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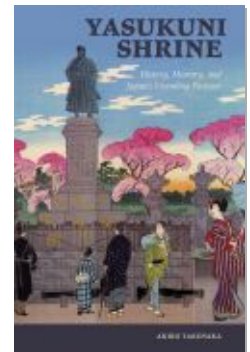
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THREE

NETWORKS OF GRIEF AND PRIDE

Yasukuni Shrine in Regional Japan

During the [Sino-Japanese] war, we elementary school children received the honor of attending the funeral of a fallen soldier, along with the mayor, the district headman, and other volunteers. Because the soldier was from a poor family of a devastated part of town, townspeople did not try to hide their discontent that the town awarded him such an impressive ceremony.

JOURNALIST UBUKATA TOSHIRO, PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

During the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, Yasukuni Shrine, utilizing the latest technology, transformed itself from a popular *meisho* into a military-themed entertainment site that offered sensational representations of battlefield triumphs. It was a space for celebration: of war, of national strength, and of modernity and technology. Together with enhancements to its physical presence, such as the museum and the panorama building, as well as the spectacles and festivals the shrine hosted, the prominence of the Tokyo memorial grew. But most Japanese did not visit it. Unless one lived in central Tokyo, the shrine was not easily accessible. Unlike the Tokyoites depicted in the previous chapter, residents elsewhere in Japan did not frequent the shrine. How did they become familiar with the beliefs associated with Yasukuni Shrine? Or, to put it more precisely, in what ways—other than through cultural representations of the events hosted on and around the shrine grounds—did the Japanese come to understand the ideas of death and memorialization associated with Yasukuni Shrine?

In this chapter I explore the gradual institutionalization of regional death rituals. An examination of rural Japan—areas far away from Tokyo in particular—is crucial for understanding the widespread and growing recognition of Yasukuni Shrine. For the most part, men enshrined there as a result of Japan's earlier wars had never set foot in Tokyo. Family members of most military dead had only mediated knowledge of the shrine. And yet,

by the time of the Asia-Pacific War, the myth of Yasukuni enshrinement was widely known throughout Japan, if not yet fully accepted by all. Drawing on examples from outside Tokyo, I want to explore here the process through which people without easy access to the shrine came to understand Yasukuni enshrinement. The previous chapter deals with the development of “Yasukuni the belief” through “Yasukuni the site”; this chapter examines the belief in the absence of access to the site.

In this period we also see the beginnings of a nationwide network that disseminated ideals associated with the emperor and Yasukuni Shrine to all of Japan: an ideological network that utilized a range of tools from conscription and funerals to victory celebrations and school rituals, with which all Japanese—regardless of where they lived—had an obligatory relationship. This network became more institutionalized in later decades through the construction of *gokoku jinja* (nation-protecting shrines) and war memorials and through organized visits to Yasukuni Shrine by bereaved family members. Live radio programming enabled some rituals to take place simultaneously throughout the Japanese empire, further reinforcing the network (chapter 4). Yasukuni Shrine was central to this network. At the same time, I want to emphasize that the shrine was only one part of a larger system in which mass media, education, and rituals played key roles. My intention here is not to downplay the role of Yasukuni Shrine in imperial Japan but to highlight other actors without which the idea of honorable war death would not have taken root as powerfully as it did.

I begin with two contrasting episodes from journalist Ubukata Toshirō's memoir, *Meiji Taishō kenbunshi* (Observations of Meiji and Taisho Life) in order to provide a glimpse into life in rural Japan at the turn of the century. The first scene is the epigraph that opens this chapter: a town funeral for a soldier during the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895).¹ Ubukata remembers the townspeople's discontent upon observing the elaborate funeral for a son of a poor family, for which numerous people, including town dignitaries and elementary school children like Ubukata, were present. The second episode took place about a decade later: a similar funeral for a soldier from another poor family, killed in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). This time, he recalls, the attendees whispered enviously to each other that the deceased would “now become a god at Kudan (Yasukuni Shrine).”² Ubukata, a fierce critic of Japanese militarism, was expressing his disdain for this quick shift in public opinion. Nonetheless, these two excerpts together demonstrate a dramatic shift in popular consciousness in response to the two wars. In just a decade, the perceived status of the war casualty was transformed: The dead

soldier was no longer just another dead person who was not worthy of the ceremony accorded to him; he had now attained a position of reverence and envy. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, more people were also aware of the idea that the war dead became gods at Yasukuni Shrine.

The impressive ceremony that Ubukata mentions was not unusual at the time. Funerals for the military dead were typically planned and carried out by the town or the village, partially funded by residents' donations. Schoolchildren and members of various local associations attended, sometimes resulting in thousands present for the funeral of a single low-ranking soldier. Prefectural governments often directed mayors and village heads to submit a detailed report of the funeral: a requirement that pressured the local administrators to host events that were as grand as possible.³ These ceremonies can be considered the local equivalent of the multiday festivals at Yasukuni Shrine that followed the *shōkon* rituals. The practice taught participants that war death should be publicly recognized and, further, should be an occasion for commemoration and even celebration rather than mourning. However, as indicated by Ubukata's narrative, not everyone approved of the grandeur of these ceremonies. The idea of reverence for the war dead took hold at an uneven pace throughout Japan. Ubukata's story takes place in Numata City, Gunma Prefecture, almost one hundred miles north of Tokyo. Even though Ubukata and his neighbors could not yet understand the state-constructed significance of war death at the time of the Sino-Japanese War, writer and educator Lafcadio Hearn (Koizumi Yakumo) encountered a quite different situation. One of Hearn's former students, en route to fight in the Sino-Japanese War, asserted not only that was he proud to fight but also that he intended to die for the emperor. The student reassured his astounded teacher that he would be respected and worshipped by all Japanese people after his death. He recalled a visit to a local shrine with fellow conscripts, during which the group silently contemplated the likelihood of being enshrined there as gods (just as at Yasukuni Shrine).⁴ These contrasting episodes related by Ubukata and Hearn do not represent the full spectrum of popular belief at the time.⁵ Many would continue to express dissent or indifference toward the Yasukuni system of enshrinement even in the later years.

This chapter examines attitudes toward war and war death in regional Japan primarily during the years of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars. For example, the elaborate funeral ceremony that Ubukata recalled was central to propagating support at home for imperialist wars. Funerals were not the only opportunity. Structured events from

military-related ones (e.g., victory celebrations; sending troops off and welcoming them home; local funerals) to those that honored the emperor (e.g., recitation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, celebration of imperial holidays, and paying tribute to the imperial portrait) gradually instilled in participants the idea of proudly dying for emperor and nation. General changes in death rituals, precipitated by the arrival of modernization in regional Japan and the resulting structural changes in the family, also affected the ways that people perceived war death. The shift in awareness is not uniform, as I have suggested with the contrasting examples of Ubukata and Hearn, but steadily spread to all of Japan. During this period the state established the social infrastructure needed to support a militarized nation, namely, conscription, education, public events, the legal system, and so on. Chapter 4 takes up how this structure was further institutionalized during the Asia-Pacific War.

CONSCRIPTION: BECOMING A SOLDIER IN MODERN JAPAN

For a soldier in the Imperial Japanese Army or Navy, war death was the route to “becom[ing] the god at Kudan.”⁶ Conscription, the system of securing these soldiers that were to die for imperial Japan, was introduced in 1873, shortly after the completion of Tokyo Shōkonsha.⁷ Conscription was by far the most significant step in the process of militarizing the young nation. The system not only maintained a supply of young men in training but also allowed the state to gather and collect detailed information on every male Japanese.⁸ Most important, it was meant to instill in all Japanese males the sense of their obligation to serve the emperor and the nation as a soldier and possibly die in the process. The importance of having and raising healthy sons eligible for conscription was inculcated among Japanese girls and women. Even the mundane process of paperwork required of every Japanese male became a rite of passage: It was a reminder that being male meant it was necessary to consider the possibility of dying for Japan. Yasukuni Shrine, then, always loomed in the background.

The conscription process was designed to motivate boys and young men to become model citizens by maintaining a healthy body as well as a good academic and social standing. The state categorized all twenty-year-old men into five ranks based on a health and fitness examination.⁹ Unless one was assigned to the fifth rank, created for those who were ill and needed to re-take the examination, a man’s ranking did not change throughout his life. Fitness ranking thus constructed an ideal male image: A patriotic Japanese

male was in the top two ranks and physically eligible for conscription. Only 15 percent of the examinees enjoyed the honor of earning the highest rank.¹⁰ This ranking method transformed the process of becoming a soldier from one based on birth to one based on effort; it also brought soldiers admiration and respect.¹¹ This creation and instilling of desire to fulfill a state-imposed obligation continued throughout the history of Imperial Japan: Men wanted to achieve the highest rank in the physical exam even though that increased the probability of military service and war death; schools wished to become eligible for the imperial portrait; local governments aspired to obtain permission to build war memorials. Similarly, the education system instilled in young men the desire for enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine.

The primary goal of conscription is to meet a need for military personnel. But at the outset, the lottery process ensured that one's probability of being conscripted was quite low.¹² In 1893, the year before the start of the Sino-Japanese War, the lottery selected approximately 20,000 out of the 120,000 eligible men, about a 17 percent chance of conscription. In 1902, the probability rose to 47 percent and to 66 percent in 1910.¹³ Those not conscripted into the military were nevertheless incorporated into the new system, which ranked all adult males according to their physical qualities. In fact, all men between the ages of seventeen and forty were registered for conscription purposes.¹⁴ The required information on each man, which was compiled at the village level, consisted of not only the aforementioned physical qualities but also academic and criminal records, neighborhood reputation, and the family's financial data, including taxes paid, real estate owned, and household income.¹⁵ The information also allowed the state to regard the entire male population as potential fighters for Japan. But more important, for the male population, the process of documenting and submitting information was meant to foster a sense of obligation to the state. Even if men were not conscripted into the military at age twenty, the possibility always remained. This sense of awareness would grow and increasingly tie into awareness of Yasukuni Shrine as Japan experienced more military conflicts.

CELEBRATING WAR IN RURAL JAPAN

Although the idea of becoming a soldier slowly gained acceptance after conscription began, the system was not conceptually tied to Yasukuni Shrine in the minds of most. In the absence of warfare, serving in the military did not necessarily signify fighting in battles or, perhaps more important, dying.

It was not until the Sino-Japanese War that the general public first became aware of the fact that conscripted men would be sent to fight and die in battle. The concept of fighting another country was foreign to many Japanese. For example, when the Sino-Japanese War started in July 1894, twelve-year-old Ubukata Toshirō felt extremely confused. He did not understand why his country and China needed to be at war. Writing as an adult, he recalled that, even as a child, he was aware of China's positive cultural influence on his life: Beautiful artworks from China were in his house; every night his father taught him to read classical Chinese literature; the characters he learned every day at school came from the Chinese language. This confusion was shared with many others in Japan at the time. How then did the general public come to understand the concept of international warfare?

Ubukata's childhood experience is useful here.¹⁶ Once the war started, anti-China sentiments quickly engulfed the boy's life. Various aspects of his day, from classroom education and games with friends to news and entertainment, explained why the war was justified and even necessary. Popular culture quickly shifted to incorporate the theme of war. Woodblock prints depicted courageous Japanese soldiers defeating Chinese troops. In these visual representations, the Japanese soldier was always presented as a tall, dignified man, clad in a Western-style uniform, whereas the Chinese counterpart was shorter, cowardly looking, and dressed in traditional garb. Japanese troops always managed to easily rout their Chinese opponents.¹⁷ In comedic theater, Sino-Japanese War-themed features were simple but popular. On stage, a few Japanese soldiers would fight a large army of Chinese men and always beat their foe with ease. In tears, the Chinese soldiers would apologize and then, following the Japanese soldiers' orders, engage in silly acts and songs.¹⁸ Toys and games featuring the Sino-Japanese War theme were also popular. Similar images ornamented everyday objects such as rice bowls and plates.¹⁹ In all of such renditions, courageous and righteous Japan was at war with the cowardly and corrupt China for the sake of Asia. These kinds of visual representations instructed the general public, uninitiated to the concept of imperialism, on the legitimacy of Japan's wars.

Japan's victories in the ongoing battles also made these jingoistic narratives convincing. The news traveled fast through various media. The young Ubukata was sent out many times a day by his mother to check the latest news posted on the bulletin board at the police station. Every update reported another Japanese victory, he recalls, and people were ecstatic.²⁰ By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, newspapers began to play a key role in the dissemination of information from the front. Even in rural areas,

mailmen delivered extras by train to town halls, villages, and temples. Family members of soldiers gathered every day at their local temple to have the cleric read the newspaper to them.²¹ Such group readings of newspapers and bulletin boards also promoted a collective experience of joy and pride as subjects of the empire.

Reports in the mass media conveyed the grandeur and excitement of local celebrations. The following excerpt from the *San'in* newspaper describes an event in April 1895 celebrating Japan's victory over China at a town in Shimane Prefecture:

At Hiranuma Town, Tatenui District, numerous people, including town residents, civil servants, and school children of various grades, climbed atop Mount Atago hailing the flag of the rising sun from eight in the morning. The townspeople, organized in twenty-one neighborhood associations, all shouted *banzai* to the Empire of Japan and the Japanese people. At the Atago Shrine, the mayor delivered a speech and school principals offered congratulatory addresses. . . . Later, all twenty-one groups gathered at flag-adorned houses and held receptions for military families. After dark, the groups hung lanterns throughout the city, marched to the Izumo Shrine, where they offered supplication for the prosperity of the imperial authority and prayed for the safety of the troops.²²

The excerpt depicts a town filled with energy and excitement, proud of the military accomplishments of their local men, and ecstatic about their nation's prospects. But a careful reading of the passage reveals that participants in the events presented here are not individuals but parts of organized groups such as schools, businesses, and neighborhood associations.²³ Participation in these events was neither voluntary nor spontaneous. Each participant was compelled to partake in the activities and often required to pay for equipment such as flags and lanterns.²⁴ But to the casual reader, the event appears to have been a joyful celebration by willing participants. Furthermore, these representations in the mass media became the lasting image—rather than fleeting moments of discontent experienced by some of the participants—which gradually became institutionalized as the official memory of Japan at war.

Reports of celebrations and other public events were not the only way that the mass media conveyed an image of an entire nation wholly invested in the national cause. During the Russo-Japanese War, newspapers reported on episodes that exemplified the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.

For example, the *Yomiuri* newspaper reported in March 1904 that a sixty-four-year-old woman had taken her own life to lessen the burden on her daughter-in-law, who, in the absence of her husband, worked without sleep to feed their two young children.²⁵ Men reportedly divorced their wives before going to the front so that they could fight without reservation.²⁶ Mothers killed themselves so that their sons could go to the front without worrying about them.²⁷ Also in March 1904 a father sent a tablet of unvarnished wood to his enlisted son with a letter instructing him to “come back as this tablet” (i.e., to die on the battlefield).²⁸ Stories of widowed men killing their children upon enlistment also appeared in print around this time.²⁹ The significance here is not so much the veracity of these incidents, although it is possible that fathers made a desperate decision so their children would not be left alone to suffer and starve, but rather that they circulated as commendable tales, as models for readers. Such episodes later became a staple of mass media reports during the Asia-Pacific War: If the duty of a Japanese male was to fight and die for the emperor, the ultimate sacrifice possible for women and children was to enable men to perform their duties even if it cost them their lives.

Despite these narratives, support for Japan’s wars—or, more specifically, for participating in Japan’s wars—did not grow steadily during these years. In agricultural communities families that lost the main breadwinner to the war often struggled to maintain their land. Even when the men returned home, some refused to go back to their previous farming lives. Others suffered from war trauma, became warped by their neighbors’ adulation, or turned to alcohol and violence. Excluding these extreme situations, the financial burden of taxes, war bonds, and donations sometimes resulted in discontent with state policy. The mainstream media, however, rarely reported such negative sentiments, particularly when they happened on an individual basis.

MOURNING DEATH AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

I opened this chapter with references to two public funerals in a Gunma town. Funerals played a key role in presenting to rural Japan the importance of fighting in and dying at war. These funerals were not private events planned by the deceased’s family. They were official commemorations, organized and executed by town and village associations, town representatives, and military support groups. During the Sino-Japanese War, public funerals required consent from the deceased’s family. But by the time of the

Russo-Japanese War, public funerals were mandatory, and families no longer were allowed to conduct their own rituals.³⁰ For example, in Sakai City, Osaka, the local association of military affairs (*beiji-kai*) conducted both Shinto and Buddhist memorial rites for all of the city's war dead, including those who died of illness while in service.³¹

However, when compared to the last years of the Asia-Pacific War—the years that are most closely associated with enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine—loss of life during Japan's wars at the turn of the century did not have the same significance. In rural Japan, commemorative towers (*gaisen kinenhi*) often had an equally dominant presence as memorial structures.³² This also parallels the presentation of war on the Yasukuni Shrine grounds, where the presence of lives lost was overshadowed by victory celebrations. One obvious reason is the relatively small number of war deaths. During the Sino-Japanese War, for example, war death was something that happened to other people in the community: Of the entire population, the percentage of all war-related deaths of conscripts was about 0.03.³³ For most of the families that lost fathers, husbands, and sons at war, the importance of their loss to the nation was not registered. The death toll rose dramatically during the Russo-Japanese War, when nearly every village lost a man.³⁴ But as I note in the previous chapter, the conceptual tie between war death and Yasukuni Shrine was not yet explicit.

At the same time, popular attitudes toward warfare in general were changing. Wars of imperialism were presented to the Japanese populace in ways that led people to believe they were a positive experience. Some families worried about the fate of their conscripted loved one, and others suffered the loss of their breadwinner, but the vast majority regarded war as a cause for celebration. We see here, too, a parallel between Tokyo and rural Japan. In Tokyo, numerous people visited Yasukuni Shrine to enjoy the entertainment, served with an increasing slant toward militarism, but few attended the *shōkon* rituals. Although war death was still understated at the festivals both in and outside Tokyo, war victory was certainly recognized and celebrated everywhere.

These funerals continued to take on a commemorative structure. Some records show temporary triumphal arches and fireworks during public funerals conducted on elementary school grounds during World War I.³⁵ Food associated with celebration, including red rice with beans (*sekihan*) and red and white sweet dumplings (*kōhaku manjū*) were typically distributed.³⁶ Rituals no longer involved the home of the deceased but were relocated to public places such as a schoolyard or a town hall. Memorial events were

changed from the traditional evening funeral to noontime rites in order to accommodate a larger number of people and to make the experience more uplifting. Some remember funeral processions being as magnificent as victory parades.³⁷ The events were simultaneously individualized and mass produced. Local associations such as the Association of Reservists printed and circulated instructional handouts about the ceremony's procedures. According to these handouts, the program included many commemorative features such as a chorus of schoolchildren, a memorial address by a dignitary, and a display of the deceased's photograph. The memorial address was usually preprinted, so that the reader could merely insert the name and rank of the deceased. Words such as the "state" and "emperor" appeared numerous times in the address, as did "Yasukuni Shrine." Military songs and *banzai* choruses usually concluded the occasions. Crying at funerals also began to be discouraged around this time.³⁸

By taking part in these events and acting as a collective, going through the motions of celebrations together, the participants consciously and unconsciously became an integral part of the nationally sanctioned narrative. The speeches delivered by town officials and school principals, peppered with key words such as "emperor," "honor," "sacrifice," and "Yasukuni Shrine," gradually inculcated the participants with the idea of proudly dying for the nation. Group participation at the local level instilled respect for war death and the sense of being a part of a larger cause, while references to Yasukuni Shrine during these rituals emphasized the importance of the monument and reinforced the conceptual ties between local events and the Tokyo institution. Thus tenets of Japanese imperialism took hold in participants' minds through repeated action, viewing similar performances, and being viewed by others.

WAR, THE EMPEROR, AND YASUKUNI SHRINE IN SCHOOLS

In addition to rituals, popular culture, and mass media, the educational system was instrumental in propagating Japanese imperialism in the emperor's name among inhabitants of regional Japan. For young Japanese, elementary school education was central to the indoctrination of these values. Knowledge of the emperor was just as important as that of Yasukuni Shrine in order for ideas about ultimate sacrifice to take root. Accordingly, instruction on the topic of the emperor took place alongside lessons on Yasukuni Shrine. All lessons associated with these two concepts were presented with an emphasis on producing desire and gratitude. The distribution

of the imperial portrait is a perfect case in point: Although the state ordered schools to receive and carefully maintain the photographs, the task, as mentioned earlier, was presented as something for each school to aspire to and be grateful to achieve.³⁹ In this sense, there is an important parallel between practices involving receipt and maintenance of the imperial portrait and the act of serving in the military (or even being grateful for having a son, a father, or a husband who died in the military for the emperor, as discussed in chapter 4). Furthermore, the portrait and the rituals associated with it, along with classroom education, strengthened the conceptual ties between the imperial institution and Yasukuni Shrine. These experiences reinforced children's understanding of what they were supposed to do (i.e., obediently follow their teachers' rules, no matter how absurd they seemed) and what they were supposed to believe in—that the emperor was the god that they must respect and sacrifice themselves for if necessary. This process of constructing and instilling expectations, as well as creating obedient subjects who respond to these expectations often willingly and with gratitude, resulted in the idea of “institutionalized grief,” which I introduce in chapter 4.

In the classroom, Yasukuni Shrine and the emperor were fundamental to instilling the concept of honorable war death in students. This process was gradual, as was the increase in the military presence in Yasukuni Shrine or the grandeur of local funerals. Classroom instruction was deliberate and systematic. As Japan's modern system of education developed alongside Japanese imperialism, classroom activities and textbooks became the optimal instrument with which to instill state ideologies in the minds of young Japanese. The Elementary School Order of 1886, which required government authorization of all textbooks used in elementary schools, for the first time regulated the curriculum and instructional materials. In 1904 the shrine was included in the first edition of the national textbooks.⁴⁰ For example, the 1904 edition of the fifth-grade Japanese language reader gave a detailed historical and descriptive account of the shrine, including its history as Tokyo Shōkonsha, details of those enshrined, and key structures on the grounds, such as the statue of Ōmura Masujirō and the Yūshūkan Museum. The idea of following in the footsteps of the war dead was already firmly established in the 1910 edition. The fourth-grade ethics reader, for example, introduces Yasukuni Shrine as follows:

Yasukuni Shrine is located on top of the Kudan Hill. Enshrined here are those people who lost their lives fighting for this country. An imperial

messenger visits the spring and fall festivals, and the Emperor and the Empress themselves sometimes visit the special festivals (*rinji taisai*). These loyal warriors have come to be memorialized with special care through these ceremonies due to the Emperor's kind intentions. We must remember the depth of the Emperor's blessings and devote ourselves to our country, following [the example set by] the people who are enshrined here.⁴¹

That is, as early as 1910, children were taught that enshrinement in Yasukuni Shrine was the highest honor they could achieve: one that merited personal visits by the emperor. The third and fourth sentences of the passage explain that those who demonstrated their loyalty by dying while fighting for the nation would be rewarded by the emperor's visits, an honor that is obtained only through death. The last sentence of the passage instructs children to follow those enshrined at Yasukuni—in other words, honor associated with war death was already instilled in the minds of elementary schoolchildren through the myth and symbolism of Yasukuni Shrine. The shrine appeared in almost all editions of state-authorized ethics and language readers, usually in the third or the fourth chapter, so that the lesson on Yasukuni would coincide with the shrine's spring festival in late April.

During the wars against China and Russia, schools also began to introduce concepts associated with memorializing the military dead in contexts outside the classroom. Under instruction from the local government, elementary schools incorporated war-related events into their curriculum, including sending off troops to the front and welcoming them home, offering prayers for victory at local shrines, celebrating war victories, and, perhaps the most important, attending funeral rites of the war dead, as Ubukata had. From the 1910s on, school trips increasingly involved visits to Shinto shrines, not only local ones but also prominent shrines such as Ise, Meiji, and Yasukuni.⁴² Rituals involving worshipping Yasukuni Shrine from afar on annual festival days started in the late Meiji period, and the practice was mandated by the Ministry of Education beginning with the special festival of May 1938.⁴³ Mandatory education was designed so that the children, who had never been to Tokyo, would consider Yasukuni Shrine an integral presence in their lives. Even though the shrine was but one useful component of a larger system of instruction, all of which were intended to transform people into obedient and loyal subjects of imperial Japan, its symbolism was certainly potent: It simultaneously reaffirmed the importance of both the

emperor and the war dead and augmented the social position of the latter by honoring their special relationship to the emperor.

DEATH RITUALS AND MODERN FAMILY STRUCTURE

Classroom education and participation in public events were integral to the dissemination of ideas around Japan's emperor-centered expansionism. But activities such as the celebration of military victories and imperial expansion, as well as the commemoration of the lives lost in the process, do not immediately translate into an acceptance of Yasukuni Shrine's role in relation to war death: that one was to serve the emperor even if it meant death with enshrinement at Yasukuni as a reward and that the Japanese state rather than the deceased's family assumed the role of memorializing such losses. However, the Japanese people had little choice in this matter. Unless one acquired an exempt status, a conscript had to fight during wartime. And if the conscript died at war, a funeral would be conducted by the local administration, and his spirit would be enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine. While not everyone embraced this idea, a great number of Japanese at least acknowledged the fact of the process. For many, Yasukuni enshrinement became a prescribed outcome of war death even if it was not motivation for fighting and dying at war.

In the process of familiarizing the Japanese people with the idea of Yasukuni enshrinement, we again see the use of current customs for the invention of tradition. One method involved strategic application to the Yasukuni myth of folk beliefs about death and the afterlife, as well as the communal rituals and festivals associated with them. Another tradition incorporated into the state-sponsored rites of military death was the *ie* (family lineage) system, a concept central to death-related rituals, particularly in rural Japan. The traditional *ie* system functioned around the *senzo*, the founding male ancestor of each family's patriline, and the *ie* occupied a central place in death-related practices.⁴⁴ This ancestor was the only person that needed to be memorialized each year. Other family members received Buddhist memorial services on specific dates and years after death for a period of thirty-three to fifty years, depending on local custom. After the set number of years, their spirits were considered to have lost their identity and merged with the spirit of the original ancestor. The ancestor was considered as the family god, who would prevent natural disasters and bring luck and happiness. Families annually conducted rites to call back the spirits of ancestors, entertain them with food and music, and finally send them off

again so that they would continue to protect the living and bring good fortune.

During Japan's imperial era, the nation appropriated the system such that all Japanese were to rally around the emperor as the founding father of the nation instead of the *senzo* as the founding ancestor of the family.⁴⁵ This cooption of family ritual took place with relative ease, as the outflow of the young workforce from rural villages to the metropolis in the early twentieth century weakened the *ie* unit. With the establishment of Yasukuni Shrine, the god of Yasukuni (spirits of the war dead) gradually took on the role of maintaining peace for Japan. Instead of the ancestor protecting the family, the Yasukuni god was to protect the nation. Events at Yasukuni are comparable to the ancestral rituals: The semiannual festivals that took place following the *shōkon* rituals are meant to be offerings of entertainment for the enshrined spirits; the traditional attractions such as sumo and fireworks were to appease the spirits. The newer military-themed venues, including the museum, panorama building, and other temporary installations, were not only to celebrate victory but also to commemorate war death.

Many conceptual parallels exist between ancestor worship by *ie* members and Yasukuni enshrinement. Ancestors were memorialized by their offspring as a demonstration of gratitude for their hard work in establishing the *ie* and for being a protector god of the household; in imperial Japan, the spirits of the men who died for the emperor came to receive tribute for protecting the nation. The rituals associated with ancestor worship helped maintain a sense of unity among the *ie* members; local public memorials and their conceptual ties to Yasukuni Shrine promoted national identity. The mortuary tablet of the ancestor was considered extremely important, and family members were taught to protect it at any cost: just as the state later told each school principal to protect the imperial portrait from damage at all costs.⁴⁶ The key structural difference between the traditional rituals and the Yasukuni festivals is how they end: In the ancestral rituals, the spirits are sent back to where they normally dwell; at Yasukuni Shrine, the spirits are not free to depart after the festivals. The spirits of the war dead are held hostage by the state in Yasukuni Shrine (as the mother in the opening epigraph to the Introduction lamented).

The state's takeover of memorialization processes made sense in the context of the changes brought about by modernization and wars of imperialism, particularly for regional Japan. The traditional structure of the family memorial was declining, and increasing numbers of men, who were supposed to maintain the family patriline, were losing their lives at war. As

young men began dying at war, more parents were faced with conducting death rituals for their children. This created a demand for a new form of memorial, particularly in regions where it was taboo for parents to attend their child's funeral. Yasukuni Shrine and other public memorial practices quickly replaced both losses. The nation (*kokka*) gradually came to substitute for the family (*ie*) in war death-related practices. Memorialization of the dead by the nation instead of the *ie* transformed the conventional respect for the ancestral dead into a cult of worshipping the war dead. For the Japanese, the significant deaths were no longer familial. They were national: Those people had lost their lives to establish and later to "protect" the nation. Supporters of this cult of remembrance increased and eventually surpassed the familial form of remembrance as the numbers of honored war dead increased, with the Russo-Japanese War marking the turning point. At this time the modern Japanese state fully appropriated this broadly shared, albeit waning, notion of ancestral worship.

The shift of the family unit from *ie* to the nation was undertaken on a structural level as well. In October 1908 the government initiated its regional improvement movement (*chihō kairyō undō*), which reorganized local organizations such as youth groups (*seinendan*) into state-controlled bodies, including schools, associations of reservists, and morality groups (*hōtokukai*), thus introducing systems of rule within people's everyday life. According to cultural anthropologist Kawamura Kunimitsu, these groups reinforced two concepts for their members: the family-state (*kazoku kokka*) and ancestor worship.⁴⁷ Kawamura defines the *family-state* as a system that posits the nation as an extension of the *ie* system, in which the relationship between the emperor and his subjects parallels that between the ancestor and his descendants. Just as descendants were taught to demonstrate loyalty and filial piety to the ancestor according to the Confucian tradition, so the emperor's subjects were required to show the same qualities to the emperor.⁴⁸ Along with the concept of the family-state, the concept of ancestor worship was highlighted in order to enforce the worship of Amaterasu Ōmikami, considered the mythological ancestor-god of the imperial family.⁴⁹

Along with the deterioration of the *ie* as a concept, the structure of each household also altered in modern Japan. The introduction of the family register system (*koseki seido*) in the early Meiji period reduced the family unit to one household with one head (*ko-nushi*). Through the register, the head of the household was positioned just below the village or town headman (rather than the ancestor), thus incorporated at the very bottom of the administrative hierarchy while the emperor resided at the top.⁵⁰

This reorganization eliminated the ancestor as the object of worship and replaced him with the emperor as the head of the expanded *ie* system. Instead of *ie* members worshipping their common ancestor, each household was to worship the emperor in appreciation for creating and maintaining their larger unit: the nation-state. Instead of the *ie* head conducting funeral rites to allow the newly dead to join the ancestor and all other family members that were dead, the state was to conduct the *shōkon* ritual to have the newly dead join all others at Yasukuni Shrine. The Yasukuni ritual, limited to the military dead, thus created a hierarchy among the dead.

Issued in October 1890, the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku Chokugo), which schoolchildren were required to cite from memory, also contributed to the reinforcement of the family-state concept. A handbook for teachers, the *Commentary on the Rescript* (Chokugo engi, 1891), accompanied the short rescript. The commentary's interpretation of the rescript demonstrates the connection between the family and the state, which the government advocated in relation to the emperor system. For example, the phrase "be filial to your parents" in the rescript was supplemented by a lengthy sixteen-page commentary fundamental to the appropriation of the family unit by the nation-state: "Just as you are at once a subject of his majesty and the offspring of your parents, the state is an expansion of the family unit. A command of the head of the state is no different from a benevolent order by the parents of a family. Therefore, if the Emperor calls upon all you subjects to rise to an occasion, you must listen attentively with deep gratitude, as you would toward your honored father and affectionate mother."⁵¹

In education, the philosophy of the family-state was incorporated into the second edition (1910) of the national textbooks.⁵² In the ethics textbooks in particular, concepts such as "freedom," "progress of society," "competition," and "trust," used in the first edition (1904), were replaced with lessons such as "founding the nation (*kenkoku*)," "the glory of the national polity (*kokutai no seika*)," "maintaining the prosperity of the imperial throne (*kōun fuyoku*)," and "loyalty to the emperor and piety to the ancestor (*chūkō icchi*)."⁵³ In the second edition, the analogy between the family unit and the nation-state was more apparent, particularly in the ethics textbooks. For example, the seventh-grade ethics textbook taught the following: "Our country, based on the family system, forms one large household with the emperor as its head. We, the people, revere the Imperial throne, succeeded in an eternally unbroken line, with the sentiments of veneration that a child has for its parents. In view of this, loyalty to the throne and

filial piety cannot be separated.”⁵⁴ Although textbooks took a turn toward liberalism in the third edition (1918), published during the so-called Taisho democracy period, themes associated with the family-state returned more explicitly in the fourth and fifth editions (1933, 1941).

The modern *ie* system also had a significant legal dimension. The Meiji Civil Law (Meiji Minpō, 1898) stipulated that each family maintain a single surname. The wife was to “marry in” to the husband’s family by taking his surname. Law scholar Hozumi Yatsuka, who played a central role in writing the law, argued that “the national polity of [the Japanese] state is based on the *ie* system. The state is an extension of the family, and the family is a component of the state.”⁵⁵ Hozumi also reasoned that, since the same gods are the ancestors of the emperor and the Japanese people, the act of pledging loyalty to the emperor represents a pledge of allegiance to the spirit of the gods. Hence, the *ie* system, which originally had no genealogical relationship to Yasukuni Shrine or the ancestral gods of the emperor, became incorporated into the emperor system. This incorporation merged the emperor and his people by appropriating a version of ancestor worship at Yasukuni Shrine. The Confucian respect for the ancestor or the family elder was reconfigured as utmost respect for the emperor. With the status of the emperor as the founding father of Japan consolidated, the act of dying at war (for the emperor to protect the country he created) came to be acknowledged as the highest achievement for a Japanese man. Through this series of transformations, Yasukuni enshrinement replaced ancestral worship, and the state created a structured system to commemorate the dead locally and nationally and thereby consolidate the Myth of the War Experience.

INVENTION OF THE *EIREI*

I conclude this chapter with an examination of the term *eirei*, or heroic spirits, which refers to the spirits enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine. *Eirei* consistently appeared in news reports of the war dead and in speeches and eulogies at public ceremonies. While the word *gunshin* (military god) was sometimes used during the Asia-Pacific War to refer to men who died a particularly heroic death (“the Nine Gods of War,” who perished at Pearl Harbor, for example), *eirei* most commonly referred to the typical war dead. But this usage is a modern invention. According to ethnologist Tanakamaru Katsuhiko, the word *eirei*, which today is always associated with the war dead, was not originally used in that context. Dictionaries from the Meiji and early Showa periods, for example, define the word as the spirit of a great or

superior man.⁵⁶ Newspapers used terms such as “war dead” (*senshi no mono*) and “spirits” (*reikon*) to report deaths during the Satsuma Rebellion and the Sino-Japanese War. By the time of the Asia-Pacific War, however, all of the spirits at Yasukuni Shrine were referred to as *eirei*. This invented term further transformed the nature of the war dead by eliminating individuality and transforming individuals into an anonymous collective. As I explain later, it also exonerated the war dead from any wrongdoing they may have conducted during their lives. Today, *eirei* is a representative term that refers to the spirits enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine, as can be seen in the booklet series *Eirei no koto no ha* (The Last Words of the Heroic Spirits), compiled, edited and published by the shrine office. In this section I also introduce the issue of war responsibility, which I explore in chapters 5 and 6. I broach the postwar topic of war responsibility here because it is an important topic that underlies the discussion of the Asia-Pacific War in chapter 4.

The word *eirei* appeared for the first time in the *Kokumin shinpō* newspaper on May 3, 1907, in an article reporting a Yasukuni ceremony after the Russo-Japanese War. Several newspaper articles use the word in 1910, all in relation to those who had died in the war against Russia. But Tanakamaru, who has surveyed the usage of the word, argues that these earlier uses did not equate *eirei* with war dead (the persons) but praised the actions or personal qualities of those who had died.⁵⁷ The first time that the word *eirei* was used to refer exclusively to the war dead was in the introduction to *Yasukuni Jinjashi* (Chronicle of Yasukuni Shrine), published in 1911, in which Navy Minister Saitō Kan writes: “To construct a shrine for the *eirei* who demonstrated great achievements for the nation and to conduct ceremonies for them to praise their deeds and respect their virtue are fine customs that our country has practiced since antiquity.”⁵⁸ Here, the word *eirei* has become synonymous with “war dead” rather than a description of the deceased. Tanakamaru also notes, however, that the main text of the chronicle or other Shinto-related documents does not include *eirei* until the 1930s and concludes that its use was promoted by the military or the media rather than Shinto shrines.⁵⁹ Over time, the status of *eirei* came to embody values beyond heroism, tragedy, or war death. Those who died in war came to be considered *eirei* regardless of their actions. Every *eirei* was remembered as noble, kind to his parents, hard working, and a good student. *Eirei* was a useful word for the purpose of obtaining popular support for wars since it was considered the highest praise for the common soldier. The *eirei* was honored not only at funeral rites and festivals. The household of an *eirei*

received a wooden plaque—inscribed with the words *homare no ie* (house of honor) for army dead and *isao no ie* (house of merit) for navy dead—to hang by the front door, signifying that a man of the house had died at war. Children were instructed to tip their hat or bow when passing by. The connection of the *eirei* to the household alludes to the idea that the *eirei* was supposed to become the household's main breadwinner and eventually someone to be worshipped as an ancestor.⁶⁰ But since, instead of working for the *ie*, the *eirei* had died serving the emperor, he was worthy of respect not only from immediate family members but also from members of the new expanded family, which encompassed all of Japan. Thus, the system of Yasukuni Shrine was to be understood as an expanded and nationalized form of ancestor worship.

Of course, not everyone agreed that every war casualty was a good person worthy of respect. In 1921 political philosopher Yoshino Sakuzō, for example, delivered a scathing critique of the idea that everyone who died at war was a noble soul: “I know a fellow who, while working as a shop clerk, stole money and ran away. He later died at war and is now honored as a god at Yasukuni Shrine. This system, which allows anyone to become a god as long as he dies at war, whether he was a libertine or good-for-nothing while alive, cannot be satisfactory for our ethical ideal.”⁶¹ Yoshino’s commentary met with fierce criticism from readers. Although many—particularly intellectuals—shared his sentiments, most Japanese did not agree with him, not openly at least. But whether they agreed or not, most did not question how it was possible that anyone, regardless of their lifetime deeds, could become a god. How did this “system” work? According to ethnologist Orikuchi Shinobu, the *shōkon* ritual is key to this process. Orikuchi explains that the spirits, which are “wandering through faraway mountains, fields, oceans, and rivers, are called in and enshrined [at Yasukuni] as evidently pure spirits” that would “become gods after three years’ time.”⁶² Orikuchi uses the phrase *akiraka ni kiyoi* for “evidently pure.” The choice of the word *kiyoi* suggests that the spirits are also cleansed in the process of enshrinement. The spirits at Yasukuni Shrine, then, have been cleansed of past wrongdoings, including those committed before the war and the killings and other atrocities committed during the war.

The invention of the *eirei* contributes to Japan’s difficulties in resolving its war responsibilities. According to the logic of enshrinement of the war dead at Yasukuni as *eirei*, as a god that had sacrificed his life for Japan, guilt could no longer be attributed to the war dead. Included at Yasukuni Shrine today are those found guilty of war crimes during the Tokyo

war crimes tribunals and other trials in the months following the war's end. If we subscribe to the belief that the spirits are cleansed in the enshrinement process, those honored at Yasukuni, even the Class-A war criminals, are no longer guilty of war crimes. When then Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro referred to Japan's "war of aggression (*shinryaku sensō*)" during his speech on August 15, 1993, Itagaki Tadashi, then head of the Japan Association of Bereaved Families, protested that the prime minister had "desecrated the *eirei*."⁶³ An acknowledgment of Japan's war responsibilities is not possible according to this logic since it would require recognition of the crimes that the *eirei* committed while alive, which, in turn, would diminish or invalidate the status of the *eirei* as impeccably honorable.

In addition to being cleansed of all acts performed prior to war death, the spirits, once enshrined as *eirei*, lose their individuality. They become a collective ancestor of the Japanese state: the ancestor that sacrificed to establish and protect the family, which is Japan. All military-related war dead, from the foot soldier and the civilian supporter to the commander, have become part of a collective that is defined through the belief in Yasukuni Shrine as propagated by the wartime state. Responsibility for individual crimes, including those during war, no longer exists for the enshrined war dead. Even the Class-A war criminals are no longer individual men culpable for the crimes they committed. The *eirei* system, which created a collective out of all war dead, enables many to point their finger at Yasukuni Shrine—the shrine itself rather than the individuals enshrined there—as the culprit of Japan's wartime aggression. However, it was the presence of a system of practices and beliefs, including Yasukuni Shrine, death rituals, and a variety of media, that fostered the widespread acceptance of *eirei* throughout Japanese society.