

**Yasukuni Shrine
and the
Constraints on the Discourses of Nationalism
in Twentieth-Century Japan**

by

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ISBN: 0-9658564-1-0

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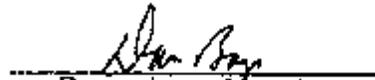
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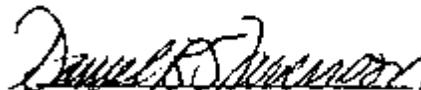
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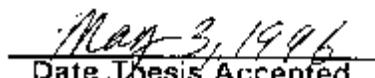
Submitted to the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


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Dedication

To Professor Ronald DiCenzo, the inspiration of my passion for Japan.

sensei, osewa ni narimashita

Abstract

The Yasukuni Shrine - - Japan's national memorial enshrining the spirits of Japanese soldiers killed in domestic and foreign wars - - occupies a peculiar chapter in Japanese history. Originally designed as a sanctuary to house the spirits of those who died in overthrowing the Tokugawa Regime, Yasukuni was nurtured by the state and then the military into a powerful religious and iconographic center to promote Japanese ultranationalism. Following the close of World War II, the Shrine became the subject of intense politico-religious debates as the Japanese, with the assistance of the international community, consigned themselves to the task of finding a place for Yasukuni as they worked on their postwar project of reinventing nationalism and cultural identity.

This thesis provides a narrative review of Yasukuni's history from its inception to the present, focusing on the critical years of 1985-1986, when Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro sanctioned a commission to settle the Yasukuni problem. This study also represents one path in a quest toward a deeper understanding and definition of postwar Japanese nationalism and identity.

Acknowledgments

In the research and writing of this project, I have benefited immensely from the knowledge, active interest, and support of many.

I would like to thank Professor William M. Tsutsui for his extensive, enthusiastic and sustained guidance and support. His erudition, forthrightness and keen constructive criticisms helped me to fine-tune this study from its inception.

I am also grateful to Professors Daniel Bays and Daniel Stevenson, who provided helpful suggestions and assistance; my good friend Chihiro Kawabata for sending essential source materials from Japan and expressing her views openly on issues related to this paper; my family, who have always supported me with the warmest love; and my mother, to whom I owe my ever-developing writing style and training.

My warmest words of gratitude are reserved for my wife, Elena. Her intellectual companionship, objective insights, and unswerving devotion were an invaluable necessity during the course of this study,

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Introduction: Setting the Stage

On July 26, 1945, the Allied Powers issued the Potsdam Declaration which decreed that:

The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights, shall be established.¹

This directive was explicitly designed to root out ultranationalism and militaristic notions of empire, and thus ensure a lasting peace in the world. In 1947, these democratic ideals were written into Japan's new Constitution by the American Occupation.

Moreover, in order to excise the heritage of expansionistic nationalism, MacArthur and his forces aimed directly to demobilize the Yasukuni Shrine as a government-sponsored religious institution. The physical edifice was allowed to remain standing, but the Shrine's control was removed from the auspices of the Imperial Army and Navy. Thus, the Shrine could only operate as a private religious organization. Whether or not the Japanese of the Cold War years welcomed and wholly accepted these new democratic principles was irrelevant at the time. In the wake of Japan's defeat, the vocation of survival, rather than

¹

The Potsdam Declaration: July 26, 1945, Paragraph 10, as cited in William P. Woodard, The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945-1952 and Japanese Religions. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1972), Appendix A. 1, p. 286.

the abstraction of nationalism was of paramount concern. In time, as Japan rose from the ashes, some Japanese began searching for the sense of cultural identity which lay buried amidst the rubble of war and suppressed by the victors' blueprint for peace.

In 1952, after the American Occupation had left Japan, right-wing groups and members of the *Nihon Izokukai* (The Japan's Bereaved Families Association) launched a movement to rehabilitate the Yasukuni Shrine as a government-sponsored institution.² These political drives were severely criticized by leftist parties, labor unions, and various religious organizations because they violated Articles 20 and 89 of Japan's new Constitution. Article 20 guarantees the freedom of religion and the separation of religion and state; and Article 89 forbids the use of public funds for religious purposes. Not only did constitutional law prohibit state patronage of the Yasukuni Shrine, but the national and international climate of the times looked with disdain and distrust upon every movement which sought to renew a sense of nationalism in Japan.

²

Originally established in 1947 as the Nihon Izoku Kosei Renmei (Bereaved Families Welfare Alliance), the Nihon Izokukai has become one of Japan's most powerful and tightly organized political pressure groups. It was founded to force the postwar government to honor the prewar government's commitment to provide military pensions for the families of the war dead. Since 1952, it has become an active group supporting the re-nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine. Hiroshi Ueda, "Yasukuni Shrine Reform Remains Hot Live Issue," Japan Times Weekly, May 11, 1974; Oe Shinobu, Yasukuni Jinja mondai, (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1984), p. 12.

Nevertheless, since the early 1960s, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the *Nihon Izokukai* steadily increased their activities to re-establish state patronage of the Shrine by submitting formal bills for its adoption to the Diet. All of these proposals were defeated, sending a powerful message to LDP members and their constituents that Yasukuni should rightfully remain within the guidelines of the Constitution.

The LDP's struggle to re-legitimize Yasukuni as a national institution highlighted the fact that Japan's postwar search for national identity hinged not only on building a new sense of nationalism, but also on escaping the memory of their previous one. Every year, on and around August 15, global attention shifts toward Japan's commemoration of the end of World War II. During this time, a wave of media scrutiny recalls Yasukuni's prewar role, including its association with the Emperor and its manipulation by the military elite. In this way, the image of Yasukuni as a politically charged religious institution, dedicated solely to memorializing the war dead and expressing patriotic sentiments, is annually revitalized in the public imagination. Consequently, the Shrine's aura as a symbol of aggression, ethnocentrism, emperor-ism, and religious fanaticism reminiscent of Japan's prewar personality is regularly reinforced.

Moreover, the international community watches with critical eyes as the annual period of protest over the incumbent Japanese Prime Minister's decision

to visit the Shrine begins. If he pays an official visit to Yasukuni, then Japan is violating constitutional law, the spirit of democracy, and is returning to prewar methods of rule. If the Prime Minister does *not* visit, then the conservative right and approximately 4.5 million members of the *Nihon Izokukai* demand to know why Japanese leaders are betraying their own cultural history. Even though Yasukuni was ideologically deadened in 1945, its prewar symbolism and psychological impact on the world remains frozen in time. Its origin, history and national significance have left an indelible impression upon world memory and this image has contributed to the complexity of the Yasukuni controversy.

On August 15, 1985, the LDP changed its tactics when Nakasone Yasuhiro became the first government dignitary since World War II to visit the Yasukuni Shrine and to sign the visitor's book in his official capacity as Prime Minister. His offering to the shrine, an expensive sprig from a sacred tree, was reimbursed from the public purse.³ The reverberations of this event still echo in public memory.⁴ Over the past decade, the media, intellectuals, statesmen,

³ "Nakasone Visits Yasukuni Ignoring Religious Groups," *The Japan Times*, 16 August 1984, p. 203.

⁴ *By public memory, I am referring to one specific narrative of history that has been sewn together by several informants. First, the general public's individual and collective historical experiences. That is, their consumption, processing and reflection of historical events as they relate to them and their particular station in society at both the time the event(s) occurred as well as past recollection(s) of the event. Secondly, members of the state and academicians who, through public expression, display and written format, inform the general public about vantage points and perspectives from*

various organized religious groups, pacifists, leftists, the governments of South Korea and China, and Southeast Asian countries subjected to Japanese exploitation during World War II, have vocally expressed their outrage and adamantly protested the possible re-nationalization of the Yasukuni Shrine through such official and religious displays of support.

But where does one place the Yasukuni Shrine in postwar Japan? Why does the shrine continue to draw worldwide attention if it is constitutionally

which to view specific issues and events. Textbooks, for example, represent one powerful channel through which public memory is informed and directed. In Japan's case, the Monbusho's (Ministry of Education) editing of Japan's role during World War II, specifically the omission of war atrocities, has served to formulate and instill a specific version of the war within the minds of younger generations of Japanese. Thirdly, public memory is created by the media, including newspapers and news broadcasts that reach a wide and diverse audience. These three taxonomies are by no means exhaustive, but they represent the more prevalent architects of public memory.

In reference to international public memory, specifically in the case of Yasukuni, the public memories of many nations exploited by Japanese wartime aggression have converged to achieve a consensus on what global memory surrounding Yasukuni should entail. Regardless of the fact that these nations (China, Korea, Southeast Asian countries, United States, Britain, etc. . .) possess a different perspective of World War II and have processed those events according to cultural specific variants, each nation has formulated the same general opinion that Yasukuni is a symbol of Japanese militarism. This memory (based upon historical recollection) has been kept alive for 41 years by the masses, politicians, academicians, and media all over the world. No one group is responsible for writing public memory alone. Instead, each group interacts concomitantly with one another forming a discourse and ongoing dialectic bent on experience, perception, perspective, hearsay and fiction.

Finally, using Yasukuni once again as the modus operandi, Japan's national public memory of Yasukuni has been subjugated to that of international memory. In other words, it does not matter if Japanese officials try to cleanse their histories, cloak their visits in unofficial garb or political jargon, or assert that Yasukuni is a national memorial and deserves the patronage of the state. Yasukuni has been branded globally and that has remained the dominant recollection.

My understanding and interpolation of public memory draws in part from Carol Gluck's lectures on "Master Narratives and Epochal Moments in Modern Japanese History," (1996) and also Gluck's, "The Past in the Present," in Andrew Gordon's, Postwar Japan as History, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 64-95.

forbidden to be patronized by the state or to act as a medium through which state policy is disseminated? Why have prominent statesmen in postwar Japan continually looked to this particular shrine as a source of national unity? Is it an attempt to thwart potentially revolutionary aspects of democracy and postwar social change as Helen Hardacre suggests in Shinto and the State?

Another goal [of the Japanese government to revive the symbolism of Shinto] is the creation of a compelling myth of cultural identity encompassing a formula for the legitimation of the state, one that will again submerge the divisions of gender, class, and ethnicity in the cozy, penumbral illusion of spiritual unity, articulated in the characteristically vague and incontrovertible rites and symbols of Shinto, with special use of the Yasukuni Shrine.⁵

Or, more to the point, is the Japanese government renewing its historical manipulation of religious institutions for the purposes of political indoctrination and ideological construction?

The aim of this study is to re-evaluate the nature of postwar Japanese nationalism through the prism of the ongoing controversy over the Yasukuni Shrine. In order to establish Yasukuni as one of the centers where postwar nationalism is being debated and fashioned, this work will outline Yasukuni's history in the context of postwar political and cultural change, and analyze a report drafted in 1984 by an officially appointed Japanese advisory commission. Appraising the report will involve delineating three schools of thought,

⁵ *Hardacre, Helen. Shinto and the State: 1868-1988. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 9.*

establishing the credibility of the commission members to validate their arguments, and exploring the reasons why a consensus could not be reached. Having assessed the state of the debate, this work will seek to gauge Yasukuni's potency as a symbol in the postwar era and reflect on the nature of Japanese nationalism. It is my contention that the message and mission of prewar Japanese nationalism was not obliterated by an American-imposed Constitution, but persists today, intertwined with the new ideological imperatives of "internationalization" (*kokusaika*).

This study is divided into four chapters that progress forward chronologically. The first chapter presents an historical overview of the Yasukuni Shrine between 1869 and 1945. Originally established as a monument to the loyalists who sacrificed their lives for the restoration of the Emperor and the overthrow of the Tokugawa Bakufu, Yasukuni was steadily transformed into a politico-religious tool for enhancing the authority of the ruling Meiji elite, and later, for supporting the Ministry of War's expansionist policies. Under the auspices of the Meiji government and the Ministry of War, the Shrine was intimately connected with the divinity of the Emperor and shrouded in religious ceremony. This became part of the powerful ideological apparatus wielded by the military to manipulate the country toward war.

Chapter Two surveys the Shrine's history from 1945 through 1984 by examining the demobilization of Yasukuni by SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) and the subsequent measures taken by the *Nihon Izokukai* and elements in the Liberal Democratic Party to revitalize state patronage of Yasukuni. In the wake of war, defeat and occupation, a rising sense of concern over the future of Japanese identity emerged within Japan. To address this lingering problem, reinvigorate Japanese nationalism, and dispel a taboo subject in national affairs, Prime Minister Nakasone presented his "New Vision" of Japan and placed the Yasukuni Shrine at the iconographic center of Japan's new nationalism. This conservative tactic had far reaching domestic and international implications. Nakasone ignited a national debate between conservative and progressive factions by revitalizing traditional values and masking his Japan-centric intentions behind the facade of Japanese internationalization. Internationally, foreign criticism and suspicion applied continuous pressure to the realm of Japan's external relations.

Nakasone was convinced that an international Japan rested on a strong sense of national self-confidence created through economic and technological prowess. He believed Yasukuni represented a formidable cultural center capable of redirecting Japan's energies and harnessing these powers to lead the nation into the twenty-first century. One way in which Nakasone tried to bridge

"traditional reverence" for the war dead (and, by extension, traditional values) with a more forward-looking nationalism was to sanction a commission to study and achieve a consensus on the Yasukuni issue.

Chapter Three analyzes the results of that inquiry which were submitted in a written report to the Diet on August 9, 1985. This section outlines the predominant factors contributing to the commission's establishment and introduces the commission members and their respective political leanings. I will discuss the major issues debated during the commission's twenty-one meetings, and gauge public reactions to their final report from relevant Japanese newspapers of the time. Three schools of thought are clearly presented in that report, suggesting the pluralistic political climate that had emerged in postwar Japan. As I will show, the commission's report demonstrates both how and why the Yasukuni controversy has remained paralyzed for so long. The report further suggests the diffuse nature of postwar Japanese nationalism.

In the final chapter, an evaluation of the Yasukuni Shrine controversy is presented from two perspectives: its potency as a symbol of nationalism in postwar Japan and its blending with the new ideological requisites of internationalization (*kokusaika*). Whereas previous studies have emphasized an evolving "new nationalism" in postwar Japan, excluding traditional symbols of nationalism and the ideology they stood for, this section suggests that the

message and mission of prewar Japanese nationalism has been, to a certain extent, incorporated into the postwar ideological landscape through cloaking it in the guise of internationalization.

In the course of researching this topic, several limitations arose which were addressed as follows. The general framework of this thesis provides a narrative history of the Yasukuni Shrine between 1869 and 1996. Due to the absence of any comprehensive historical survey of Yasukuni in English, I have pieced together an historical picture of the shrine from both English and Japanese sources.

Throughout this study, every effort has been made to translate selected Japanese sources with the utmost accuracy. Any shortcomings are clearly the fault of this author. The major primary source for this project is the commission's official report printed in the 1985 issue of *Jurisuto*. Since the report consists of the anonymous opinions of fifteen commission members, linking any findings to specific members was virtually impossible. Nevertheless, I have tried to compensate for this in two ways. First, I have utilized several germane commentaries accompanying the report which have been written by the same commission members or pertinent members of Japan's intelligentsia. These commentaries served to illuminate related issues and made deciphering the political leanings of the members slightly less ambiguous. Secondly, I have

included biographical sketches on all fifteen members in a separate appendix.⁶

A final point regarding nomenclature is in order. Prime Minister Nakasone was fond of establishing advisory panels to boost his personal political agenda. Although this particular advisory council has been formally called the "LDP Subcommittee on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue,"⁷ I will refer to this commission as the Hayashi Commission, after its Chairman, Hayashi Keizo.

Definitions: Nationalism and the Ideological Process

As one of the most potent forces at work in the modern world, nationalism has been rigorously studied by political scientists, historians and economists. Each group has fashioned its own definition(s) of nationalism while remaining within its own field(s) of expertise. While many comparative studies have been undertaken, the trend has been not to stray beyond one's discipline. According to the political scientist Hans Kohn, nationalism is an historical phenomenon characterized by a sense of pride and patriotism. It is a product of group loyalty and shared consciousness resulting in a strong feeling of national identity and

⁶ *The major source for this information was the Gendai Nihon shippitsusha daijiten 77/84 (Biographical Dictionary of Modern Japan). Tokyo: Nichigai Associates, 1984-85.*

⁷ "Official Yasukuni Visits Discussed by LDP Body," The Japan Times, July 22, 1983.

cultural uniqueness.⁸ Historian Delmer Brown, meanwhile, has described nationalism as an "intellectual and emotional phenomenon," one that does not "become a significant socio-psychological force until the elements [shared cultural possessions, experiences, ideas, beliefs, hopes, and fears] have been activated by social and intellectual developments which place the members of a nation into a close interdependent relationship."⁹ These broader definitions allow for a greater understanding of nationalism and its development at different levels of society and at different historical moments.

Although these definitions can be applied internationally, other factors such as geographical location, ethnic diversity, and cultural specificity seep into the formula and can give rise to variations. In an effort to avoid such pitfalls and to allow Japan's unique variation of nationalism to emerge, I have chosen a general definition with which to work. According to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences:

Nationalism is a political creed that underlies the cohesion of modern societies and legitimizes their claim to authority. Nationalism centers the supreme loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the people upon the nation-state, either existing or

⁸ Kohn, Hans. *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, INC., 1955, p. 9.

⁹ Brown, Delmer M. *Nationalism in Japan: An Introductory Historical Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955, p. 2.

desired. The nation-state is regarded not only as the ideal, "natural," or "normal" form of political organization but also as the indispensable framework for all social, cultural and economic activities.¹⁰

The reasons why nationalism emerges are as diverse as its definitions. In his essay, "Some Recent Approaches to Japanese Nationalism," historian Kenneth Pyle delineates at least six distinct approaches to the development of this phenomenon. For example, nationalism can be the product of cultural disorientation or disruption resulting from interaction with outside cultures; it can be wielded as an ideological weapon by the ruling elite to further its own social class; it can also be an outlet for social duress induced by rapid social change or the uneven pace of development between different social groups or regions.¹¹

These genealogies may help clarify the external manifestations nationalism can assume, but they do not sufficiently explain the internal mechanisms at work. Since nationalism will be treated as a form of ideology in this study, some understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of nationalism deserve attention.

One of the current trends in Japanese historiography is analyzing the

¹⁰ *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. David L. Sills, ed. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: 1968), s. v. "Nationalism," by Hans Kohn.

¹¹ Pyle, Kenneth. "A Symposium on Japanese Nationalism: Some Recent Approaches to Japanese Nationalism." *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 5 (1971): 5-16.

creation of ideology in modern Japan. In other words, scholars are examining ideology as an idea or set of ideas that provide a consistent intellectual framework for viewing the past and experiencing the present, rather than considering history to be a *natural* unfolding of events. Although explained below in theoretical terms, the connection between the construction of ideology and the evolution of the Yasukuni Shrine as a pivotal symbol of nationalism in Japan's pre- and postwar ideological process will be elucidated in succeeding chapters.

In its most conventional sense, ideology constrains or subjects people to a specific socio-political order through shared beliefs, values and ideas.¹² In addition, there must always be two active agents involved: the inventors, those who create and promote the ideology, and, the recipients, those who accept it. For the inventors, ideology serves as a means of rationalizing their rule by disguising it as the natural state of things.¹³ As for the recipients, we must accept that they subscribe, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, to the ideas being prescribed.

A case in point is the ingenuity with which the Meiji oligarchy, and later

¹² Vlastos, Steven. *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986, p. 15.

¹³ John Goodman and Kirsten Refsing. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*. New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 11.

the Ministry of War, constructed prewar Japanese ideology (1868-1945). Their genius rested in their ability to create what Prasenjit Duara has coined a "narrative of descent," whereby the present was re-invented by re-connecting it to the past.¹⁴ In effect, a new history emerged, one that appeared genuine because it successfully grafted tradition to the modern. History appeared to the public as continuous and progressive, but it was also dually designed to legitimate the ideology being professed and, for our purposes, ignite the flames of nationalism.

In Japan's case, this historical transformation was realized by merging traditional values and institutions into the present, thus fashioning a continuous historical narrative in the popular imagination. The Meiji leaders were able to combine myth derived from the past (the Emperor's divinity through his association with an unbroken Imperial line) with national reform and progress (modernization) to the extent that both were imagined by the Japanese to co-exist as one entity. Through ideological channels such as schools and national memorials, like Yasukuni, the government artificially aroused the Japanese populace and transformed the country into a nationalistic state. From this perspective, prewar ideology can be characterized as a political deception pulled

¹⁴ Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History from the Nation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 81.

over the *free* consciousness of the Japanese people. The Japanese were coerced into believing the myth of the Emperor ideology and envisioned their country's reality according to the rhetorical strategies of the ruling elite.

But ideology is not merely a product of false consciousness or a propagandistic deception pulled over the hearts and minds of the people. This definition seems to exclude the recipients from what is clearly a collective enterprise. In order for ideology to take root there must exist a sense of cooperation between the rulers and the ruled. To help increase our field of vision in understanding the fuller implications of ideology, it will prove helpful to briefly examine several approaches found within the range of theoretical possibilities.

Within any society there is a multiplicity of ideologies, each of which has its own values and meanings. But what gives one ideology dominance over the others? Carol Gluck suggests that an ideology becomes orthodoxy when a particular set of ideas receives the majority of consent of the population. Ideological domination is contingent upon the depth to which these ideas have permeated the social consciousness. Citing Gramsci's conception of ideological hegemony, Gluck states:

. . . when a social group is successful in persuading others of the validity of its own world view, force does not greatly exceed

consent. The consent, moreover, so penetrates the society that to many it seems commonsensical, natural, and at times invisible.¹⁵

We must accept the fact that ideology, while at some point a new behavior to be learned, disappears from conscious thought only to be adhered to naturally.

Indeed, as Maruyama Masao asserts, rulers will rule only if their brand of ideology is capable of casting an invisible net over the populace.¹⁶

Conversely, ideologies which become visible, or which loosen their mental and spiritual hold on the populace due to changing historical events, can allow for the emergence of new sets of ideas among the people. In other words, people may once again select from among new sets of ideas being propagated or created and conduct their lives accordingly.

To help clarify this line of thought, consider how the Meiji ideologues were capable of distancing or removing themselves from the waning (yet deeply embedded) Tokugawa system of thought control that guided their everyday lives.

The emergence of the Meiji intelligentsia was due, in part, to their ability to escape one ideological "net" and begin the construction and casting of another.

This was accomplished by exposing, or consciously recognizing the weakened state of Tokugawa thought control and beginning the dissemination of a new set

¹⁵ Gluck, Carol. *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 7.

¹⁶ Irokawa, Daikichi. *The Culture of the Meiji Period*. Princeton: Princeton

of ideas, such as the Emperor ideology. The debilitated state of the Tokugawa shogunate, together with its ineptness in dealing with the encroachment of foreign countries, provided fertile ground for a new ideology bent on national reform and modernization. Whether or not ideological change was a result of *natural* historical timing, it seems fair to conclude that prewar Japanese ideology (Emperor Ideology) enveloped the nation because it promised a new era and an enlightened stage of civilization that steadily progressed toward modernization. As will be demonstrated below, the Emperor ideology was powerful enough to confront the onslaught of Western imperialism and insure the survival of the modern Japanese nation-state.

With this in mind, we can invite another definition of ideology into this theoretical picture. According to Victor Koschmann,

Ideologies not only subject people to a given order. They also qualify them for conscious social action, including actions of gradual or revolutionary change. Ideologies do not function merely as "social cement."¹⁷

In this sense, once ideologies gain public support and begin the construction of daily realities, people can be persuaded to act according to specific ideas on their own accord. They consciously make a choice to abide by rules and support

University Press, 1985, p. 271.

¹⁷ Koschmann, Victor. *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790-1864*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1987, p. 7.

a specific societal order by unconsciously submitting to a system of ideas. This of course hinges on the presumption that these rules have become invisible, or part of the greater social unconscious. The word "persuaded" as used above may harbor negative connotations, but consent on the recipient's part still shows acceptance of the ideology.¹⁸ Ideological acceptance has the dual effect of publically legitimizing the ruling faction and cloaking what is actually a ruler-and-ruled relationship as one built on equality and consensus.

The lines of demarcation between nationalism and ideology as I have described them may seem rather obscure, but this is because they appear to this author as one and the same when analyzing the machinery of prewar Japanese nationalism. Nationalism, as an ideology, was the crucial ingredient necessary to unite Japan and carry her successfully through the transition from a feudal state to one of modernization. Prewar Japanese nationalism was founded on a formula consisting of traditional ethics, modern statecraft, and a touch of fiction. As Gluck has suggested, the Emperor, Yasukuni, and the education system were all contributing agents to nationalism. As prewar Japan's primary ideology,

¹⁸ *Kenneth Pyle identifies six distinct approaches to nationalism and how it is developed. According to what he coins the "interest theory," the ruling elite will wield nationalist doctrine as an ideological weapon to further the interest of its own social class. This theory is heavily influenced by the principles of Marxism and pertains to negative images which may arise over actions motivated through self-interest. Kenneth Pyle. "A Symposium on Japanese Nationalism: Some Recent Approaches to Japanese Nationalism." Journal of Asian Studies, vol. 31, no. 5 (1971): pp. 5-16.*

nationalism provided a cure for Japan's domestic and international ills.

The Yasukuni Shrine has been chosen for this study as one locus among many from which to view Japan's past, experience its present, and speculate on its future. The task of synthesizing the nature of ideology and the role of Yasukuni in perpetuating nationalism occupies the pages of the following chapters.

Chapter I Yasukuni: A Historical Overview, 1869-1945

Today, as in June of 1869, the Yasukuni Shrine stands on the top of Kudan Hill northeast of the Imperial Palace. Rising majestically before a white gravel path leading to the main shrine is a *torii*, a traditional Japanese symbol representing sacred space. Within the compound, two large wooden buildings, a *Honden* (Main Shrine) and a *Haiden* (Hall of Worship) are roofed in copper, surrounded by a wide rectangular veranda, and connected by an open corridor. One might be tempted to conclude, as at least one writer has, that Yasukuni's appearance represents the essence of peace.¹⁹ It is a place that tempts the pedestrian to escape the hustle of inner-city Tokyo life. However, within the Shrine's precincts, cherry trees bearing white tags with the names of Imperial Army Regiments and famous battleships contrast sharply with the sanctuary's external appearance of a shrine dedicated to the promulgation of peace.²⁰

The Yasukuni Shrine represents a peculiar concept of peace, one that is shrouded in over fifty years of an even more peculiar controversy, obscuring, in

¹⁹ Sawafuji, Toichiro. *Iwate Yasukuni iken soshō*, (*Opinion on the Lawsuit between Yasukuni and Iwate Prefecture*), *Shin Nihon Shuppansha*, 1992, p. 158.

²⁰ Buruma, Ian. *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 221.

some ways, more than it explains about modern Japanese nationalism.²¹ The contemporary images painted above describe a national symbol which many Japanese find difficult to speak about because it reflects a dark period of their country's history. For many younger Japanese, their knowledge of the Shrine is dominated by political debates and international recriminations, resulting in confusion or indifference. To gain a greater understanding of the role the Yasukuni Shrine plays in contemporary Japan, it is necessary to recount its long and evocative past, and to trace the evolution of Yasukuni from a symbol of patriotism to an international symbol of aggression.

* * *

In the waning years of the Tokugawa shogunate, while the civil war between the Imperial loyalists and Tokugawa forces spiraled toward the Meiji Restoration, the first recorded Shinto ceremony honoring the war dead took place. In December of 1862, sixty members of the loyalist Tsuwano clan gathered in Kyoto to hold a *shokonsai*, or "spirit - inviting - rite" at the *Reimeisha*, a Shinto funeral hall on Higashiyama. This Shinto ceremony commemorated the spirits of comrades who had died in battle for the loyalist cause since 1858. In 1863, a similar ceremony was observed within the precincts of the Gion Shrine (also in Kyoto), and a small shrine-like structure called a *shokonsha* -- possibly

²¹ Chapman, William. *Inventing Japan: The Making of a Postwar Civilization*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991, p. 231.

the first spirit invoking shrine -- was erected for the occasion; but it had to be immediately destroyed for fear of detection by the shogun's spies.²²

The primary impetus for these ceremonies grew out of respect for fallen comrades and human compassion. They were also a reflection of Restoration Shinto. During the Tokugawa period, the dead had been buried according to Buddhist ritual. However, to leaders of the restoration movement, Buddhism was perceived as a corrupting foreign influence incompatible with the Japanese spirit.²³ To loyalist leaders dependent upon military support from commoners and *samurai*, the Shinto ritual provided them with an indigenous ideological tool to mobilize patriotic sentiments. Used as a means of encouraging dedication and sacrifice to the loyalist cause, *shokonsha* became the physical symbols of group integration, and the accompanying rituals played an instrumental psychological and cultural role in bolstering a sense of patriotism.²⁴

At about the same time, other similar shrines consoling the spirits of the war dead began cropping up in domains that were loyal to the imperial cause. In 1864, thirty-seven shrines were built (of which eighteen were in Yamaguchi) and

²² Woodard, William. "Yasukuni Shrine," *Japan Christian Quarterly*. 37 (Spring 1971): 72-79.

²³ Kitagawa, Joseph M. *Religion in Japanese History*. New York: Columbia University press, 1990, p. 203. and, Woodard, Yasukuni Shrine," p. 76.

²⁴ Goodman and Refsing, *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, p. 26.

2,016 comrades were deified.²⁵ Official ceremonies honoring the war dead continued in Kyoto until the loyalists succeeded in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868. An Eastern Expeditionary Force composed of loyalist troops entered Edo Castle on April 21, 1868. On June 2 of the same year, a spirit-invoking ceremony in honor of those who lost their lives in this campaign against Tokugawa forces at Edo Castle was observed. Subsequently, this particular ceremony came to be regarded as the origin of the Yasukuni Shrine which, in the beginning, was called the Tokyo *Shokonsha*.²⁶

By 1876, some 105 shrines had been dedicated to the spirits of 6,733 loyalist soldiers.²⁷ In many cases, these shrines received funding from the state. According to Hardacre's research on government expenditures for religious institutions, Shinto shrines deemed to be of significant national and Imperial importance regularly received state appropriations. Between 1902 and 1944, annual state appropriations for the Imperial Grand Shrines at Ise steadily increased from 50,000 yen to 230,000 yen. State funds were granted to specific shrines damaged or destroyed by fire or other natural disasters. The Yasukuni

²⁵ *Yamaguchi is the Western-most prefecture on the island of Honshu. The large number of shrines may be related to the fact that many loyalists came from this particular region (Choshu), and because it was the furthest distance from the capital, where the Tokugawa Shogun resided.*

²⁶ *Woodard, "Yasukuni Shrine," p. 76.*

²⁷ *Woodard, "Yasukuni Shrine," p. 76.*

Shrine annually received funds from the Ministry of the Army, and shrines constructed at state initiative, such as the Meiji Shrine, were also supported by the state.²⁸ The increase in shrines and funding indicates a growing concern

among the people for formal commemoration ceremonies and an increasing desire on the part of loyalist leaders to sanction national sentiment and solidarity.

In 1879, after the seat of the new Meiji government had been transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo and the ideological potency of the shrine recognized, its name was changed to *Yasukuni Jinja* (shrine) and it was classified as a Special Government Shrine (*bekkaku kampeisha*).²⁹

The name of the shrine further suggested its national significance. In its constituent parts *Yasu* means "peace(ful)," and *kuni* is "country." Therefore, Yasukuni Shrine came to symbolize a peaceful nation brought about after years of internal strife through the ultimate sacrifices made by fellow countrymen.

* * *

From the moment the Meiji oligarchs came to power they were confronted with a vexing dilemma. On the one hand, they recognized that modernizing the nation to escape potential Western colonization was imperative.

²⁸ Hardacre, *Shinto and the State*, p. 166.

²⁹ Woodard, "Yasukuni Shrine," p. 76.

However, they were also cognizant of the potential danger that economic development would be accompanied by widespread social disruption. The Meiji leaders were well aware of the social consequences accompanying industrialization in other nations, and expected the process to spark similar tensions in Japan.

To counter these adverse effects, the Meiji government invented an elaborate series of imperial myths around the Emperor, instilling within the Japanese what Japanese scholars have called the, *tennosei ideorogii*, or the ideology of the emperor system. Gluck suggests that the heyday of the *tennosei* ideology stretched from 1890, when the Meiji constitution established the new political structures of modern Japan, to 1945, when these structures collapsed with Japan's surrender.³⁰

The emperor system has been analyzed by many scholars. Gluck argues that the ideological landscape of the Meiji period "emphasized diversity, not consensus," and that the emperor ideology represented only one powerful agent among many responsible for the spiritual and patriotic mobilization of the Japanese.³¹ Others, such as Irokawa Daikichi, have suggested that the emperor ideology was an all consuming force, an "illusion" encompassing the

³⁰ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 5.

³¹ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 15.

"entire constellation of political, economic, and educational policies by which the government undertook to rule the people."³² The emperor ideology was a spiritual phenomenon which helps to explain why it captured the public imagination so intensely. Both Gluck and Irokawa agree that the emperor system became part of everyday reality to the people of prewar Japan.

According to Irokawa:

The emperor system as a way of thinking was like an enormous black box into which the whole nation, intellectuals as well as commoners, unknowingly walked. Once within its confines, the corners of the box obscured in the darkness, the people were unable to see what it was that hemmed them in. The emperor system became part of the landscape, disappearing into the Japanese environment until the people thought it was a product of their own village community, rather than a system of control from above.³³

Since the illusion, or *myth*, portrayed the emperor as a figure associated with an unbroken and divine lineage, bestowing upon him an aura of timelessness, the Meiji government could claim their ideology existed from the beginning of time. Moreover, the emperor became the crucial component in what Kenneth Pyle has termed the "technology of nationalism" because the emperor represented an easily understood link between the present and the

³² Irokawa Daikichi. *The Culture of the Meiji Period*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 245.

³³ Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, p. 245-246.

past.³⁴ Throughout the Meiji period, intellectuals and bureaucrats worked adamantly to counter the adverse effects of modernization. Through experimentation with a variety of laws, institutions, ideologies, and policies designed to ameliorate class conflict, absorb new groups into the political process, and promote loyalty to the regime, the Meiji leaders gradually perfected the *technology* of Japanese nationalism.³⁵ In this way, the Meiji government could ensure maximum support from the more traditional rural sectors of the population who were most likely to feel alienated by the government's agenda for modernization. The emperor system thus secured the peripheral and rural regions of Japan to the center.

Pulsing at the core of this apparatus was the much discussed concept of *kokutai*, described by Irokawa as an "amorphous spiritual force" that could be summoned in times of national crisis to prepare the nation and unite the people. *Kokutai* was a "moral concept that constituted the very essence of the state," fusing the emperor and his inviolability with the popular mind through education, politics and social values.³⁶ The emperor ideology's value system was

³⁴ Pyle, Kenneth. "The Technology of Japanese Nationalism: The Local Improvement Movement, 1900-1918," *Journal of Asian Studies*. 33, no. 1 (1973): 51-65.

³⁵ Pyle, "The Technology of Nationalism," p. 5.

³⁶ Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji period*, pp. 245-311.