

## Through the Peoples' Hearts and Memories: The Yasukuni Shrine

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### Abstract

When one visits *Yasukuni Jinja* in Tokyo, the question, “What do you commemorate?” sets in, and although your answer may be very clear to yourself, the action itself carries such great ambiguity that other people’s preconceptions equally so define the answer. “The Shrine for a Peaceful Nation” was established by Emperor Meiji to commemorate those who gave their lives for the nation. In our contemporary times Yasukuni has become shrouded by an ideological aura of the pre-war system as the “citadel of military ideology” which it is perceived to glorify to this day. This heritage has come to taint Yasukuni as a place of commemoration and mourning in the eyes of the peoples who fell victim to the Japanese Army’s adventurism. Even though their protests against visits to Yasukuni are similar, their preconceptions are based on unique interpretations of this shared past. This research therefore sets out to clarify the preconceptions surrounding Yasukuni in Japan and amongst those peoples the Empire most intensively colonised, namely Korea and Taiwan. Moreover, it will grant insights in how their individual collective memories interpret the enshrinement of their own countrymen at *Yasukuni Jinja*.

**Keywords:** colonialisation, commemoration, identity, preconceptions, *Yasukuni Jinja*

“... not only did we suffer the injuries of invasion and colonialism, but to be enshrined in a shrine that symbolises more than anything the militarism of the perpetrator nation is an unbearable humiliation.”

- **Extract from a statement by the Korean organisation of bereaved families**<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Throughout the world, the act of offering your own life for another human being has been regarded as one of the most sacred acts imaginable. To worship “the divine spirits of those who sacrificed themselves for the country,” Emperor Meiji founded Shōkonjo, which would later be renamed *Yasukuni Jinja* meaning “Shrine for a Peaceful Nation,” in Tōkyō in 1869.<sup>2</sup> The shrine houses over 2,466,000 divine spirits, but while many scholars and much of the media emphasise the 14 Class A War Criminals amongst them, its 27,863 enshrined Taiwanese and 21,181 Koreans are often forgotten. In our contemporary times Yasukuni has become shrouded by the ideological aura of the pre-war system as the “citadel of military ideology”<sup>3</sup>—which it is perceived to glorify to this day. In the eyes of the peoples whose nations were colonised and who themselves became part of the Japanese Army’s adventurism this ideological aura remains very strong and equally so defines their view of what one commemorates at Yasukuni. The bereaved families from Taiwan and Korea continue to struggle against the enshrinement of their lost family members. This struggle is even more personal for those who are still alive and who wish their name to be removed from the shrine’s registry.

With these challenges in mind this paper aims to answer the question: “What is the nature of the struggle of Korean and Taiwanese (both aboriginal and Han-Taiwanese) bereaved families with Japan’s colonial past with regards to Yasukuni Jinja?” Based on preliminary research, this paper claims that while Korea and Taiwan have similar wartime experiences and hold similar memories, their people’s struggle is of a very different nature, utilizing distinct forms of protest against the enshrinement of their family members. The scope of this paper is limited

to the specific role Yasukuni and the associated *gokoku* shrine system fulfils in Korean and Taiwanese memory, but also grants attention to the process of mobilisation in these parts of the Japanese Empire. Furthermore, it must be noted that this paper focuses on Yasukuni itself and not the Yushukan War Museum housed within its grounds. An analysis of the manner in which the Yushukan presents Japan's wartime history may provide interesting insights, but the clash of collective memories over this interpretation is of such an immense nature that it would overshadow the true focus of this paper. The same deliberation is made with regards to the particular focus on those who were affected and their descendants rather than their governments. These latter are more limited in their ability to speak out on the issue due to diplomatic concerns. To date, there has been a certain amount of research conducted on the issue of Yasukuni, including J. Breen's study, *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (1995) as well as B. Palmer's *Fighting for the Enemy* (2013), which deals with the subject of those Koreans and Taiwanese who served the Japanese Empire. Most of this research, however, does not observe the unique interconnectedness between Yasukuni and the two nations in the past and present in a comparative manner. The aim here is to provide a multi-perspective characterization of the bereaved families' struggle with regards to the enshrinement of their loved ones at Yasukuni and those elements in Japan's colonial past that have made this situation possible. The paper is structured as follows: a brief introductory section on the clash of identities within Yasukuni itself and the domestic controversies that emerge from it, followed by two interrelated sections on the mobilisation of Koreans and Taiwanese by the Japanese Empire and the nature of their struggle in the past and present with regards to the enshrinement of their compatriots by the Yasukuni system. The commonalities and differences between the Korean and Taiwanese struggle with Yasukuni are summarised in the paper's final section together with an outlook on possible solutions.

### ***Yasukuni Jinja* and the Clash of Identities**

As its name suggests, the "Shrine for a Peaceful Nation" embodies

Emperor Meiji's vision for Yasukuni to serve as a place for the Japanese people to pray for peace and commemorate those who had fallen in the Boshin War of 1868-1869. With Japan still in a fragile state of unity, Yasukuni stood, and still stands today, at the head of over 50 so-called *gokoku* shrines built across Japan. The *gokoku* shrine or Yasukuni system was unique as it was the first time regular people were enshrined including those who contributed to the nation in other forms than military service. Before this time only a handful of heroes from certain clans had small local shrines dedicated to their deeds. Not long after its founding, Yasukuni nonetheless became controversial as it excluded members of the Aizu clan and those who partook in the Satsuma Rebellion. The samurai were officially deemed to be enemies of the Empire, a charge both factions denied as they had remained loyal to the Emperor but could not accept what they perceived to be a governmental power-grab by rival factions. Despite the great contributions prominent members of both Aizu and Satsuma had made to the modernisation and unity of Japan after their clan's defeat, these people never shed the markings of being rebels and remain "unworthy" of commemoration. Reflecting upon the question "What does one actually commemorate at Yasukuni?" at this point, one can wonder whether these 7,751 enshrined souls were being remembered because they had fallen in serving their nation or merely the New Government. A second controversy arose surrounding the obligatory nature of the enshrinement, since it did not require consent by the bereaved family. This issue was especially important for those who had converted to Christianity while they were alive and wished to be commemorated in accordance with their adopted religion. The second wave of enshrinements numbered 1,130 souls following the Taiwan Expedition of 1874. The punitive expedition against the Taiwanese Paiwan aborigines was issued after the murder of 54 Ryukyuan sailors. At the time the question arose whether the Taiwanese who had died serving in the Japanese expedition should also be enshrined at Yasukuni. After the Taiwanese resistance against the Treaty of Shimonoseki that Japan had signed with Qing China, Emperor Meiji decided to decline their enshrinement. Another interesting fact to note is the fact that Japan ordered the punitive expedition after the

murder of the Ryukyuan sailors. At the time the Ryukyu islands were not officially integrated into the state of Japan, but those fallen soldiers were nonetheless classified as having died for the nation. This classification seems to indicate Japan's growing interests in both Ryukyu and Taiwan. Following the second wave, more than 100,000 souls would be enshrined at Yasukuni following a number of military engagements, including the Russo-Japanese War and the Second Sino-Japanese War.

During the pre-war period, the military government, driven by expansionism, regarded its people as subjects who had a moral duty to dedicate themselves to the Emperor and the State without consideration for their own lives. Under this change Yasukuni became increasingly shrouded under the veil of militarism; it offered itself as a beacon to raise morale and foster a spiritual mobilisation. Being remembered as a divine soul not only by one's loved ones but by the Emperor himself was proclaimed as the greatest honour one could receive after death. For those who had experienced the impact of Japanese imperialism, it is this legacy that has most profoundly tainted Yasukuni as a place of mourning. The issue became more problematic when it was discovered that 14 Class A War Criminals had been secretly enshrined in 1978. The souls had been enshrined after the Ministry of Health and Welfare had determined that they would be regarded as "ordinary" war dead who "died in the line of duty." The discovery led to both domestic and foreign outrage but also weighed so heavily on the Japanese Emperor that neither he nor Emperor Akihito has since returned to Yasukuni in person. To resolve this crisis as well as the controversy surrounding the obligatorily enshrinements, the removal of the deities from Yasukuni has often been suggested. When the Japan Society for the War Bereaved, the single largest sponsor of Yasukuni, set up a study group to examine these possibilities, it found that such steps were religiously difficult due to the shrine's specific rituals. These rituals state: "*you can transfer the flame of one candle to another, but the original candle continues to burn.*" What this means is that the ritual maintains that even if the name of the individual soul is removed, the soul itself would still remain with the shrine.<sup>4</sup>

### The Emperor's Subjects beyond the Home

The rhetoric of the Japanese Empire used to describe its relations with other nations in East Asia in terms of a “family.” In such a relation, it becomes almost natural for Japan to be viewed as the family head, guiding the other members of the family towards a common outlook. The use of vague terms such as the family state (*kazoku kokka*) and national body (*kokutai*) enhance the appeal of this notion, since people are free to interpret them as they wish.<sup>5</sup> In seeming contradiction with these notions, however, Japan also promised its colonial subjects a future of equality in which Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, and other family members were treated and respected as being one and the same. In reality, this implied a process of assimilation whereby the family members should mimic the Japanese. Even within Japan itself, patriotic symbols, such as the “Day of Patriotic Services,” were altered so that they became symbols of unity and Pan-Asianism. For example, the concept of a “Public Service Day for Asia” was an attempt to turn the resistance against this process into a collaboration and affirmation of Japan’s war effort.<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, this process was not harmonious or consistent throughout the Japanese Empire. Even in Korea and Taiwan, two of the earliest “family members,” Japan took different approaches towards the assimilation of their populations. As a consequence, the memories associated with this process determine how both Koreans and Taiwanese perceive their undesired place at Yasukuni today.

### The Korean Struggle against Time and Emotion

The Korean Peninsula had been a scene of conflict between Chinese dynasties and Japanese warlords for centuries, forcing the nation to veer between maintaining independence and becoming a protectorate several times in its history. The peninsula became a Japanese protectorate under the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1905 and was officially annexed on 22 August 1910 when Japan demanded Emperor Gojong concede his sovereignty. During the initial years of the annexation, the colonial government primarily focussed on economic policies, such as agricultural land acquisition and industrial advancement while

maintaining order through military rule. Korean cultural identity, however, almost immediately fell victim to colonial attempts to eradicate its existence. The colonial government initiated several policies to enforce the use of the Japanese language and adapted Korean schools to the Japanese educational system which did not allow the teaching of Korean culture, history, or language. The newly introduced household registration system abolished the caste system, but also formally barred Koreans from taking Japanese names under the “Matter Concerning the Changing of Korean Names” proclamation of 1911. The colonial government maintained differentiations such as these for over two decades as they were genuinely concerned that any enablement of the Korean population would foster their desire and demand for political equality “without sharing the responsibilities associated with it.”<sup>7</sup> The naming policy was only reversed in the late 1930s with the rise of the so-called *kominka* programs and the Empire’s drive to gain the “wholehearted loyalty toward the mother country” without which any form of (future) “mobilisation would be incomplete.” The programs attempted to do so through a process of rigorous assimilation of the Empire’s colonial subjects who were “not quite Japanese but perhaps capable of becoming Japanese.”<sup>8</sup> One of the first steps in this process was the adoption of Japanese names under the *sōshikaimei* program as “it would have been unbearable had the Emperor’s Army included persons named ‘Kim’ and ‘Li.’”<sup>9</sup> In later years the *kominka* programs offered the colonial government an alternative to using blatant force to mobilise the Korean population. Perhaps more importantly, the rising importance of the *kominka* programs initiated a shift where Koreans were no longer regarded as colonial subjects who still retained a native identity but rather as imperial subjects with its associated duties.

This shift resulted in the first phase of Korea’s military participation in the form of the Korean Special Volunteer Soldier System in 1938. This system enabled Koreans to take part in military service with combat capabilities. The Army nonetheless remained hesitant to recruit Koreans as they were wary of any socialist or independence sympathisers infiltrating the armed forces. To that end, the application process was quite rigorous with applicants undergoing a physical, an oral, and a

written examination, during the course of which the assessment of their Japanese language proficiency was considered the most critical.<sup>10</sup> Of the 2,946 applications during the first year of the System, only 406 persons were enlisted in the newly-established “Korean Army.”

Year	Applications	Enlisted	Deployment
1939	12,348	613	Korean Armies
1940	84,443	3,060	Korean and Kwantung Armies
1941	144,743	3,208	Korean and Kwantung Armies
1942	254,273	4,077	Korean, Kwantung and Northern Armies
1943	303,294	6,300	To all armies
1943	45,000	-	Naval Attachments

**Table 1.** Korean Volunteer Soldiers (Palmer 2013, 71)

As Table 1 indicates, the number of applicants continued to rise rapidly over the years, although it must be noted that the number of genuine volunteers is undoubtedly inflated. This is because while coercion may not have been a genuine means during the program’s first two years, the preparations for drafted mobilisation led to the implementations of policies in which schools, villages, and other bodies called upon their students and other young men to apply to meet the statistical goals set by the colonial government.<sup>11</sup> Even though an increasing amount of young Koreans applied to join the System, a great many of them lacked the linguistic skills, understanding, and bodily physique to meet the Army’s strict requirements. What was most striking for the colonial government however was the conclusion by some of its bureaucrats, such as Shiobara Tokisaburo of the Education Affairs Bureau, that while “some young men have the self-realisation as Japanese where they are practically equal to that of their Japanese counterparts,” others had not reached the point of truly being the kind of imperial subjects that the Bureau would be comfortable with enlisting into military service.<sup>12</sup> Statements such as these show how the examiners were more than capable of selecting those who expressed “a sincere eagerness to serve.”<sup>13</sup> The recruitment process is often portrayed as being very authoritarian, and yet the colonial government often lacked the means to coerce the Korean population. Nor was it very motivated to use it. By upholding



strict requirements, offering a limited number of positions, and making it clear that this was a long-term process, the applicants were only enticed by the prospect of social and economic benefits they and their families would receive if they were successfully enlisted.<sup>14</sup> This general attitude may also explain why enlisted recruits received very little practical combat training and were instead mostly drilled in the cultivation of an imperial spirit based on Japanese language, history, and customs.<sup>15</sup> Military recruitment remained relatively limited, especially when labour shortages saw the need to recruit Koreans for physical labour in 1939. Labour mobilisation was initially on a voluntary basis but was converted into conscripted service in 1942 through the National Mobilisation Law due to the entrance of the United States in the war and the consequent military mobilisation of Japanese men. Contrary to what many may assume, the labour system undermined the military mobilisation of the Korean population. Enlisting for the labour force exempted them from military service, resulting in a relatively low number of Koreans available for conscription.<sup>16</sup> Other motives to volunteer were the prospect of escaping Korea's poverty, moving to the city, or acquiring the sense of truly becoming part of the Empire.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the war evasion and desertion was highly prevalent amongst volunteers and conscripts. In response, industrialists and the military increasingly used pressure, enforced by other Koreans, to locate and recruit the population. The true extent of the conscripted mobilisation of Korea remains a contested issue since the colonial and Japanese government destroyed much of the documentation after Japan's surrender. In 1953, the Japanese Welfare Ministry estimated that 22,182 serving Koreans had died during the war.<sup>18</sup> This number correlates well with the 21,181 Koreans officially enshrined

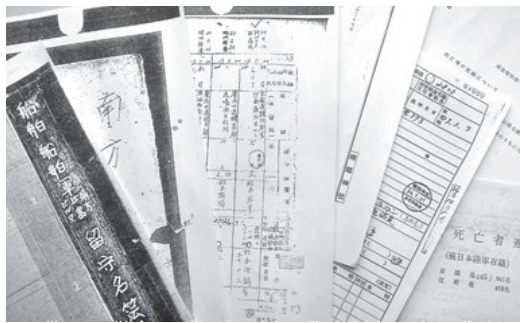


Figure 1. Documents concerning the enshrinement of Koreans at Yasukuni<sup>20</sup>

at Yasukuni; but the vast majority of these war dead were enshrined after the war and it remains unclear when certain souls were enshrined. In terms of implementing the *Yasukuni* system, Korea did not have its own *gokoku* shrine until late 1943 when one was built within the *Keijō Jinja* complex, also known as the Gyeongseong Gokoku Shrine, in Seoul and the *Ranan Gokoku Jinja* in present-day North Korea in 1944.<sup>19</sup>

The enshrinement of Korean souls at Yasukuni would not be revealed to the bereaved families until much later after the war. As a consequence, 252 Koreans, some of whom had been enshrined themselves (even though they were still alive) as well as bereaved families of those who had fallen, filed a lawsuit against the Japanese State in June 2001 demanding the enshrinement's annulment. The lawsuits came to be known as the *Gungun saiban* after the functions those enshrined had fulfilled (soldiers—*gunjin* and civilian workers—*gunzoku*). In May 2006, the Tokyo District Court dismissed the case, as well as the appeal in October 2009, arguing that although the decision for the enshrinement may have been based on information provided by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, it was eventually made by Yasukuni as a private entity—and not the Japanese State. Eleven plaintiffs attempted another lawsuit against the Japanese State and Yasukuni, but the Court also dismissed their case in July as well as its appeal in October 2011. In response to the Court's decision the South Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement that it regretted the decision and deemed it to be an “anti-humanitarian thoughtless decision” that continued to cause significant emotional damage to the bereaved families.

On a personal level, many of the bereaved Korean families express the idea that the human rights of their loved ones have been harmed by the enshrinement. Not being consulted on the manner in which they would like to be remembered impedes on the notion of religious tolerance guaranteed under these rights.<sup>21</sup> From a cultural and historical perspective, one cannot ignore the emotional harm that these Korean souls are enshrined alongside the samurai of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who committed vicious atrocities against the civilian population in the 16th century, as well as members of the colonial and Japanese government, who facilitated the conscription and oppressive policies in Korea

following its annexation. On the diplomatic stage the government of the Republic of Korea has issued various statements of concerns and condemnation of visits by Japanese officials to Yasukuni over the years.<sup>22</sup> The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is not recognised as a nation by Japan and upholds no diplomatic or trade ties with Japan, has gone a step further: in 2013, it referred to PM Abe's visit as being equal to a "war declaration."<sup>23</sup> More importantly, the struggle for the removal of the enshrined is a battle against time. As Nam Yeong-Ju, who found out her brother was amongst those enshrined as late as 2010, stated "When I'm gone, this pursuit is gone too."<sup>24</sup>

### **Taiwan: From Unwanted to Equality in Death?**

Like their ancestors of the Taiwan Expedition in 1874, both the aboriginal and the Han-Taiwanese population were discriminated against by the Yasukuni system throughout the early years of the colonial period. While the Japanese Empire gradually embarked on its policy of cultural assimilation of all its inhabitants, regarding them as imperial subjects regardless of ethnicity, the Taiwanese were still denied enshrinement at Yasukuni due to their continued resistance against the Japanese presence on the island. This discrimination became particularly evident in 1908 when the colonial government requested the enshrinement of two Han-Taiwanese police officers who had lost their lives while fighting local insurgents in service of the Empire. The Army Ministry, which was tasked with handling such requests, initially opposed their enshrinement. After two years of back-and-forth communication, however, it finally agreed—on condition that aboriginals would continue to be excluded. In March 1911, however, the Imperial Household, which held final say in the matter, turned the request down. The Household's decision seems to indicate that a status quo had been established which excluded imperial subjects from the colonies to truly become equal to the Japanese dead. It was not until 1928 that these souls received a place of remembrance when the colonial government established *Kenkō Jinja*, also known as Chienkung Shrine. Unlike the *gokoku* shrines, *Kenkō Jinja* was initially not part of the Yasukuni system. The shrine was managed by the



**Figure 2.** Postcard of Kenko Shrine  
(date unknown, from author's private collection)

colonial government and housed the souls of about 16,000 spirits, of which around 3,000 were Han-Taiwanese and 300 aboriginals, who had given their lives during the invasion of Taiwan in 1895 and the various uprisings

afterwards. Since the shrine was not truly a part of the Yasukuni system, its architecture was also very different from that of the *gokoku* shrines. As one can see in from the postcard above, *Kenkō Jinja* does not abide by traditional Shinto architecture. It consists of a mixture of not only Chinese and Japanese elements, such as the three-gated *torii*, but even Western elements, such as the dome-shaped roof.<sup>25</sup> The shrine continued to serve its purpose until the end of the war. Although it was not destroyed or demolished, it was repurposed to serve as a building devoted to Taiwan's national education.

The discrimination against the Taiwanese by the Yasukuni system came to an end when the war effort demanded the mobilisation of the colonial population. The initial incorporation of the Taiwanese into the Japanese wartime apparatus was introduced in 1937 when the Imperial Army omitted its ban on recruiting Taiwanese for military service. As the Army ventured further into mainland China, it saw a need for translators who could speak Min, Cantonese, or Mandarin. Many Taiwanese would eventually fulfil these functions while the Army maintained a ban on their combative capacities. By October 1939, the Japanese Empire needed both labour and technical talent throughout its territories and sought to acquire these things by means of its Ordinance for Drafting Nationals granting the Taiwanese the "right to participate in imperial Japan's military service as Japanese nationals." While Koreans mainly served as manual labourers, the Taiwanese served as technical, administrative, and medical personnel.<sup>26</sup> To attract these skilled volunteers, the colonial

government predominantly used mass media to create an image of loyal subjects serving as honourable military labourers. Its promise of equality proved attractive for many young men in their twenties, of whom over 200,000 eventually served in the military's supplementary force. This promise was further enforced through the *kominka* programs that required the Empire's colonial citizens to adopt Japanese names, speak Japanese on all occasions, conform to Shintoism, and serve in the military in order to come closer to an equal standing with the Japanese and the opportunities this brought with it. The Taiwanese aboriginals were particularly targeted by the *kominka* programs in order to coerce them into forsaking their non-literate, subsistence lifestyle and adopting Japanese as their common language.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence of the labour drafts and the *kominka* programs, both groups of Taiwanese found themselves in an inner conflict regarding their self-identity. They were no longer Taiwanese colonial subjects of the Japanese Empire but imperial subjects in an assimilation process to become "close to being Japanese."

When the war effort came to require more manpower than the voluntary enrolment could provide, the mobilisation of Taiwan entered a new phase—that of conscription through the Army Special Volunteer Act.<sup>28</sup> The Training Centre for Army Volunteers only offered 1,020 positions in 1942, even though it received 425,961 applications that year, significantly more than its counterpart in Korea. The rationale behind this immense popularity of the Act was the fact that the Taiwanese were empowered to identify themselves as "soldiers of the Emperor" for the first time. This entitled their families to better treatment by the colonial government. Like the situation in Korea, this treatment came in the form of additional rations of food and other supplies as well as improved career chances and less discrimination. This package of benefits convinced many volunteers that it was the most opportune choice to make at the time. In contrast, the accounts of the Taiwanese aboriginals who served reveal that they were generally excited with the prospect of volunteering and even perceived fighting alongside the Japanese, whom they greatly respected for their bravery, as a supreme moment of glory. Some also noted a sense of duty to erase "the stain of treachery and regain [our] honour" for their tribes' series of insurgencies

against Japanese rule.<sup>29</sup> In the past, the aboriginals had already proven to be excellent combatants in jungle environments and more resilient to the South Asian climate than regular Japanese soldiers. Following Japan's expansion into the Philippines and the South Seas, the Japanese military command gladly mobilised eight corps of so-called Takasago Volunteers amongst them. A new national complex was also erected on the banks of the Keelung River in Taipei, which apart from housing the colony's main Shinto shrine and the Training Institute of National Spirit also housed Taiwan's *gokoku* shrine for the enshrinement of both Han-Taiwanese and aboriginals.<sup>30</sup> In 1943, 1,008 positions were opened, and yet the Training Centre received a much greater number of 601,147 applications. In the following year, there were 759,276 applications for 2,497 positions.<sup>31</sup> Whether these young Taiwanese truly volunteered or were coerced as well as to what extent drafted military labourers tried to convert their volunteerism to combat capacity remains a points of debate. In 1944, the Army program was converted into a conscripted service followed by the Navy Special Volunteer Program. According to the Japanese government, 80,453 Taiwanese had been mobilised in combat service, while another 126,750 were working in non-combat service by the end of the war. Compared to the number of reported volunteers in 1944, this number seems very low, but this might be explained by the fact that by this time the Japanese military was not only lacking proficient officers to train all conscripted recruits but had also lost the means to place them in combat regions due to its decreasing control over the seas. According to Japanese government files, around 30,304 Taiwanese were killed in action while serving in the Empire's military. Of this number, 27,863 dead (including 26 convicted class B/C war criminals) were eventually enshrined at Yasukuni. In 1966, the *gokoku* shrine in Taipei was demolished, and its grounds were subsequently used to house the National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine, which now commemorates the deaths of the various revolutions and expeditions during the Chinese Civil War.<sup>32</sup>

When the Han-Taiwanese and Takasago veterans returned to Taiwan after the surrender of Japan, they encountered a very different political climate to that which they had left behind only a few months before. The Han-Taiwanese were marked as traitors by the Nationalist government:

they were not only marked for discrimination but even for prosecution for serving in the Japanese military. Many of the Takasago veterans wished to retain their adopted Japanese way of life and even continued to regard themselves as Japanese, while the Nationalist Government demanded that they change their Japanese names to Chinese ones. In addition, the new education policy sought to assimilate them into becoming Chinese.<sup>33</sup> For the bereaved families wishing to mourn their fallen loved ones, this situation confronted them with a complex conflict, forcing them to choose among their Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese identities. The highly popular former Taiwanese president Lee Teng-Hui, for example, was conscripted by the military in the last months of the war together with his brother Lee Teng-chi. While Lee Teng-Hui survived, Teng-chi lost his life while attached to the Japanese Navy in the Philippines. Teng-chi was then enshrined at Yasukuni without the knowledge of his family. Since his brother's remains were never recovered, Lee Teng-Hui, who is now a Christian, can only commemorate his brother at Yasukuni where his soul is enshrined. He excellently argued for the importance of being able to offer a tribute of respect to his brother during his first and only visit in 2007 by stating that it would be unbearable for himself not to have done so.<sup>34</sup> Unlike in the case of the Koreans, with the exception of a single request in 1978, there have been no calls from the bereaved families for the removal of their family members from the shrine. In response to this single request, Yasukuni argued that since the deceased was considered to be Japanese at the time of his death in battle, he did not stop being so afterwards. As a consequence, the deceased would be honoured in the same manner as other Japanese soldiers.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, the aboriginal tribes are more outspoken on this issue, sharing many of the reactions of the Korean families. Apart from the enshrined family members, the aboriginals also struggle emotionally with the Japanese Army's actions against them during the earlier years of Japan's acquisition of Taiwan.<sup>36</sup> On a political level the Taiwanese government's reaction to any visit to Yasukuni by Japanese politicians is very different from that of the Korean government. The Taiwanese government merely states that it "regrets" such visits taking place. In contrast, Lee Teng-Hui defended

PM Koizumi's visit in August 2001 by stating that "[i]t is natural for a premier of a country to commemorate the souls of people who lost their lives for their country."<sup>37</sup> Apart from visits by members of the Taiwanese political elite, this modest reaction may also be explained by the fact that Japan's imperial rule in Taiwan was less extensive and intruding or, as some argue, more benign than elsewhere. Another explanation would be the lack of diplomatic weight: the two nations do not maintain full diplomatic relations but only enjoy a working relationship since China's implementation of its "One-China-Policy" in 1972.<sup>38</sup>

The Taiwanese story of mourning their fallen loved ones and the controversy surrounding Yasukuni mainly evokes an internal conflict of identity amongst those who lived during that era: they recognised themselves as imperial subjects but also kept their ethnic heritage close to heart. While some aboriginal bereaved families, like the Korean families, protest against the enshrinement of their loved ones, others seem to struggle primarily to ensure that their sacrifice and the conditions under which this sacrifice was made are not forgotten.

## Conclusion

The respective Korean and Taiwanese memories of the mobilisation process and the associated Yasukuni system may have been very similar, yet the nature of their current respective struggles differs greatly. The Korean bereaved families find themselves in a highly emotional struggle for the removal of their loved ones. They also feel that the time left to resolve this issue is now running out, all the while the situation remains deadlocked due to both the shrine's unwillingness to find a suitable solution and the lack of suitable legal remedies. Although some Taiwanese aboriginal families protest against the enshrinement of their members on similar grounds, they also emphasise the Army's actions against them during the earlier years of Japan's presence in Taiwan. In contrast, the Han-Taiwanese seem principally concerned that their sacrifice and its extenuating circumstances not be forgotten. When looking towards the future, both the Korean and the Taiwanese bereaved families sketch a pessimistic image of unending struggle. Unless the



Yasukuni shrine itself decides to accommodate the feelings and wishes of the bereaved families, the only source of possible outside pressure would be that of the imperial family itself. It is noteworthy that the imperial family has not paid a visit to the shrine since the presence of the enshrined war criminals was revealed. After all, to be remembered for one's sacrifice by not only the nation but also the Emperor himself was perceived to be the greatest honour one could receive, and yet this honour has not been granted in person for several decades now.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Breen, ed. *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007), 117.

<sup>2</sup> "Foundation," *Yasukuni Jinja*, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/foundation.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Emilo Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 82.

<sup>4</sup> Breen, *Yasukuni*, 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* (London: Routledge, 1994), 209-11.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building: An Institutional Approach to Colonial Engineering* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 173.

<sup>7</sup> Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy – Koreans in Japan's War, 1937-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 184.

<sup>8</sup> Ming-Cheng Miriam Lo, "Between Ethnicity and Modernity: Taiwanese Medical Students and Doctors under Japan's Kominka Campaign, 1937-1945," *East Asia Cultures Critique* 10, no. 2 (2002): 293.

<sup>9</sup> Setsuko Miyata, Kimu Yondaru, and Yan Teho, *Sōshi kaimei* [創氏改名] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1992), 40.

<sup>10</sup> Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy*, 70.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 184.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>19</sup> Michio Nakajima, "Shinto Deities that Crossed the Sea," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 1 (2010): 39. See also Minoru Jushi, "Report on Investigation of Aggression Shrine Sites (in Seoul)," in *Questioning the Yasukuni Shrine: On the Lawsuit to Remove Those Enshrined Without Consent*, [야스쿠니에 묻는다-야스쿠니신사 무단합사 철폐 소송], ed. The Northeast Asian History Foundation (Seoul: The Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2014), 260.

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<sup>22</sup> "Statement by MOFAT Spokesperson on Prime Minister Koizumi's Visit to Yasukuni Shrine," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Republic of Korea*, August 13, 2001, accessed June 7, 2016, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp?typeID=12&boardid=302&seqno=296553&c=&t=&pagenum=1&tableName=TYPE\\_ENGLISH&pc=&dc=&wc=&lu=&vu=&iu=&du=](http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp?typeID=12&boardid=302&seqno=296553&c=&t=&pagenum=1&tableName=TYPE_ENGLISH&pc=&dc=&wc=&lu=&vu=&iu=&du=).

<sup>23</sup> John Hofilena, "North Korea Says PM Abe's Yasukuni Shrine Visit Equal to 'War Declaration,'" *Japan Daily Press*, December 31, 2013, accessed August 18, 2016, <http://japandailynews.com/north-korea-says-pm-abes-yasukuni-shrine-visit-equal-to-war-declaration-3141670/>.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, "Kin: Get Koreans out of Yasukuni." See also The Northeast Asian History Foundation, ed., *Questioning the Yasukuni Shrine*, 283-99.

<sup>25</sup> Kuroishi Izumi, *Constructing the Colonized Land: Entwined Perspectives of East Asia Around WWII* (London: Routledge, 2014), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building*, 178.

<sup>27</sup> Chih-huei Huang, "The Yamatodamashi of the Takasago Volunteers of Taiwan," in *Globalizing Japan: Ethnography of the Japanese Presence in Asia, Europe, and America*, ed. Harumi Benucci and Sylvie Guichard-Anguis (London: Routledge, 2001), 224.

<sup>28</sup> Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building*, 176.

<sup>29</sup> Huang, "The Yamatodamashi of the Takasago Volunteers of Taiwan," 225-35.

<sup>30</sup> Izumi, *Constructing the Colonized Land*, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building*, 180.

<sup>32</sup> "National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine," accessed July 1, 2016, [http://afrc.mnd.gov.tw/faith\\_martyr/index.aspx](http://afrc.mnd.gov.tw/faith_martyr/index.aspx).

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<sup>34</sup> "Taiwan Ex-leader in Shrine Visit," *BBC*, June 7, 2007, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6729067.stm>.

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