originally gave to them’. At the heart of this way of thinking is that if the emperor grieves and mourns for Imperial army soldiers, it is because they are his ‘children’, so the grief or feelings of the bereaved relatives are irrelevant. If soldiers in the future really belong to the emperor (that is, the state) and not to families, the emperor’s (the state’s) will takes priority over bereaved relatives. Worshipping the fallen at Yasukuni Shrine becomes only natural (*tōzen*) and granting the

bereaved families' requests for removal from enshrinement become unthinkable.

We must be extremely careful of Priest Ikeda's comments that 'it is the emperor's wish that the war dead are worshipped, and they are worshipped without consideration of the bereaved relatives'. If this is the case, it is not only the feelings and views of the bereaved relatives demanding removal from enshrinement that are being ignored. It so happens that their views and emotions are simply equated with the will of the emperor. Fundamentally, this is no different to their views being ignored completely.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the Yasukuni Shrine is an institution that ignores the feelings and views of the bereaved relatives. It simply regards the people's will as being the same as the emperor's will. What seems to be regard for the feelings of the people who are honoured by enshrinement in Yasukuni Shrine actually occurs because the will of those people happens to be effectively the same as the will of the emperor. At any rate, Yasukuni Shrine forces on people the emotions that dying for the emperor and the country are honourable and dying in battle is a joy.

In this way, the essence of Yasukuni Shrine, which was founded as the 'emperor's shrine' through an imperial proclamation of the Meiji emperor, has not changed over the sixty years of the post-war period and continues to adhere to its founding principles. As a result, the views and feelings of the bereaved families are fundamentally ignored, and the bereaved families who feel insulted and pained by the enshrinement of their relatives continue to have their feelings hurt. Worship by political leaders such as the prime minister and mayor of Tokyo, with the sort of political objectives that I have outlined at length in this chapter, is causing increasing pain and insult not only to the bereaved relatives, but also to people who hope to develop friendly relations with Asia by reflecting on Japan's past wars, and those who, for intellectual reasons or for reasons of conscience and belief, do not want to have the Yasukuni Doctrine forced upon them.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Takahashi Tetsuya, *Kokoro to sensō*, Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2003, Chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> 'Koizumi shushō danwa of 13 August 2001', 13 August 2003 (yūkan), *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>3</sup> 'Koizumi shushō kasha kaiken of 1 January 2004', 1 January 2004 (chyōkan), *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>4</sup> Author's italics. 'Nakasone Yasuhiro shushō kōen', *Jimintō Karuizawa seminā*, 27 July 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Author's italics. 'Koizumi shushō danwa of 14 January 2003', 2 January 2004 (chyōkan), *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>6</sup> 'Koizumi shushō kasha kaiken of 9 December 2003', 10 December 2003 (chyōkan), *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>7</sup> Author's italics. 'Nakasone moto shushō intabyū', 30 March 2003 (chyōkan), *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>8</sup> Kawamura Tateo, [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/houdou/16/01/04010502.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/16/01/04010502.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Author's italics. 26 February 2004, *Asahi shinbun*.

<sup>10</sup> Author's italics. Yokoyama was an elementary school teacher, army personnel officer, an

employee of *Hōchi shinbun*, and ultimately, a successful children's author. Yokoyama Natsuki, *Kagayaku Yasukuni monogatari*, Tokyo: Taihei shobō, 1944, p. 226.

<sup>11</sup> Author's italics. Yasukuni restsujo itoku kenshōkai, ed., *Yasukuni retsujo den*, Tokyo: Shuppan bunka kenkyūkai, 1941.

<sup>12</sup> Takagami Kakushō, *Takagami Kakushō zenshū*, 10 vols, Tokyo: Rekishi toshosha, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> Author's italics. Takagami Kakushō, *Yasukuni no seishin*, Tokyo: Dai ichi shobō, 1942, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Hirayama Hiroshi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no shinjitsu*, Tokyo: Bunshun shinsho, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū*, vol. 15, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970, pp. 321–2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>19</sup> Kawakami Hajime, 'Nihon dokuji no kakka shugi,' in Sugihara Shirō (ed.), *Kawakami Hajime hyōron shū*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> 16 April 1987, *Asahi shinbun*.