
Nation and Sacrifice

The Problem of Yasukuni Shrine in contemporary Japan

On 15 August 2006, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro made an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. No other Prime Minister has ever made as frequent official visits to the Shrine as Koizumi, who has managed to make six visits in six years of being in office, despite all the criticisms he has received both at home and from abroad. Both the Chinese and South Korean governments issued official protests, and continued to express their discontent by canceling the regular summit meeting with Japan.

In contemporary Japan, “the Yasukuni issue” is understood as the problem of Prime Ministerial visits to the Shrine, either on the issue of “the enshrinement of Class A War Criminals” or the legal matters regarding “the separation of religion and the state.” Viewed in these ways, the issue does not appear to be deserving of any philosophical inquiry, but only appears to be a political problem that the state needs to deal with domestically and internationally, or a legal problem related to the Constitution. As I see it, however, it is not possible to reduce the Yasukuni issue solely to political and legal issues because doing so would not only fail to recognize some of the more important dimensions of the issue, but also risks concealing them. What I mean by “more important dimensions” of the issue are, first, the question of “historical consciousness” (*rekishi ninshiki mondai*), or more concretely, the issues of Japanese responsibility stemming from its wars and colonial rule. However, the second and more universal set of questions arising from the Yasukuni issue concerns the “commemoration of the war dead” by the Japanese state, and state orchestrated “mourn-

ing” of the Japanese nationals who lost their lives in the war. While the former addresses the issue of the violence the modern Japanese state perpetrated against “others” as well as against “itself” as a result of being forced to modernize in the face of the Western powers’ encroachment into Asia, the latter concerns not only Japan, but is a universal issue shared by all modern nation-states as agents which conduct war. By starting off with the specific issue of the Japanese Prime Minister’s official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, I intend in this paper to challenge the Yasukuni issue as it is widely understood, and to approach the deeper question of the possibility of deconstructing the inherent “religiousness” of a nation. In other words, the task at hand is to question whether it is possible to deconstruct the logic of “sacrifice” of a nation as an agent conducting war.

1. The Enshrinement of Class A War Criminals

In Japan, Asia and the rest of the world, there is a tendency to represent the “Yasukuni issue” as a problem concerning the enshrinement of Class A War Criminals. This is because the main criticism of the Chinese and Korean governments is “the Prime Minister’s visit to the shrine where the Class A War Criminals are enshrined as gods (*kami*) is a denial of his country’s war responsibility.” (14 Class A War Criminals, including war-time Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki, who were found guilty of being “the primary war criminals” at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, are enshrined at Yasukuni).

However, to frame the issue in terms of the enshrinement of Class A War Criminals in turn means the exemption of the other aspects of the Yasukuni issue. This is exemplified in the comment made by Chinese ambassador Wu Dawei in July 2001: “To pay respects to the common war dead is fine, but the problem is that Class A War Criminals are enshrined together with them.” Similarly, Roh Moo Hyun, the present South Korean President, remarked: “I deeply regret that Prime Minister Koizumi has visited the Yasukuni Shrine. While we understand the demands of the souls of the war dead and of the

bereaved families, the issue is not the same when it comes to war criminals.”

This perspective, which only problematizes the involvement of Class A War Criminals, corresponds to the position often expressed by the Chinese government in the postwar era on the question of war responsibility that distinguishes between “the small number of Japanese militarists” and “ordinary Japanese people”, and argues that only the former is responsible for Japan’s military invasion of China. In 1985, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry remarked that Prime Minister Nakasone’s official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine “would hurt the feelings of many Asian people, including both Chinese and Japanese, who suffered deeply as a result of Japanese militarism.” In this view, apart from “a small number of militarists”, “ordinary Japanese” (*jinmin*) were seen as “victims” of militarism in the same way as “ordinary Chinese” people were. For the Chinese government, this view is supposedly as a message to the Japanese people to promote “Chinese-Japanese friendship,” and, at the same time, implied a logic/rationale for “dissuading” the Chinese people, who suffered so greatly at the hands of the Japanese military, from “ethnic revenge (*minzoku fukushūshugi*)”.

This position can be considered to be a major political concession on the part of China and other victimized countries. At the Yasukuni Shrine, in addition to Class A War Criminals, a large number of Class B and C War Criminals, who were convicted of ordering or carrying out war crimes, as well as senior commanders, including many generals who were not convicted of war crimes but who died in the China War, are also enshrined. As Zun Jianrong at Toyo Gakuen University argues, the idea that the Yasukuni issue could be resolved by separately enshrining the Class A War Criminal from others amounts to “an attempt to bring about a political solution by excluding the question of the war responsibility of those who were Class B and C War Criminals and below.” The former Nakasone cabinet’s proposal of the separate enshrinement of Class A War Criminals (*A-kyū senpan bunshi*) was a politically “rational” response to the Chinese position. Compared to this, present Prime Minister Koizumi’s remarks made during a debate among party leaders in July 2001 are astonishingly irrational:

“According to the feelings of the Japanese people, all those who die become “gods (*kami*)”. The Class A War Criminals were punished in this world by being executed... Is it necessary to discriminate the dead to that extent?”

In the end, the Nakasone cabinet’s attempt at a political resolution through the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals was unsuccessful, because of the refusal of the Yasukuni Shrine itself, which insisted that “once enshrined, the souls cannot be moved elsewhere”, and because of the objections of the families of the Class A War Criminals. The Japanese government has no power to enforce separate enshrinement, because if it did intervene, that would constitute an explicit political intervention into the affairs of a “religious corporation (*shūkyō hōjin*)” and would thus be unconstitutional. The present situation is different from that shortly after the war when Ishibashi Tanzan, who later became Prime Minister as the leader of Liberal Democratic Party, wrote “The Reason for Abolishing the Yasukuni Shrine” (November 1945): at that time, the Yasukuni Shrine was still a state institution, and could have been abolished by a government decision. Ironically, once the Yasukuni Shrine was designated a “religious organization,” the Shrine became free from any government intervention, so even the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals went beyond the influence of anyone in the face of the Shrine’s opposition.

In theory, it is possible that the Yasukuni Shrine could undertake the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals itself. However, if that were to happen, more fundamental dimensions of the Yasukuni issue are revealed. “Political resolutions” among the various governments not only fail to address problems in those dimensions but rather dismiss them—in China and Korea—or conceal them, in Japan. In short, the reduction of the Yasukuni issue to the enshrinement of Class A War Criminals itself means the oblivion of such dimensions.

To begin with, the “political resolution” through the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals is not a solution to the problem of war responsibility, but the diminution of it. Let us suppose that the Shōwa Emperor (or alternately, the present Emperor)

himself carried out an imperial visit to the Yasukuni Shrine after the Class A War Criminals had been removed from enshrinement at Yasukuni. (The ultimate goal of those who demand the Prime Minister's official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine is Imperial Worship at the shrine.) In this scenario, the greatest political problem of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials reappears; namely, the reappearance of the familiar position that attributes all war responsibility to the Class A War Criminals, while completely exempting that of the Emperor, who served as the Supreme Commander of the Japanese Imperial Army (*Daigensui*). Furthermore, the responsibility of "ordinary soldiers" goes unquestioned; they could be seen as victims in the sense that they were conscripted invaders, but nevertheless, they were also perpetrators who contributed to the war by engaging in acts of aggression (*shinryaku kōi*). Moreover, this scenario also implies the nullification of the responsibility of the Yasukuni Shrine, which, under the jurisdiction of the Army and Navy Ministries, functioned as the "War Shrine" and played a decisive role in mobilizing the people into the war through rituals to enshrine as gods soldiers and army civilian employees who "died in devotion to the Emperor and the Nation." As Nonaka Hiromu, the Chief Cabinet Secretary at the time, remarked in August 1999: "Someone must take responsibility for the war. We shall ask the Class A War Criminals to take this responsibility for World War II, and enshrine them separately from others."

Secondly, the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals masks the inseparable relationship between the Yasukuni Shrine and Japanese colonialism in Asia. The Yasukuni Shrine has enshrined the souls of a total of nearly fifty thousand war dead who are of "different nationalities" (*iminzoku*), among them, about twenty-eight thousand are Taiwanese, and twenty-one thousand are from Korea, both ex-colonies of Japan. The request by seven representatives of the indigenous Taiwanese (*Takasago zoku*) war bereaved association to remove their relatives from the list of those enshrined at Yasukuni, which was first issued in February 1979, has been consistently refused by the Shrine for the reason that "they were Japanese when they died in the war." In June 2001, fifty-five members of war bereaved families from South

Korea filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court demanding an end to their relatives' enshrinement (*gōshi zesshi*) at the Yasukuni Shrine. In the petition presented at the court, the Korean families claimed that it is an unbearable humiliation for them that their relatives are enshrined as "heroes who fell in defense of their country" (*gokoku no eirei*), together with the Japanese who were the ringleaders and executors of the invasion and colonial control of Korea. Here, one should take seriously the phrase "together with the Japanese ringleaders and executors." Notwithstanding the fact that the Yasukuni Shrine refuses to consider the removal from enshrinement of those who were mobilized in colonized countries, those whose deaths were not reported nor their ashes returned to families, and those who were enshrined without the knowledge of the bereaved relatives, the Shrine also continues to commemorate as gods the spirits of the commanders and soldiers of the Japanese army sent to acquire colonies and suppress resistance movements alongside their victims. In the *History of the Fallen Soldiers (Yasukuni Jinja Chūkōshi)*, in five volumes, published by the Shrine in 1935, one can see all the names, military units, positions, home prefectures, and dates of death of those in the Japanese Army and Police who were mobilized and died in the acquisition and control of Japan's Asian colonies—ranging from major wars such as the Sino-Japanese War and the "Manchurian Incident", to such incidents as the dispatch of soldiers to Taiwan in 1874, "the Korean Incident" in 1882–1884, the "Conquest of Taiwan" in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese War, the suppression of riots in Korea between 1906 and 1911 around the time of the annexation of Korea, the "Taiwanese Gao-sha-zu", 1896–1915, for the subjugation of aborigines, "the Taiwanese Wu-she Incident" in 1930, and the crushing of "outlaws" (*hizoku*) and "rebels" (*futei senjin*) in Manchuria in 1931–1932. To this date, the Yasukuni Shrine has not changed its view of history that all the wars and colonial control pursued by modern Japan were just. The Tokyo War Crimes Trials only questioned Japan's war responsibility after "the Manchurian Incident" of 1931. Therefore, the debates over the separate enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals makes the critical relationship between the colonial project of modern Japan and the role the Yasukuni Shrine played in it invisible.

2. *The Separation of Religion and the State*

Solely on the basis of previous court cases, the question of whether the Prime Minister's official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine violate Articles 20 and 89 of the Constitution that ensure the separation of religion and the state seems resolved. A Sendai High Court verdict in January 1991 stated that Prime Ministerial and Imperial official visits to the Shrine were "unconstitutional"; a Fukuoka High Court verdict in February 1992 stated official visits as "unconstitutional if continued"; and an Osaka High Court verdict in July 1992 stated that the official visits may be unconstitutional (*iken no utagai*). Furthermore, in a Supreme Court of Justice verdict in April 1997 concerning the Ehime Tamagushiryo lawsuit over the unconstitutionality of making financial offerings at the Yasukuni Shrine, it was judged unconstitutional for an official institution to "give the impression" to "ordinary people" that a particular religious group "was privileged, or that it aroused particular interest." Despite all these rulings, Prime Minister Koizumi has one-sidedly claimed that "I do not think visiting Yasukuni is unconstitutional" and "an activity is not good or bad just because it is religious". In response to his official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, lawsuits are currently being filed to affirm the unconstitutionality of visits to the Shrine, and to prohibit future visits, at the Fukuoka, Matsuyama, Osaka, Chiba, and Naha District Courts, in which more than 1000 plaintiffs are involved, including members of South Korean bereaved families and Koreans living in Japan. On 17 January, 2003, in protest against Koizumi's visit to the Shrine for three consecutive years, 236 people, including 124 Taiwanese, filed a lawsuit at the Osaka District Court.

Naturally, the issue of the separation of religion and the state should be thoroughly pursued, but again, paradoxically, the constitutional issue does not necessarily solve the problems, but tends to give rise to even more difficult problems. Particularly difficult is how to think about the question of whether Japan should establish a non-religious "new site for national mourning" where the Prime Minister

(and Emperor) can mourn the war dead without violating the Constitution. There are a number of variations on this idea, and they can be divided into two groups; the first is to change the status of the Yasukuni Shrine from a religious to a special “non-religious” corporation; and the second is to establish a completely new site for mourning.

Concerning the first option, what would it mean to make the Yasukuni Shrine into a “non-religious” corporation, and would that be possible at all? Hishiki Masaharu, a monk in the Jodo-Shinshu sect of Buddhism and a scholar on religion, identifies three core doctrines of the Yasukuni Shrine (Yasukuni shinkō): [1] the doctrine of the “holy war” that advocates “the military activities of one’s own nation are always justified, and participating in them are noble obligations of the people”; [2] the doctrine of the “glorious dead” (*eirei*) which says that “those who die in battle will be enshrined as gods (*kami*)”; and [3] the doctrine of the “public honoring of the war dead” which says that people should “follow the example of the glorious dead.”¹ Among these three, only the doctrine related to “enshrining the dead as gods” has some connection to Shrine Shinto (*jinja Shinto*), while the doctrines of “holy war” and “public honoring” do not imply any connection to particular religions.

What is important here is that before and during the war, the Yasukuni doctrines and State Shinto had at their core the ideology of “non-religious shrines”: State Shinto became an “over-arching national religion” over all other existing religions, including Christianity and Buddhism. As exemplified in the comment made by the Ministry of Education about an incident in which two students from Sophia University refused to worship at Yasukuni in 1932, it was firmly held that the Yasukuni doctrines and State Shinto “represented patriotism and loyalty” to the Imperial State, and thus, as a national subject, one had to swear absolute obedience, regardless of whether one’s religion was Christianity or Buddhism. Even though it has legally become a “religious organization,” the Yasukuni Shrine today has not altered this self-perception, as suggested by the following remark of one of its

1. Hishiki, Masaharu, *Kaiho no Shukyo e (Towards Emancipatory Religion)*, Ryokufu-shuppan, 1998, pp.70 sq.

priests: “The Yasukuni Shrine is not part of a ‘religion’ in the way that ‘religion’ is defined in the Constitution. The Shrine is part of a ‘way’ that any Japanese should follow. The essence of the Yasukuni Shrine and the content of its religious services remained the same before and after the war, and will not change in the future, even if it is nationalized with the approval of the Yasukuni Shrine Bill.” (Priest Ikeda, August 1969) In this sense, an attempt to “dereligionize” (*hishūkyōka suru*) the Yasukuni Shrine while maintaining the doctrine of “public honoring of the war dead” would be little more than a return to the prewar ideology of “non-religious shrines”. Consequently, it can be said that turning the Yasukuni Shrine into an “corporation with a special status” (*tokushu hōjin*) and making it a “national site of mourning” would cause more problems than simply maintaining its present status as a religious corporation. How about if the doctrine of “public honoring of war dead” is also abolished? Such a measure would never be endorsed by the Yasukuni Shrine, for that would mean the loss of its identity.

What has been proposed in this context is the idea of establishing “a non-religious national site of mourning” which is completely separate from the Yasukuni Shrine, and to make it the “focal point for the mourning of Japan’s war dead.” This idea is important because the Chinese and South Korean governments are endorsing it as a solution to the “Yasukuni issue.” Beyond that, however, the proposal of establishing an alternate site of mourning has an even greater significance in the sense that it separates us from the historical specificities of the Japanese case and allows us to address the more fundamental and universal question shared by all modern states and nation-states on the question of the “commemoration of the war dead.”

Among the three doctrines of the Yasukuni Shrine and State Shinto outlined by Hishiki, it is undeniable that the doctrines of “holy war” and “the public honoring of the war dead” are not only unrelated to any particular religion, but are also promoted, though to differing degrees, by all nations that potentially engage in war. Similarly, if one secularizes the doctrine of *eirei*, the “glorious dead”, by replacing the notion of “god” (*kami*) with that of “hero” (*ei'yū*), it turns into an idea that is widely accepted today and simply amounts to the notion that

“one is revered as a national hero upon one’s death while fighting for one’s country.” In other words, when all the elements that are particular to Japan are taken away from the “doctrines” (*kyōgi*) of the Yasukuni Shrine, we can see it is an ideology that exists in any nation where the ideology that “when one sacrifices one’s life in war for one’s nation, one is publicly honored as a national hero” is actively promoted by the organs of the state. Various sites of state commemoration embody such national ideologies, such as the Arlington Cemetery in the U.S., the Cenotaph in the U.K., the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior below the *Arc de Triomphe* in France, Hyong-Chung Wom in South Korea, Zhong-lie-ci in Taiwan, the “Memorial Hall for the Anti-Japanese War” in China, and so on. At the center of Canberra, the Australian capital, is the Australian War Memorial commemorating Australia’s war dead in all wars since World War I, where a grand ceremony is held every year to the memory of Australia’s war dead. Of course, one cannot neglect the distinction between a war of invasion and a war of self-defense. It would be difficult, however, to say that the Vietnam War, to which America, Australia and South Korea sent troops, was a “just war.” There is a tendency for those who sacrificed themselves in wars of self-defense to be honored more strongly in public.

In *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*,² G. L. Mosse conducts a detailed examination of the process of how a number of states in Europe and America created and fostered nationalism, and how they mobilized their subjects into further wars through the commemoration of the “ultimate sacrifice”, the honoring, and the glorification of fallen soldiers. According to E. H. Kantorowicz, the origin of the doctrine of *Pro Patria Mori* (dying for one’s fatherland) can be traced back to Ancient Greece and Rome. It declined in the Middle Ages, but soon revived in twelfth and thirteenth century Europe and it continued its evolution into the modern age.³ There-

2. Mosse, George L., *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford University Press, 1990.

3. Kantorowicz, Ernst H., *Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought*, in *American Historical Review*, LVI, 1951.

fore, if one looks beyond the particularities of the various historical and present contexts, what emerges is the universal system by which the modern nation-state, as an agent conducting war, prepares for future wars and attempts to secure the loyalty and sacrificial devotion of its people by evoking the memory of the war dead and publicly honoring them as exemplary subjects of the nation. Here, I detect the “religious nature” of the state, or “the state as a religion”: even if the state is separated from any particular religion, or even if the state has completely excluded religious aspects from its politics, the state remains “religious” as long as it can conduct a war as an exercise of its sovereignty. Put differently, the state can be seen as a “god,” and the war dead are the “sacrifices” offered to that god in a religious ritual (*saishi shūkyō*).

3. *Is it Possible to Deconstruct the “God” of the Nation-State?*

The rhetoric of “sacrifice” is the litmus test for the notion of the “nation as a religion.” Take for example the words of Prime Minister Koizumi during his first official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on August 13, 2001: “As I stand before the souls of those people who died in the war believing in the future of their country during those difficult times, I think again about how the peace and prosperity of Japan today is built on their precious sacrifice, and I come here to renew my yearly oath to peace.” If the “peace and prosperity of Japan today” are “built upon the precious sacrifice” of Japan’s war dead, the rhetoric suggests that their “sacrifice” was necessary to establish “peace and prosperity.” The word “sacrifice” (*gisei*) means a live animal offered to a god in the course of a religious ritual, and by being killed, the animal goes through a process of being “made sacred” (*sacri-fice, faire sacré*). The way in which fallen soldiers are worshipped as gods (*kami*) at the Yasukuni Shrine is a clear example of this. As long as the war dead have made “precious sacrifices” for the state, the mechanism that honors “martyrdom” for the state as a “secular god” is maintained. Even if the war dead are not explicitly honored, and instead given only “gratitude and respect”, this mechanism can still operate relent-

lessly. That is to say, as long as this mechanism is in effect and is accompanied by the rhetoric of “sacrifice”, any “non-religious site of national mourning” would nonetheless produce a “national spirit” (*kokumin seishin*) that supports war as a part of the machinery of the “nation as a religion”. We can also say that one of the reasons why the movement to establish a “new national site of mourning” has grown noticeably in contemporary Japan is that it is expected a new generation of “fallen soldiers” will be produced given the future development of Japanese government’s security policy.

The state, as the agent conducting the war (*sensō suikō shutai*), is made up of the people (*kokumin*) who entrust their own fates to the state. In a state where sovereignty rests with the people, the real agent that conducts war is the “nation.” In this sense, the definition of “nation” given by E. Renan’s classic text on the modern nation-state *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* is particularly interesting:

In the past, a common history of regrets and glory, in the future a common destiny to realize; to have suffered, rejoiced and hoped together, these are what are valued more than shared texts or the frontiers created by strategic visions; these are what are understood despite all the diversity within race and language. ... Yes, communal suffering more than communal joy. In the memory of the nation, grief is more valuable than triumph because it bestows obligation, and commands communal effort. Thus, the nation is a large solidarity, based on the sentiments of the sacrifices that have been made, and those that will be required to be made again.⁴

It then turns out that Renan, who was said to have argued for the superiority of the conception of “the nation” based upon the republican principle of “the will” over the German conception of the “nation” based upon “blood rights,” after defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, assumed an alternate notion of “sacrifice” within his understanding of the nation, namely, the “solidarity through blood”. Here, “nation” presumably means those who are prepared for the “obligation” of

4. Renan, Ernest., *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*, Presses Pocket, 1992, p.54.

“sacrificing” themselves in future wars through the “mourning” of those who were “sacrificed” in past wars.

In conclusion, I shall briefly mention an essay written during the formative period of the Yasukuni doctrines. It is an essay by Fukuzawa Yukichi, a leading enlightenment thinker of Modern Japan, entitled “We Should Hold a Grand Ceremony for the War Dead”, and was published on November 14, 1895 in the daily newspaper, *Jiji-Shinpo*, a newspaper issued by Fukuzawa himself.⁵ The essay was written during the period of the formation of the Yasukuni Shrine doctrines. Fukuzawa first mentions that the total number of “our soldiers” who had died in the “Sino-Japanese and Taiwanese Wars” amounted to 6,469 as of September 29, 1895, and then, he expresses his resentment and complains that the accomplishments of those soldiers who died in the wars were unfairly belittled in comparison to the accomplishments of the soldiers who returned in triumph and received the “greatest honor” as well as medals and rewards. He claimed:

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

Why did Fukuzawa see such grand ceremonies as necessary? He continues:

The situation, especially in East Asia, is becoming more precarious by the day and we cannot predict when and in what way incidents

5. Fukuzawa, Yukichi, *The Complete Works*, vol.15, Iwanami-shoten, 1970, pp. 321sq.

will happen. In the unfortunate situation that war breaks out, who should we rely on to defend our country? Since we have no other choice than to rely on the courageous, fearless souls that dare to confront death, to cultivate this spirit is the most urgent task for the defense of our country. To foster such a spirit, as much honor as possible should be given to the war dead and bereaved families so that people would never fail to feel a sense of happiness about falling on the battlefield.

The reason Fukuzawa emphasized the necessity of giving “as much honor as possible” to the bereaved relatives is to make them “feel a sense of happiness” for the lost lives of their beloved. The part following the above excerpt vividly reveals the mechanism by which the grief of the bereaved families is converted into “honor” through the “rituals of commemoration”:

When a commemorative ceremony [*Shōkonsai*] was held in Sakura, there was an old man among the war bereaved. Saying that his dead son was his only child and he was the only surviving parent, the father could not stop crying when he first heard of the unfortunate death of his son in the war. After attending the ceremony, however, he felt honored and went back home content in the feeling that even the loss of his child was nothing to regret. If his Imperial Majesty himself leads a special ceremony, the dead will appreciate the grace of heaven from their graves, and the bereaved relatives will cry in honor, find joy in the death of their fathers and brothers, and the people will be willing to die for their nation when demanded.

About a month after the publication of Fukuzawa's essay, a special grand ceremony was held at the Yasukuni Shrine from 12 December for 3 days for those who fell in the Sino-Japanese War, and the Meiji Emperor as the Commander in Chief worshiped at the Shrine. It was the largest ceremony held since the establishment of the Shrine, marking a major moment in the development of the Yasukuni doctrines and State Shinto.