Yasukuni Shrine

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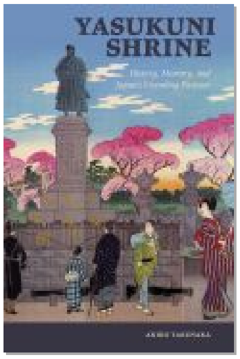

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INTRODUCTION

Yasukuni no
miya ni mitama wa
shizumaru mo
Oriori kaere
haha no yumeji ni

Your noble spirit rests
In the shrine of Yasukuni,
My son.
But why don't you come visit
Your mother every now and then
At least in her dreams.

EULOGY FOR A YOUNG SOLDIER KILLED IN CHINA

This short poem about a mother whose son fell in battle during the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945)[1] was popularized throughout Japan in 1937 by the song "Yasukuni no" (Of Yasukuni). The song is just ninety-three seconds long.[2] Sung by a choir with piano accompaniment in G major, the melody would sound uplifting if it were not for the slow tempo and solemn vocals. The words, in the *tanka* poem structure, are minimalist. Yet, they eloquently convey both the mother's attempt to contain her overwhelming sadness and the reverence that she must now express for her late son. The music for "Yasukuni no" is credited to composer Nobutoki Kiyoshi, and the words are by Ōe Hifumi. Ōe, a career soldier in the Japanese Army, originally wrote the poem as a eulogy for a young comrade killed on a reconnaissance mission in August 1937, just three weeks into active duty. Found in the pocket of the young man's bloodstained uniform was a photograph of his mother with the word *okāsan* (mother) handwritten twenty-four times on the back.[3]

"Yasukuni no" quickly became a familiar requiem. It was featured in the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) *National Songs* (Kokumin Kayō) radio series.[4] In addition to frequent radio broadcasts, the song was popularized through live radio coverage of the enshrinement rituals at Yasukuni Shrine.[5] Soon after Japan's defeat in 1945, however, most of these national songs (including "Yasukuni no"), which were frequently sung and broadcast during the war years, faded from the nation's collective memory.

The song began its second life in 1984—amid the controversies generated by then Prime Minister Nakasone's repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine—when its lyrics were reintroduced as a cultural artifact that symbolized the problem of Yasukuni Shrine. Ōe's son, the late historian Ōe Shinobu, invoked it in the afterword of his 1984 publication, *Yasukuni Jinja* (Yasukuni Shrine) as the inspiration for conducting his own research on the monument. The younger Ōe points out that the mother in the poem, unable to keep the spirit of her fallen son at her side, is hesitantly asking him to visit her from time to time in her dreams. To Ōe, the passage demonstrates how Yasukuni Shrine controlled the lives of Japanese men to the extent that they could not return home even after death and, further, how the shrine indoctrinated people to believe that dying in battle was an act worthy of aspiration and a source of pride.[6] The poem is an apt opening for my discussion of Yasukuni Shrine not only because of its significance during wartime and today but also because of the parallel trajectories of both the poem and the shrine during the war and subsequent decades.

Ōe's analysis of the poem brings up just one of several problems that Yasukuni Shrine has posed in recent decades. Another key issue concerns the Class-A war criminals enshrined there.[7] In commemorating men who were charged with the maximum level of guilt for conspiring to start and wage the war, Yasukuni Shrine has, for its critics, also come to symbolize Japan's militarism in general and the multitudinous war crimes committed during the Asia-Pacific War in particular. It has thus been (and continues to be) the focus of intense political controversy, which on occasion has led to major international-relations crises. Books, articles, and editorials are continually published in Japan on the "Yasukuni issue" (*Yasukuni mondai*). Almost all of them treat it as a political issue in need of resolution.[8] In this book I analyze Yasukuni Shrine as a war memorial. I examine its role in waging war, honoring the dead, promoting peace, and especially in building a modern national identity. Through my study of Yasukuni Shrine, I reflect on the making and unmaking of a modern militaristic Japan and consider the shrine within the context of memory studies—that is, in terms of the varying ways that contemporary Japanese remember the Asia-Pacific War.

My analysis of Yasukuni Shrine grapples with two larger issues relating to war and memorialization. The first is the problem of how a nation-state that was defeated in war acknowledges its military dead. It is a relatively uncomplicated matter for a victorious nation to commemorate its fallen soldiers as sacrifices to a worthy cause. But how does a nation legitimately acknowledge its military dead not only when the war was lost but also when an international tribunal deemed the war a criminal event? The prolonged and heated debate over the design and implementation of the United States' Vietnam Veterans Memorial offers some parallels and demonstrates the difficulties associated with forming a consensus on how to pay tribute to those who died in a controversial and unpopular war.[9]

War inevitably produces death. Military dead have been memorialized at both the personal and the national level throughout the modern era. The dead of victorious wars are commemorated as heroes: Eulogies are written, names are inscribed, monuments are constructed. Heroicizing the war dead is key to mythmaking, which is a vital component of modern nation building.[10] However, the treatment of those who died for the losing side is considerably more complicated. How does it officially remember its war dead? Moreover, how might survivors and succeeding generations remember those who fought and died in what was deemed a war of aggression? Are their deaths devalued when the cause for which they were fighting is discredited? Japan has had to face this issue following its failed imperialist conquests in Asia, which began in the late nineteenth century and culminated in the Asia-Pacific War.

Yasukuni Shrine is central to these questions as it epitomizes the dilemma of how to remember those who fell during this problematic war. At once a Shinto shrine and a war memorial, it is where all of the military-related war casualties of modern Japan (1868–1945) are collectively memorialized as the protective deity of Japan.[11] Until the end of the Asia-Pacific War, an elaborate ritual was conducted once or twice a year to summon the spirits of the war dead from all of the battlefields so that they might be enshrined there as heroes. Children growing up during the war were taught that enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine was the highest honor a Japanese could receive. Regardless of the soldiers' actions on the battlefield, once they died, they were commemorated as god. However, everything changed after Japan's defeat. If it is unacceptable to commemorate the victims of a wrongful war, in what way should the Japanese state publicly recognize these sacrifices? Further, as seen with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, reaching a consensus on how to memorialize these individuals is a difficult task, as there is no one single, national memory of the war. For many, Yasukuni Shrine represents all of the wrongdoings of the Japanese wartime state. Yet for others, it honors the memory of loyal Japanese who gave their lives for their country.

The second issue that this analysis addresses is the relationship between religion and war memorialization in a secular state. Religion typically plays a key role in memorial rituals. In modern Japan, Shinto and Buddhism coexisted in rituals for the dead. As a Shinto shrine, the physical form of Yasukuni Shrine is typical of such monuments. A large *torii* gate stands at the entrance, while a central approach (*sandō*) of approximately five hundred meters connects the main entrance and the worship hall. Along this path, a series of smaller *torii* gates creates hierarchical layers of sacred spaces. The main hall (*honden*), where the spirits of gods are believed to reside, is behind the worship hall. But as I demonstrate in the following chapters, Shinto as a religion was not always consistently visible, mainly because of the ways in which the shrine's spaces were used. Furthermore, the conflation of religion and war memorialization was not problematic until 1945 as Shinto was, until then, considered the official doctrine of the Japanese state.[12] However, the postwar Japanese Constitution prohibits state support of religious institutions and guarantees freedom of religion to all. These constitutional provisions make Yasukuni Shrine's status as a religious institution problematic. At the same time, for current visitors, the spatial configuration as a shrine continues to anchor memories that are colored by religion.

In most critics' discussions, Yasukuni Shrine typically is portrayed as the official propaganda machine of the wartime government. For example, Ōe Shinobu argues that Yasukuni Shrine is problematic because, during the Asia-Pacific War, it was a "political and ideological instrument of the state . . . [that] indoctrinated people into believing that war death was not tragic or distressing but in fact glorious and honorable."[13] Numerous other scholars have similarly portrayed Yasukuni Shrine. In discussions about the controversies surrounding the shrine, the term "Yasukuni" (often interchangeable with "Yasukuni Shrine") alone can refer to anything from the political controversy to beliefs associated with shrine rituals and decisions made by the Council of Worshipers' Representatives (Sūkeisha Sōdaikai).[14] For example, the presence of the names of seven executed Class-A war criminals on the shrine's register is said to glorify militarism. To many East Asian and Southeast Asian countries that suffered from Japan's military aggression during the Asia-Pacific War, interactions between the Japanese state and Yasukuni Shrine signals Japan's desire for rearmament and future military enterprise. Furthermore, the shrine representatives' refusal to grant requests from family members to remove those who are enshrined demonstrates the unconstitutionality of the shrine's activities. All of these discussions ambiguously use "Yasukuni" to describe the cause or source of the issue. In these narratives, "Yasukuni" is responsible for most, if not all, of Japan's unresolved issues from the Asia-Pacific War. What, then, does "Yasukuni" really stand for?

This conflation of the shrine—a group of buildings in central Tokyo—with the discourse on Japan's unsettled war responsibilities is at the heart of the Yasukuni issue. That is, the shrine's compound and the physical structures situated within it did not, on their own, create all of the problems currently associated with this matter. Rather, Yasukuni Shrine was a tool—and one of many—that the Japanese state and the military used to propagate ideological messages associated with warfare in general and dying in battle in particular. The shrine compound provided a space in which to perform rituals and other practices that popularized these ideas among both visitors and those who vicariously experienced the events through mass media.[15] Since 1955 the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has capitalized on the shrine to appeal to particular voting blocs, heightening the shrine's political significance as a result. Nevertheless, it is the physical presence of the shrine that was and continues to be the focus of intense criticism. One proposed solution highlights this fact: the suggested construction of a new national war memorial to replace (or at least divert attention from) Yasukuni Shrine[16]—as if destroying or turning attention away from the physical site would eliminate all of the problems associated with it.[17] Scholars of history, philosophy, international relations, and religious studies, as well as journalists and critics, have written extensively about Yasukuni Shrine. However, most of this writing frames Yasukuni Shrine as a "political problem that needs to be resolved": a framework that conflates the shrine with the political problems of postwar Japan. However, the debates have not yet posed this pertinent question: How would replacing Yasukuni Shrine with a new representative Japanese war memorial, making changes to the existing shrine, or completely severing ties between the Japanese state and the shrine solve the Yasukuni issue? That is, how can the removal of the symbol that represents a problem solve the problem itself? This book identifies and analyzes the strands of political, religious, and other issues that are intertwined with the shrine and its site, which have come to be known as "Yasukuni" or "Yasukuni Shrine."

As a starting point, I identify three components of "Yasukuni": Yasukuni the belief (Yasukuni shinkō), Yasukuni the site (Yasukuni Jinja), and Yasukuni the issue (Yasukuni mondai). The passage by Ōe cited earlier articulates Yasukuni the belief. The men who led the overthrow of the *bakufu,* or shogunate, developed the myth underlying this belief during the last years of the Tokugawa era. During Japan's international wars of imperialism, the myth was gradually formalized into a belief system and was propagated by the Japanese government and military. In the last years of the Asia-Pacific War, the idea that war death and the resulting enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine was the highest honor a man could ever achieve reached its zenith. "Yasukuni the site" refers to the physical space that is both a Shinto shrine and a war memorial, as well as the spatial practices within it. Until 1945 it was a site where militarism was interwoven with technology and spectacle in ways that fascinated its visitors. It was also a site of mourning and remembrance for bereaved family members. In the postwar years, it became a site where the coexistence of political ideology and religious practice generated tension. Finally, "Yasukuni the issue" includes the postwar political problems currently associated with the shrine, such as the presence of the Class-A war criminals' names on the register as well as the other issues mentioned earlier. These three elements are not independent of each other. The shrine site and the associated spatial practices are intertwined with the beliefs and issues. The operators of "Yasukuni the site" are complicit in promoting "Yasukuni the belief" and therefore play a major role in intensifying "Yasukuni the issue."

In this book I examine these three elements on their own and in association with each other, and I scrutinize the complex and dynamic relationships among them over a century and a half. Most discussions of Yasukuni Shrine, and particularly those by its critics, reduce the complex history and memories of Japan's wartime past into one ambiguous "Yasukuni," giving the impression that an intervention into (or severing state ties with) the physical presence of the shrine could resolve all of the issues associated with the Asia-Pacific War. This focus on the shrine—and by extension the wartime military and political leaders who created and supported it—ironically reinforces the narrative of victimhood prevalent in Japan today. Namely, that during the Asia-Pacific War, ordinary Japanese were victims of the wartime state (embodied by Yasukuni Shrine and the Class-A war criminals enshrined there). This stark separation of victim and perpetrator roles in wartime Japan obstructs a necessary effort to reconcile with non-Japanese victims of the war. I explicate this point in the chapters covering the postwar period.

MEMORY AND SPATIAL PRACTICE

Two concepts—memory and spatial practice—are central to my analysis of Yasukuni Shrine. One of the shrine's key roles is that of a war memorial. Particularly in the modern era, memories and sentiments assigned to war memorials vary as much as the monuments themselves. In addition to the collective memories that these monuments are meant to evoke, individual visitors can have their own memories that they bring to these memory markers.[18] As a nationally sanctioned war memorial, Yasukuni Shrine preserved a particular kind of collective war memory for Japan until 1945. Officially, it commemorated the "honorable sacrifices" made to advance modern Japan's imperialist goals and was pivotal in promoting a certain kind of national identity. At the same time, individual visitors, whether or not they were personally associated with any of those memorialized, could have their own memories of and relationships with the shrine. For example, in its early years, some associated the spaces of the shrine with novelty and entertainment; for others, the shrine was a place where they could communicate with sons, brothers, or fathers who died in one of Japan's wars. Even during the postwar years, when the shrine fueled political controversy, it still served as a site for mourning and remembrance. Yet most critics today regard the shrine only in terms of its offensive role in Japan's wartime past. Assigning a single meaning to Yasukuni Shrine obstructs efforts to acknowledge and work through Japan's wartime past. Singling out Yasukuni Shrine in this way overemphasizes the role of one institution and distracts attention from important issues such as reconciliation with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries. Furthermore, it ignores the memorial function, which has been important for many. I suggest a different approach, one that is derived from a more complex and nuanced understanding of Yasukuni Shrine and involves both an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between memory and space and an acknowledgment of the multiplicity of memories and meanings that can be derived from a single space.[19]

In a posthumous essay originally published in 1950,[20] Maurice Halbwachs assumes a precise relationship between memory and space and argues that collective memory is a social construction, shaped by the concerns of the present.[21] But Halbwachs also notes the tension, or perhaps contradiction, that this presentist construction of collective memory engenders: If the presentism of memory were pushed to its limit, there would be no memory at all, no continuity in the representation of the past, and perhaps even no past as such. The so-called past would be no more than a blank screen on which to project the contingencies of an ever-changing present. Theorizing the limit to memory's presentism, Halbwachs invokes space as the fundamental medium of memory, approaching it as a "physical and sensory" presence upon which memories can be projected.[22] Through the medium of space the past takes on an objectified form in the immediacy of spatial cognition and experience. For Halbwachs, to change space is to change memory, and to change memory is to change space: "[T]he altars of the ancient gods must be overturned, and their temples destroyed, if remembrances of a more primitive worship are to be obliterated from the memory of men."[23] Succeeding scholars of memory have also sought to anchor memory in particular sites—Pierre Nora, for example, identified *lieux de mémoire* as sites "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself."[24]

If Halbwachs' assertion holds true, the destruction of Yasukuni Shrine anticipates the obliteration of inconvenient war memories in Japan. Recent theorizations of space, however, suggest a more complex and fraught relationship between memory and space.[25] Space is not the "reality that endures" and that preserves our past, as Halbwachs imagined.[26] Henri Lefebvre, for example, contends that space is a social formation that is produced not only materially but also through representations and social practices.[27] Furthermore, space is not inherently instrumental because it is a result of social practices that take place within.[28] Multiple events affect our understanding of the space of Yasukuni, including the revelation of Class-A criminals' enshrinement, visits by prime ministers, and debate over a new national memorial, to cite some key examples. Over the past four decades, "Yasukuni the issue" has become conflated with "Yasukuni the site," leading the site to become a politically charged issue and resulting in debates that focus on the site's removal or preservation. As collective memory is a social construct shaped by present concerns, the current understanding of Yasukuni is significantly influenced by contemporary political trends. The mediation of collective memory, whether through narration and visualization on the one hand or ritual and ceremony on the other, forms and transforms social space as much as the same space defines and stabilizes memory. Thus, memory can not only reproduce the meanings encoded in social space but also resist, subvert, repress, or displace those meanings. It can even produce novel meanings and spaces. Unlike for Halbwachs and others, a precise relationship between memory and space cannot be assumed but rather must be derived from analyses that incorporate the temporal dimension and consider spatial mediations.

Investigation of the three strands I introduced—belief, site, and issue—not only independently but also together, with particular attention to the shifting dynamics in their relationship, will help us understand how they have become inextricably one concern in recent decades.[29] The physicality of the site has created the impression that both the belief and the resulting issue have always been a singular, unchanging entity fully embedded within the site. Recent debates on this unspecified "Yasukuni" have further reinforced the idea of Yasukuni the site as a Halbwachsian medium that holds memories intact. But the wartime belief, of which the site was an intricate part, should be understood separately from the postwar issue, over which both the site and the belief hold sway.

Representations and social practices, which are instrumental in the production of space, also play a key role in shaping memory. As I outline in chapter 1, in the early conceptualization of Yasukuni Shrine, the belief and the site developed together and, at times, independently of each other. In chapters 2 and 3 I detail the period of Japan's earlier wars of imperialism, during which the site flourished mainly as a space for popular entertainment for Tokyoites, while the belief developed throughout the rest of Japan primarily through ritual, education, and mass media. At the height of Japan's militarism (chapter 4), the site on which rites of commemoration took place was projected throughout Japan via mass media alongside messages bolstering the belief. The spatial practices that took place within the site, therefore, were not always the same as the mediated representations that were consumed by those far from Tokyo. In the postwar decades (chapters 5 and 6), the issue emerged not only from the site itself but also alongside unresolved matters associated with crimes committed by the Japanese military. If the occupation forces had scrapped Yasukuni Shrine—a move that they seriously contemplated—I am certain that we would still have been left with the same problem concerning Japan's unresolved wartime past, only with a different name.

When pundits argue over a replacement for Yasukuni today, they are arguing not about the actual physical space that exists in Tokyo but about an imagined site on which the issue is projected. Of course the issue will not go away with the destruction of the physical space. Fused with the site that currently functions as a screen on which particular kinds of memories are projected, however, the belief and the issue, both of which have continuously changed with the social and political milieu throughout the shrine's existence, seem instead to have frozen in time. Although popular perception of

Yasukuni has never been unitary, Yasukuni the site, as it is represented in most postwar literature, continues to reproduce a very particular memory of the Asia-Pacific War—an official memory of wartime Japan, in which all Japanese were proud to sacrifice their lives for the emperor. Indeed, this strong narrative was associated with Yasukuni Shrine. And according to the shrine's opponents, this is the narrative that indoctrinated wartime Japanese.

But for many others, Yasukuni Shrine does not represent the deception these opponents speak of. For example, in his best-selling book on Yasukuni Shrine, philosopher Takahashi Tetsuya introduces gripping testimony by a widow who lost her husband during the Asia-Pacific War. As a part of the defense for Yasukuni Shrine during a 2002 lawsuit filed at Osaka District Court, war widow Iwai Masuko pleaded as follows: "If you must dishonor Yasukuni Shrine, kill me a million times instead. Hearing just one word that disparages Yasukuni Shrine, I feel my body shredded into pieces. And all the blood from my entire body gushes out and spreads as far as the eye can see—it is the ocean created by blood of the [Japanese] troops."[30] For Takahashi, this statement exemplifies what Yasukuni Shrine does best: It fundamentally alters one's feelings, a change that he called "emotional alchemy (*kanjō no renkinjutsu*)." Because of this, he argues, the emotions of the bereaved family are transformed "from sadness to happiness," training those left behind to be grateful to have had a family member who was able to die in the service of the emperor. He further speculates that this system instilled a sense of desire among Japanese during wartime: the desire to die at war, the desire to have a family member die at war.[31] The widow's comment demonstrates one of the most powerful sentiments on Yasukuni Shrine to be verbalized so many decades after 1945, and it can certainly be used convincingly to condemn the shrine as Takahashi has done. At the same time, it is possible that these powerful emotions of gratitude and pride sustained this widow for decades after the war. It is also possible that the act of holding on to similar emotions made it possible for many other women to survive through the immediate postwar years, impoverished without the family's breadwinner and often with very young children. In the postwar climate in which any association with the Japanese military was an uncomfortable concept in popular consciousness, it is possible that Yasukuni Shrine functioned as a strong consolation, as a sanctuary for those left behind. This does not necessarily mean that these women believed in this myth prior to the death of their husbands, but they perhaps embraced it to help them survive after their loss. I do not mean for this factor to legitimize the existence of the shrine or to defend the wartime ideologies attached to it. I want to emphasize instead the presence of important memories that do not conform to the critics' discourse in order to present the complexities involved in the significance of Yasukuni Shrine.

THE DISCOURSE OF VICTIMHOOD AND COUNTERMEMORY

Teasing apart the issues currently associated with Yasukuni Shrine provides an opportunity to reflect on important matters beyond wartime propaganda and the Class-A war criminals. One postwar by-product of Yasukuni the belief is what Carol Gluck has referred to as the "victims' history": the narrative in which the Japanese suffered from the prolonged war due to the actions of their reckless leaders.[32] It is important to note that this discourse is different from the revisionist narrative (e.g., Japan fought a war of self-defense) in many important ways. I emphasize this for clarification because the use of the term "victim," at least as it relates to Yasukuni issues, is easily misunderstood. That is, it tends to generate an instant response that the narrator of the victims' history is aligned with the kind of history that, for example, the Yūshūkan museum (on the shrine grounds) narrates.[33] In the discourse of victimhood, the Japanese state, as the aggressor, committed numerous war crimes during the fifteen-year war; the people, including generally everyone except the leaders of the wartime government and those found guilty of Class-A war crimes by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, are victims of the Japanese state. Such a discourse contributes to the current predicament, where, although many acknowledge the aggressive and criminal nature of Japan's fifteen-year war, few seem ready to be held accountable for, or willing to act on, Japan's war responsibilities themselves. This reluctance has become even more problematic in recent years, as there are now few Japanese citizens who actively participated in the war. Although most hold their government responsible, lawmakers also seem unwilling to accept responsibility for events that happened before they were born.

In the postwar decades, Yasukuni Shrine has become the perfect scapegoat for the defunct wartime government. In this scenario the victims are not only civilians at home but also members of the military who killed their enemies. I summarize the connection later on. "Yasukuni the belief" also justified military violence by placing little value on human life and bestowing the status of a noble spirit (*eirei*) on all military dead regardless of what they did.[34] Wartime violence, in the Japanese case, yielded two results, both of which involved the loss of numerous lives: massive atrocities inflicted against the enemy and the deaths of many Japanese troops. The violence inflicted on the enemy—most prominently in the Nanjing Massacre, but also characteristic of the reckless strategies in the Pacific Islands warfare—was made possible by devaluing human life. Death on the battlefield made a soldier an *eirei* regardless of his previous actions. Reckless fighting and killing with little regard for one's own survival resulted in massive loss of life for both the Japanese and their enemies.[35]

This ideology, which justified wartime violence, fueled huge losses and enormous grief both domestically and internationally. Of course, this "justification" of violence was not presented or perceived as such during the war. According to official wartime discourse, a soldier's motivation was the honor (i.e., Yasukuni enshrinement) given to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The concept of honorable sacrifice was vigorously disseminated through popular culture, with frequent references to Yasukuni Shrine. The postscript of this narrative in the postwar years led to a different conclusion: Because of Yasukuni, members of the Japanese military perpetrated such wartime violence, which ultimately resulted in the attacks on the homeland; because of Yasukuni, all Japanese (both on the battlefield and at home) suffered during the war. In this narrative, the Japanese are the wartime victims. Only the top government and military leaders are blamed for Japan's colonial ambitions in the Asia-Pacific War and the associated aggression against the enemy. Although few openly expressed dissent, the fact that not everyone fully subscribed to the cult of militarism is also absent from this formulation.

If the majority of Japanese believed themselves to be victims of the wartime government and military, now that the wartime leaders are deceased, there is little popular will in Japan today to address the issues of war responsibility and reconciliation. The conflation of belief, shrine, and issue is pertinent to this point. For Yasukuni's critics in Japan, the shrine represents the wrongdoings of the wartime government and military, which resulted in the suffering of the Japanese people. Internationally, Yasukuni Shrine represents Japan's failure to "adopt a correct view of history," namely, a view that recognizes Japan's war crimes, as well as the threat of future aggression by Japan associated with its rearmament. Although these issues can and should be treated separately, they are currently intertwined in the problematic concept of Yasukuni and give rise to intense criticism that focuses on the shrine and its existence rather than specific unresolved issues of Japan's wartime past.

The discourse of victimhood and the conflation of the shrine and the issue have led many to consider Yasukuni Shrine as the cause of Japan's wartime violence. As a result, war responsibility and blame have shifted from human actors to an inanimate physical structure. Many have condemned the shrine as an institution that forcefully indoctrinated members of the Japanese military to act with wanton disregard for the value of human life and converted unwilling people to members of a cult who uncritically believed in the honor of sacrificing their life for the emperor. In the discourse of victimhood, the prospect of enshrinement at Yasukuni seduced or coerced the Japanese people. To use a term popularized by postwar peace promoters, they were "brainwashed (*sennō sareta*)" or "deceived (*damasareta*)" into participating in the national war effort.[36] They were trained to subscribe to the myth of the honorable fallen, which the wartime government and military propagated. My analysis of Yasukuni Shrine complicates this victims' narrative by blurring the boundary between victim and perpetrator.

In his seminal work on overcoming the German past, Theodor Adorno expressed his apprehension for postwar German society, which, in his view, lacked the capacity to fully and critically reflect on what had happened during the reign of National Socialism. For Adorno, this inability to reflect was a kind of forgetting, a "destruction of memory."[37] I suggest that Japan is still experiencing a similar phenomenon and that the presence of Yasukuni Shrine functions as a convenient tool that aids in this forgetting. In lieu of critical reflection, complex past events are reduced to a simplified and convenient narrative that lays all blame on Yasukuni Shrine. Ironically, arguments by Yasukuni critics, who reduce the complexities of the wartime past, including the suffering inflicted both domestically and internationally, to one institution, result in a form of memory destruction that Adorno had apprehended. And for Japan, highlighting the deception—the brainwashing and the trickery—facilitated the construction of a narrative that conveniently placed the blame on Yasukuni Shrine and the wartime state. Here I am not arguing that deceit did not occur. For many Japanese born during the war, lessons on topics such as Japan's holy war and reverence for the emperor shaped their young minds. Many felt deceived when, in the immediate postwar years, the same teachers, without adequate explanation, began to preach democracy. At the same time, reducing Japan's wartime experience to that of deception does not yield a better understanding of the war period or a productive solution for the future.

Another issue that concerned Adorno was the idea of democracy in postwar Germany. Writing in the 1950s, Adorno believed that because democracy was introduced by the Allied victors, it lacked emotional connections with contemporary Germans. The history of democracy in Japan is similar: The Allied occupation forces introduced the idea, primarily through the new constitution.[38] In the immediate postwar period, the deception narrative helped many to accept this constitution, as well as the fact that nothing positive ensued from all of the suffering and loss they had endured. At the same time, it allowed the Japanese to avoid squarely confronting what they had lived through—an all-out war in which they, too, had participated. The new democratic political structure, which was to transform the wartime government—and the leaders who had deceived them—was a welcome replacement.[39] It not only promised to change society but also validated blaming the government; little compelling reason remained for critical reflection on the wartime past. In Japan as in postwar Germany, the new democracy allowed the people to "turn the page and . . . wip[e the wartime past] from memory."[40]

It is also important to note that multiple motives and concepts were mobilized to advance the war effort, many of which had little to do with Yasukuni Shrine or the emperor. Numerous narratives exist that do not fit neatly into the "people brainwashed by Yasukuni Shrine" framework. Many opportunistically took advantage of the presence of war and used its violence for corporate or personal gain. Wartime Japan's view of the emperor, too, was not uniform. Songs mocking the emperor were enjoyed behind closed doors. Children secretly changed the words to the Imperial Rescript on Education, which they were forced to memorize at school. In most letters from the front, soldiers asked about the well-being of their family members and promised to fight for their country and their family. Most did not mention the emperor.[41] In a poll taken in November and December 1945 on people's reaction to the declaration of surrender on August 15, just 4 percent admitted that they were worried about the emperor or felt ashamed for the defeat or apologetic toward him.[42] Views of Yasukuni Shrine and the emperor were never uniform, even when limited to the fifteen-year period of the Asia-Pacific War. I examine a longer history—from years before its inception to today—in order to demonstrate the diverse ways that the Japanese (and in some cases Korean and Taiwanese nationals as well) have considered Yasukuni Shrine.

Generally, critics have viewed visits to Yasukuni Shrine by the emperor as the primary incentive for soldiers to sacrifice their lives in battle. Yasukuni enshrinement may certainly have functioned as a consolation for those left behind. But, for most soldiers, enshrinement was not in fact the primary motive to die; it was simply a widely accepted outcome of a soldier's death—a view that was cultivated through elementary school education in the decades following the Russo-Japanese War. To feel the obligation to go to war and fight—once conscripted or drafted or in response to a national emergency—is a view that can almost be considered a universal one: an outcome of an intense desire to protect one's own family and others important in one's life. In fact, opposition to the state and the war it waged was somewhat public as many people used rituals and prayer in their attempts to prevent conscription and war death.[43] What, then, did the presence of Yasukuni Shrine mean to the Japanese at war and at peace? In this book I pay attention not only to memories that conform to the mainstream narrative but also to countermemories—memories that construct what Foucault referred to as "effective history": an examination that attempts not to create a linear narrative from origin (Japan's imperialist aspirations, which began in the late nineteenth century) to conclusion (the Asia-Pacific War and Japan's defeat) but instead to "isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles."[44] Such an analysis demonstrates the complexity of history and memory associated with the Asia-Pacific War, a level of complexity that cannot and should not be reduced to one specific shrine.

WAR RESPONSIBILITY, POSTWAR RESPONSIBILITY

As a starting point for discussion of Japan's war responsibility, political theorist Maruyama Masao's 1949 point on Japan's "system of irresponsibility (*musekinin no kōzō*)" remains valid in its succinct portrayal of a system through which all Japanese evaded blame for the war—both its beginning and its ending (Japan's defeat).[45] This system of irresponsibility became apparent during the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, when military personnel of every rank testified that they were unable to interfere with what they described as the "force of circumstances." The locus of responsibility therefore remained nebulous. In the same essay, Maruyama pointed to the shrine as often being a "mere robot who affects other people by 'doing nothing' "—a point that identifies how agency was overly assigned to Yasukuni Shrine in the postwar period.[46] For the general public, however, the tribunals conveniently defined responsibility and identified the names of those responsible—most prominently by identifying Class-A war criminals—while overlooking other major crimes, including many committed in Korea, China, and elsewhere in Asia.[47] The idea that the wartime state was ruled by war criminals convicted by an international tribunal further reinforced support and appreciation for the idea of democracy. Thus, the opportunity for critical reflection was compromised once again. With Japan's normalization of international relations between Korea and China in 1965 and 1972, respectively, the question of war responsibility seemed to be settled. But the situation changed at the end of the twentieth century.

As Carol Gluck notes, the 1990s saw a shift in responsibility from state-to-state claims for compensation, to individuals demanding recognition of harm inflicted on them.[48] But by the time these voices arose in China and Korea, demanding Japanese accountability for crimes committed against their people, the majority of elected officials in the Japanese government had not played any role in the war. They protested that they were being held responsible for actions that had taken place before they were born. How can we begin discussions about coming to terms with wartime crimes in a country full of people born long after the crimes took place? Partly in response to these comments by the postwar generation, in 1998 Takahashi Tetsuya suggested the idea of recognizing the concept of responsibility in terms of "response-ability," or the willingness and ability to respond to others. The postwar generation should therefore respond to the demands from Korea and China, he argued.[49]

Takahashi's suggestion is part of a more recent trend in the topic of Japan's responsibilities for the Asia-Pacific War: what many scholars and activists refer to as "postwar responsibility."[50] Most Japanese today, however, argue that they have no obligation to engage in the war responsibility discourse as they were born after the Asia-Pacific War ended.[51] The lack of concern about both war and postwar responsibility is apparent in a survey that the *Yomiuri* newspaper conducted in 2005, on the sixtieth anniversary of Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. Responding to the question "Who do you think bears a significant amount of responsibility for the Asia-Pacific War?" 67.3 percent of the respondents pointed to military leaders, followed by prime ministers at 33.3 percent and politicians at 27.2 percent. A mere 5 percent attributed significant responsibility to the general public.[52] In the same *Yomiuri* survey, 44.8 percent responded that the Japanese people no longer have to feel responsible for the damage their country inflicted on the rest of Asia during the Asia-Pacific War; as many as 63.0 percent responded that Japanese prime ministers have apologized sufficiently to China and Korea.[53] For them, Yasukuni Shrine justifies and reinforces the idea that a handful of powerful people were responsible for what happened during the war.

The tendency to place responsibility on wartime leaders developed in the immediate postwar years, while many Japanese experienced days and months that were often more arduous than those during the war. Those who managed to live through the war now needed to survive in impoverished postwar conditions, facing even more severe shortages of food, shelter, and medical care. Fear of death lingered, and many died from hunger and illness.[54] The end of the war—or rather, Japan's defeat—created an air of despair, as victory, the all-encompassing goal and belief, had become defunct. It was unclear to many Japanese why they needed to repent. Furthermore, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal identification of specific Japanese as "war criminals"—and Class-A war criminals in particular—who were responsible for the war, simultaneously fostered among the Japanese people a sense of both freedom from responsibility and victimhood.

In his speech at the first national memorial tribute on August 15, 1963, which subsequently became an annual event, Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato cautioned that "although our nation experienced a remarkable development in the areas of culture and the economy that was built upon a foundation of peace, we must never forget that this success was only possible because of the numerous people who died with the belief that they were dying for the glory of our motherland."[55] Ikeda's speech is useful in considering another concept prevalent in postwar Japan: redemption. As John Breen points out, Yasukuni Shrine highlights this redemptive factor by referents such as "cornerstone (*ishizue*)"—a cornerstone of peace and prosperity in Japan today.[56] If the idea of honorable enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine helped some to come to terms with their loss as individuals, the idea of a peaceful society built upon past sacrifices helped to define the war's meaning on a national level. People across the political spectrum could embrace the idea of peace and prosperity. However, the concept of responsibility is noticeably absent from this redemptive discourse. As Ienaga Saburō, a historian who made a lifework of responsibly representing the wartime past in school textbooks, cautioned that, if postwar prosperity came at the expense of the war, those who are able to enjoy this (including the postwar generations) should be willing to take responsibility for the war.[57]

The enshrinement of the Class-A war criminals at Yasukuni in 1978 forged a connection between those wartime military leaders and the shrine, further reinforcing the victim consciousness vis-à-vis not only those leaders but also Yasukuni Shrine. As Yoshikuni Igarashi and others have pointed out, the United States' virtual monopoly on the occupation policies of the Allied nations abetted the Japanese in reinterpreting their war experience as a conflict with the United States, thereby erasing the Asian component from Japanese memories of the war.[58] The United States' attack with atomic bombs intensified the perception among the Japanese people that they were victims of the war.[59] The erasure of war memories in Asia precipitated the ease with which responsibility was dismissed for major atrocities and war crimes, including the Nanjing Massacre, comfort women, and the Unit 731 biological experiments.

In the following chapters I explore this shift in popular consciousness and explicate the complex and often contradictory memories that have resulted in the current popular view of Yasukuni. Toward this end, I disassemble the term into the three elements I introduced earlier: the belief, the site, and the issue. Attention to the construction and destruction of memory, particularly in relation to temporal and spatial practice, is crucial to my critical reassessment of the relationship between Yasukuni Shrine and contemporary Japan's inability to confront its wartime past.

In an editorial on June 21, 2011, in the *Mainichi* newspaper, a Wakayama branch reporter drew attention to the idea that the Japanese people are responsible for the nuclear crises that followed the Great East Japan earthquake of March 11, 2011. Highlighting a Wakayama town that opposed the construction of nuclear reactors in 1988 because residents did not believe the government's assurances about the safety of the facilities, the reporter drew a parallel from discussions about the war responsibility of the Japanese people that followed the Asia-Pacific War. In particular, he referenced the late filmmaker Itami Mansaku, who argued in 1946 that the Japanese people were also responsible for allowing themselves to be deceived by their government: "If we are people that can be fine thinking that 'we were deceived,' we will most likely be deceived again and again in the future. It's likely that we are already beginning to be deceived by another lie."[60] This idea of taking responsibility for having allowed oneself to be deceived is worth exploring. An investigation of ways that people were deceived in the past is an important step toward preventing recurrences. My examination of Yasukuni Shrine's history contributes to this process.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In chapter 1 I trace the beginnings of the myth that developed around Yasukuni Shrine during the Asia-Pacific War: that dying for the emperor results in enshrinement at Yasukuni as a god—the most highly valued of all achievements for a Japanese. I investigate the process through which the idea of a national memorial was developed using memorial practices observed by members of the Chōshū domain (central actors of the Meiji Restoration) in the decade leading up to the restoration. Existing beliefs and rituals associated with death were incorporated into the foundation of the shrine. My close analysis of these early memorial practices demonstrates, however, that the idea of encouraging death by attaching a particular value to it, which ultimately became the Yasukuni myth during the Asia-Pacific War, was not present at the time the shrine was established.

In chapter 2 I cover the two early successful wars of Japanese imperialism (the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895, and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905) in order to examine the gradual process through which the Japanese people came to understand and identify with the ideas behind the shrine. At the time the shrine was conceived, most Japanese had little to do with the men memorialized there; the military conflicts associated with the restoration involved no more than a handful of men from domains far from Tokyo. The intent of the creators, then, was not apparent to most Japanese. But with each victory in the wars against China and Russia, the shrine's grounds were transformed into a key locus for celebrations of war. During these early wars of imperialism Yasukuni Shrine firmly established its position as a site for celebration of the expanding empire by situating itself at the center of a visible network of victory parades and other events that transformed Tokyo into a space of celebration. War death, at the time, was not highlighted.

Around the same time, discourses associated with Yasukuni Shrine began to be disseminated in areas outside Tokyo. (Chapter 3 examines the popularization of beliefs associated with Yasukuni Shrine in areas far from Tokyo, with a focus on local victory celebrations and memorial practices.) Two concepts in particular played a key role in the nationalization of the Yasukuni myth. One was the establishment of a parallel structure between the family and the nation-state. Just as all family members were to respect and obey the father as its head following the Confucian ideal, so all Japanese were instructed to consider their nation as one family with the emperor at the head and to whom they were to demonstrate the utmost respect and obedience. We see here the beginnings of the later idea of sacrificing one's own life for the emperor. Another discourse, more closely associated with Yasukuni Shrine, was the mobilization of the concept of *eirei* (honorable spirit) to urge ultimate reverence for those memorialized at the shrine. But the dissemination of these ideas was a comprehensive undertaking that involved a variety of venues, including education, mass media, and local rituals, as well as the Imperial Rescript on Education and the Meiji Constitution.

The use of performances and celebrations, analyzed in chapters 2 and 3, worked only under certain conditions: successful wars that did not involve a majority of the population. Chapter 4 covers the Asia-Pacific War period, during which all of Japan—both military and civilian—was mobilized for the war effort. I trace one soldier's fate after battlefield death, including cremation, return of the ashes, local memorial services, and Yasukuni enshrinement, with a particular focus on the bereaved family members. To give a fuller picture of cultural practices associated with death during the Asia-Pacific War period, I contextualize this particular soldier's journey using other Yasukuni-related episodes compiled from media sources and material produced by the shrine. During this war, grief over a family member's war death was institutionalized as a national event. Furthermore, participants came to perform an "acceptable" kind of emotional response to war death (e.g., pride rather than grief, joy rather than sorrow). I argue that such performances did not result merely from widespread and strong belief in the Yasukuni myth. Instead, these performances were shaped by organizations, including elementary schools, neighborhood associations, and patriotic women's groups, that exerted pressure on the bereaved to conform to specific conventions of behavior.

An important idea that emerges from this structure is the question of victim and perpetrator, which I deal with in chapter 5. This chapter opens the postwar period of Yasukuni Shrine with a discussion of the "Yasukuni issue." Although the components of the Yasukuni issue are closely intertwined, I focus on attempts to have the names of the dead removed from the Yasukuni register. In particular, I examine a recent lawsuit filed by Okinawans at the Naha District Court (Okinawa) in October 2010, seeking the removal of civilian deaths from the register. The Okinawa case is distinctive because it is the only place in Japan that was invaded by the enemy and simultaneously was the target of the aggressive behavior of Japanese soldiers who refused to protect the civilians. The Okinawa example thus presents an opportunity to examine the complex roles of victims and perpetrators in an all-out war. I also touch upon similar legal suits filed by Korean and Taiwanese families whose members are memorialized at Yasukuni Shrine against their will. The cases focus on Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion: Does Yasukuni Shrine's memorialization of the war dead interfere with freedom of religion, which is guaranteed to the family members of those memorialized? Through a close examination of the deliberations, I also consider the concept of mourning (*tsuitō*) a public death. Do family members possess exclusive rights to mourn? If, for example, Japan had not lost the Asia-Pacific War, those enshrined at Yasukuni would have remained national deaths. Would family members have demanded an exclusive right to mourn had the war been successful?

Memories and narratives of the Asia-Pacific War occupy an important place in Japan today, where many are concerned with the waning of its immediacy. Museums, exhibition halls, and oral history projects attempt to compile such memories and present them in a way relevant to today's youth—the postmemory generations that were born after 1945.[61] Yasukuni Shrine also participates in this effort. Chapter 6 examines recent attempts by the shrine administration and supporters to reintroduce their ideas of memorialization in ways that are relevant to postmemory generations. I introduce the ways that management and supporters of Yasukuni Shrine have attempted to reinvent the institution for the twenty-first century with the younger generation in mind. This revisionist history is finding an increasingly receptive audience in contemporary Japan. I find in this trend the postmemory generations' need for a conservative (and redemptive) discourse for the purpose of not only overcoming their inherited past but also, at the same time, evading the issue of war responsibility, which was inadvertently taken on from previous generations. I suggest here a reciprocal reinforcement between the attempt for the shrine to look back to (draw from) the past to entice its audience and the postmemory generations' desire to reconstruct an idealized past so that they may overcome their inherited trauma.

I conclude the book with a brief epilogue. In recent years, volunteers who consider themselves unofficial guides of Yasukuni Shrine have led tours through the shrine grounds to introduce various monuments and museum displays. Their mission is to use the shrine grounds as a way to discuss various acts of violence and crimes committed by the Japanese military. Through their activities, they reappropriate the space of the shrine and transform the shrine into a countermonument, a site that can be used to question the official narrative propagated by the shrine itself.[62] Through their spatial practice, these guides introduce a new, dynamic way to engage with both the political issues associated with the shrine and Japan's troubled postwar legacies. More specifically, the practices of these activist guides diverge from proposals to either alter the shrine or replace it with a new national war memorial, both of which suggestions have the implicit goal of erasing inconvenient memories by removing the monument that represents them. These practices also diverge from conservative supporters, who strive to maintain the shrine as it is. At the same time, the new narratives focus the blame for the Asia-Pacific War on the shrine, thereby reinforcing the narrative of victimhood and hindering Japan's much-needed efforts to reconcile with the rest of Asia.