

HABITUAL SILENCE:
ABSENTING (TRANS)NATIONAL MEMORIES IN POSTWAR JAPAN

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by
Katherine Harris Durand
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ABSTRACT

Although silence is certainly not what comes to mind first when considering the vast archive of critical research on postwar Pacific Rim relations, this thesis argues that it should be. By widening interpretations of collective memory and revisiting questions of the authenticity and completeness of historical records, I bring to the forefront perspectives of those who were silenced in the aftermath of the Asia-Pacific War. Such instances of silence—both imposed and self-inflicted—are examined in the following interrogations of: 1) the Tokyo Trial; 2) state control of (trans)national bodies through the aestheticization of war death; and 3) Japan's fractured national identity as a result of the roles played both actively and passively by (trans)national subjects. Silence as historical amnesia, erasure, denial, revisionism, and/or shame touches the stories of all people affected throughout this era of conflicting imperialisms. In the wake of the 20th century's violence, this paper points out which memory spaces have been forced to habituate these types of silence in the process of the un-making of the Japanese Empire, and intends to reclaim responsibility for an unethically attained postwar prosperity.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katherine Durand is currently a student of the Asian Studies MA Program at Cornell University. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Nebraska – Omaha where she received a BA in International Studies. Katherine is also a former David L. Boren critical languages scholar and completed Yonsei University's intensive two-year program at the Korean Language Institute in Seoul. Her current research focuses on international relations and collective memory in the context of Postwar Japan, especially regarding war responsibility and transnational redress culture. Her other research interests include the Korean independence movement, inter-Korean relations, and museums and film as a facet of peace and conflict studies. A native of Omaha, Nebraska, she currently lives in New York City.

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In much the same way as I discuss the intergenerational atmosphere of guilt experienced in Post-War Japan, and in the way that foreign others like the comfort women and forced laborers feel wronged and silenced even within their own countries, I also want to include my own family's history in this search for unobstructed memories and transnational reconciliation. The following account has served as my main inspiration for studying about postwar structural violence and the conflicts of collective memory in the Asia-Pacific for the past ten years.

My grandfather, William H. Durand, was both an unknowing victim and undeniable perpetrator of war violence. Asked to abandon his professorship at the University of Omaha to work as an engineer for the Martin Bomber plant in nearby Bellevue, Nebraska near the end of WWII, he became involved in a particular aeronautics project. Unbeknownst to him and his fellow engineers at the time, the designs being made by their team would eventually be implemented on the payload carrying section of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber later named the Enola Gay—the aircraft that dropped the world's first atomic bomb, which devastated the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Several months before the project's deadline, my grandfather recalled his sudden realization that this project, which from the start had been clouded in ambiguity, was likely headed for something far more nefarious than he initially imagined. With great dread he walked away from the job that morning and tried never to look back.

Our family first learned of his story only several years before his passing in 2010 while he was in the process of writing his autobiography. After more than 60 years of silence (partially induced by shame and partially by the social pressures of life in the conservative American Midwest), he shared with us his unforgettable guilt, as well as a confession that he had felt so traumatized that all details beyond the brief

explanation above felt as if they had been wiped from his memory—a sentiment uncannily mirrored by a number of former Japanese soldiers who came forth to share their memories with history long after the fact.¹

Several years later, I found myself best of friends with an exchange student, Sayuri Harano, a native of Hiroshima whose grandparents had lived through and remembered the events of the Atomic Bombings. After a brief conversation about an upcoming university exchange trip to Hiroshima and the itinerary to visit the Peace and Memorial Park, I remembered the day my grandfather told us about his involvement with the Enola Gay and felt compelled to share with her. Numerous times after that we found ourselves in deep discussions over events from a war that neither of us remembered or knew much about, but both felt an indescribable connection over. Resigned to the idea that fate must have crossed our paths for a purpose, I have since felt determined to do what I can to acknowledge that tragedy and take the most ethical and reparative steps I can during my life: on an academic level by studying and critiquing the current archive of knowledge and those who control it, and on a personal level by building open and honest friendships with Sayuri and the many other international friends who I came to know in the process of this research.

I would like to thank Cornell University's East Asia Program for their generous research travel grant that allowed me to conduct field research in Japan over the summer of 2018. My advisors, Professor Jane-Marie Law and Professor John Whitman, also deserve my utmost thanks for their patience and understanding of the personal and financial hurdles that long kept this paper from completion. Their thoughtful suggestions and encouraging remarks throughout this process helped keep

¹ These memories are addressed by feminist scholar and cinematographer Byun Young-joo in her 1997 documentary, "Habitual Sadness," to which the title of my thesis is part homage and part response. It is the second part of her trilogy on the past and present lives of comfort women that also includes, "The Murmuring" (1995), and "My Own Breathing" (1999). The trilogy's Korean title is "낮은 목소리" (Low Voice).

me from being overwhelmed by the weight of my own topic. And of course, I am grateful to my parents for their endless compassion and optimism, and to Jeong who not only contributed a much-needed diversity of perspective to my analysis, but also spent every late night studying in solidarity with me.

INTRODUCTION

Given the title of this paper, it might initially seem questionable how silence of any magnitude could exist within the discourse of one of the most well researched and hotly debated wars in world history. Although there already exists a diverse archive of research insightfully and critically evaluating what became of international relations during and after the Second World War, I resolved to write on the topic from the perspective of those who were silenced by those relations, rather than from the perspective of those who already had their say. Such instances of silence—both imposed and self-inflicted—can be discovered through interrogating the lens of collective memory and asking the hard questions about history that no one wants to ask: *What was the cause? Who is responsible? What are we allowed to remember?*

Like many authors of the sources I read in researching this topic—Hiro Saito, Yukiko Koga, Lisa Yoneyama, and Akiko Takenaka, to name a few—I find myself at once removed from any direct memory of the atrocities of that time *and* unable to move on from or ignore the burden I feel constantly at the back of my mind as a descendant of a directly involved party in these matters. Though I may not be a silenced voice myself, I am still here as a legacy of the 20th century, living in this international, cosmopolitan, and prosperous world that was won at the cost of immeasurable suffering, and I seek a way to a responsible future.

With this in mind, I locate the following thesis predominately in the fields of Transpacific Studies and Post-War Memory Studies with emphasis on war commemoration practices and state control of national and transnational bodies. Incorporating the critical strategies of Transpacific studies, I discuss the evolution of commemoration practices from pre-war Japan through the post-war era, and how they contributed to the traumatic and often suppressed memories that relentlessly haunt Asia-Pacific relations and leave the region in a state of unending postwar. I take

account of both official and original memories of the war, as well as national and transnational subjects' individual and collective roles in it.

In interrogating topics ranging from the Imperial Japanese state's aestheticization of war death² to its fractured national identity incurred through the Tokyo Trial³, I explain the root causes of Japan's current entrenchment in matters of postwar redress⁴ while also complicating the dichotomy of Japan's victim mindset versus its aggressor reputation.⁵ By pointing out memory spaces that were absented in the process of the un-making of the Japanese Empire⁶ at the end of the Asia-Pacific War, we can observe how Western countries' roles have been masked or downplayed as well as bring to light how the hasty pursuit of immediate postwar prosperity was paid for with the silence of many.⁷

A key point that stood out to me on the topic of commemoration was that it is simultaneously an act of the collective and of the individual⁸, and not always defined by such clear boundaries. I mean to say that learning about the past and deciding how to remember it should not be a passive, absorptive, or state-mandated activity. We are each entitled to our own memories, but so are all others whose paths we inevitably cross. The so-called "memory wars" in the Asia Pacific exist as a result of an apathetic public, oppressive societal sensitivities, and defensive and gendered nationalist

² Akiko Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. Kindle.

³ Madoka Futamura, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy*. London: Routledge, 2008.

⁴ Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

⁵ Hagström, Linus and Ulv Hanssen. "The North Korean Abduction Issue: Emotions, Securitisation and the Reconstruction of Japanese Identity from 'Aggressor' to 'Victim' and from 'Pacifist' to 'Normal'." *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 1 (Oct. 2014): 71-93.

⁶ Yukiko Koga, "Between the Law: The Unmaking of Empire and Law's Imperial Amnesia." *Law & Social Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 402-424.

⁷ Yukiko Koga, "Accounting for Silence: Inheritance, Debt, and the Moral Economy of Legal Redress in China and Japan." *American Ethnologist* 40, no. 3 (2013): 494-507.

⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

traditions that try to erase spaces for certain experiences to be remembered. This paper serves as a reminder to be cognizant of two main ideas: 1) that the uncomfortable truths and complexities of history do not always stop at generational, national, or personally remembered borders, and 2) that the relationship between war responsibility and political expediency shows that those who write history are not always the ones who lived it.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

As this paper necessarily makes reference to a variety of time periods, regions, and actors in discussing Japan's history problems, some being more loosely defined than others, it is necessary to clarify the boundaries I intend to assign to their namings. For instance, "the Asia-Pacific War"⁹ is preferable to "the Greater East Asia War" due to the latter's Imperial connotation and exclusion of the South and Southeast Asian theaters that were also involved in the wars of that era.¹⁰ I also prefer it to the general use of "The Second World War" in hopes of deterring emphasis on the European theater and its distantly related outcomes in the overlapping timeframe. This is not to say events in the European and Asia-Pacific theaters were unrelated, but to indicate that drawing conclusions or formulating solutions purely based on European models should be avoided. Specificities in regional events and cultural practices render such side-by-side comparison of the two regions both impractical and reckless. As I will

⁹ I demarcate this period as roughly 1931 to 1945. This encompasses the Mukden Incident (September 18, 1931), the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), and the Second World War (1939-1945). Hiro Saito (2016) also utilizes this breakdown.

¹⁰ Although this paper focuses primarily on Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean Peninsula relations in the Post-Cold War period, it is important to remember that as much as we see progress in un-"othering" the East Asian former colonial subjects in discussions of Imperial Japan's legacy, there are still the South and Southeast Asian "others" who have yet to reach this step. Due to the scope of this paper, I limit myself to direct research of East Asian relations (with which I am more familiar), but wholeheartedly support that similar efforts be taken toward reconciling the individual grievances and memory disputes between the Japanese and the South and Southeast Asian victims.

mention in the next section, the legacy created by the Nuremberg Trial in short order proved to be critically problematic at the Tokyo Trial in precisely such a way.

Although use of “the Asia-Pacific War” admittedly risks somewhat de-emphasizing the Korean perspective,¹¹ I will do my best to refer to that situation separately when relevant, but also inclusively when using the broader term “the Asia-Pacific War.” This uniquely long and troublesome history between Japan and the Koreas (especially South Korea) thus demands special attention and must not be forgotten throughout the following discussions of how Japan has come to remember the region’s war-torn past.

As for the time period following the unconditional surrender by Japan on August 15, 1945, “the Post-War era” is commonly used, technically encompassing any or all years since 1945.¹² For the sake of segmenting those 70 odd years, I will refer to the “Cold War” years as 1946-1991¹³, and to the following years as the “Post-Cold War.” I find “Post-Cold War” a particularly useful phrase as opposed to just “recent decades” or “since the 1990s” as it recognizes the significantly changed world order that resulted from the Cold War. Invoking scholar Lisa Yoneyama’s apt phrasing, the Post-Cold war era in which Asian history’s painful loose ends now linger, is effectively built on “Cold War Ruins.”¹⁴

¹¹ The country of Joseon was colonized and oppressively ruled by the Empire of Japan from 1910 to 1945. The de-emphasis of the Korean perspective in using “the Asia-Pacific War” is an important point discussed further by Hiro Saito in his book, “The History Problem” (165-173).

¹² For example, scholar Akiko Takenaka considers Japan to be in a state of unending postwar, while scholar Peter Frost bounds postwar Japan between 1945 and 1989, marking the death of Emperor Hirohito as the symbolic end of Imperial Japan. His interpretation signals that the Japan of Heisei onward is a separate entity from that which it had formerly been. I favor Takenaka’s view as it encompasses the continuity of Japanese collective memory and explains its relationship to ongoing regional events.

¹³ This further breaking down into other relevant East Asian conflicts: the Korean War years, 1950-1953; and the Vietnam War years, 1955-1975.

¹⁴ Yoneyama gives rich meaning to this term in her discussion of redress culture in East Asia from the 1990s onward in her book also titled “Cold War Ruins.”

The fields of memory studies and transpacific studies are doing much of the work of tying up these loose ends. However, despite the inclusive connotation of the term “memory studies,” significant conflict does exist within the field. For the purposes of this paper, “collective memory” will be used in line with scholar Jeffrey Olick’s sense of the phrase—that it be used as a “sensitizing term for a wide array of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, neurological, cognitive, personal, aggregated, and collective,”¹⁵ rather than to set boundaries between particular groups’ claimed memories as if they have no choice but to be in a state of perpetual competition. He makes the point of comparing the determiners “collected” with “collective” and expresses that the social aspects of both are important. On one hand, while memories may belong to an individual, they were created in some sort of social context, thereby linking that memory to others. On the other hand, certain types of memories that have become dominant within a group over time may no longer be reducible back down to the individual level, as individuals within the group may have had varied initial experiences that led them to the conclusion the group happens to hold. For these reasons, Olick’s “collective memory” will prove most useful for the purposes of this paper.

The phrase is not left wide open for lack of academic direction, but rather to purposefully absorb input from a variety of disciplines and methodologies. So in addressing this tangle of individual, local, national, and supranational memories in regard to postwar redress culture in the Asia Pacific, the simultaneous existence of overlapping and competing memories must be accepted. A second acknowledgement must also come in the form of realizing that traumatic historical memory does not disappear with the death of the last survivor, witness, or relative—as Bauman states

¹⁵ Olick, Jeffrey. “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures.” *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (Nov. 1999): 346-347.

about Auschwitz, it remains a trauma for the narratives of modernity and morality (1989).¹⁶ The current state of affairs between Japan and its neighboring countries is becoming another such case.

Geographical naming issues also arise—to whom do we really refer when we write or read “Japan” in papers on war memorialization? Surely we should no longer accept the reification of the various identities such as victim, perpetrator, conspirator, bystander, protestor, government official, foreign national, or individual under the comprehensive and more familiar word “Japan” in such a sensitive case. I attempt to overcome this lingering academic bad habit of ambiguity by clarifying at all times the directly relevant parties in each event discussed. However tedious to the reader and author, this duty is one in the same with the duty of remembering.

Another similar problem is how to address “Korea.” For example, when discussing victims of colonial trauma and war-related traumas in general on the Korean peninsula, it would be inappropriate to use the labels North or South when describing incidents prior to the political division in 1945. However, when speaking of more recent public actions taken by individuals or groups, it would be considerate to note that given the relative freedom of speech south of the 38th parallel, testimonies, media, and academic coverage we have access to is primarily provided by South Koreans.¹⁷

Due to recent controversies over the making (and attempted un-making) of political agreements between the Abe administration and South Korean presidencies over the past five years,¹⁸ utilizing the national labels of North and South becomes

¹⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

¹⁷ In the absence of accessible testimony from former comfort women whose fate led them to a life in the North, I wish also to acknowledge their yet untold suffering. Like various other women’s movements, a desire to help women on a certain topic should mean a desire to help *all* women on that same topic.

¹⁸ Former President Park Geun-hye and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo made a monumental “final settlement” in 2015, much to the dismay of comfort women and their actual support networks. As of the

unavoidable. When discussing the possible consequences of state-sponsored actions such as those, it is unfortunately necessary to consider that recent calls for a “final” act of apology/reparation from Japan have glossed over the fact that providing such things to survivors only in South Korea would leave other Korean victims in an unredressable state—allowing them to slip through the cracks for the sake of political expediency.¹⁹

For example, let's consider Abe's continued sentiments regarding the irreversibility of the controversial 2015 agreement that demanded an end to South Korean diplomats' continuing to bring up the comfort women ever again. At such a time in the future when North Korean former comfort women, forced laborers, or their families obtain the means to call for their own half of that justice, South Koreans would be prevented from assisting them in any official capacity. Such performances and allowances of this sort of “politics of regret”²⁰ make a mockery of human rights as a concept and further showcase the shortsightedness of leaders in the region. This political climate should force us to question how decisions regarding official state-sponsored redress of victims of human rights violations are made—How can they not include the sentiments of the victims themselves in their formulation?

To further reiterate the necessity of sensitizing naming practices and terminology use, we also come upon the problem of clarifying *who* the victims are, and by proxy, *which* victims have been deemed to *matter*. In response to persistent negative press coverage by major newspapers—especially *The Yomiuri Shimbun*,

time of writing this paper, President Moon Jae-in warns Abe that nullifying the 2015 agreement is very possible. Motivations of both presidents are still murky at best. For reference see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/world/asia/south-korea-japan-sex-slaves.html>

¹⁹ This does not even begin to cover the obstacles faced domestically by Korean survivors. For more on this domestic silencing of comfort women's pasts, see: Yi, Joseph. “Confronting Korea's Censored Discourse on Comfort Women.” *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2018. Also Lévy (2014) and Getz (2018).

²⁰ Jeffrey Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Kindle.

which continues to twist the experiences of the comfort women into a narrative of sex-work-by-choice—scholar Muta Kazue makes a striking point about embedded attitudes of gendered violence that continue to pervade modern Japanese society:

It is clear that these attitudes lack appropriate understanding of sexual violence and human rights. What can also be seen in this thinking is the idea of good women and bad women, in other words, the bifurcation of women. As long as the women had been paid, irrespective of coercion or deception, they were prostitutes, bad women, who were not entitled to human rights or an apology from the government. A right-winger and famous manga artist, Kobayashi Yoshinori, a prominent figure especially among Japanese youth, writes that if a woman were respectable enough, she would not go public and say that she was a comfort woman, because she should be ashamed of her past (Kobayashi, 1997). In this reasoning, vocal survivors are ‘dirty’ women by definition, and dirty women should never be entitled to human rights and dignity. Regrettably, he is not exceptional in this, as this kind of bifurcation permeates Japanese society.²¹

Later in her article, Muta goes on to back up this assessment with the revelation that even the legal system, the system any citizen looks to for justice, is full of structural violence against not just foreign women, but also Japanese women. For instance, take the Japanese penal code on rape, which has not undergone revision since its creation in 1907.²² Or the sad fact that rape cases are exceedingly underreported (1 in 13 women has experienced sex against her will, but 68% never seek help or report the incident); or that male judges in cases as recent as 2011 overruled several rape victims’ testimonies on the basis of their not having attempted to escape or call for help. The Ministry of Justice even brushed aside CEDAW²³ demands for “Promotion

²¹ Kazue Muta, “The ‘Comfort Women’ Issue and the Embedded Culture of Sexual Violence in Contemporary Japan.” *Current Sociology Monograph* 64, no. 4 (2016): 620-636.

²² We should ask why items like this legal instrument have not gotten swept up by the otherwise powerful wave of revisionism in Japan.

²³ The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and has been ratified by 189 states, including Japan (but interestingly not the United States). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

of Measures against Sex Crimes (Rape and Forcible Indecency)” with a sentence saying they will “study the matter.”

Certainly the list goes on, but the point is that we cannot expect results when the system of law in Japan does not take sexual crimes and gendered violence seriously. Being able to name what constitutes a crime is a basic requirement for being able to identify who is a victim. Description of the extent of protection from said crime becomes the basis on which the public is made to see and believe *which* victims are the ones that *matter*. Absenting these clarifications is what forms the largest roots in this rhizome of social memory and historical redress problems in Post-Cold War Pacific Rim relations, and silences voices that must remain unheard in the pursuit of an ethical Post-War world. Just as any habit can be hard to break, silence in the face of injustice, whether intentional or imposed, is a form of habitual structural violence²⁴ that necessitates unrelenting interrogation.

BACKDROP OF INJUSTICE

The central argument synthesizing the bundle of fomenting bilateral relations between the Japanese government and the governments of neighboring countries can be stated as simply as this: “We as a people have been treated unjustly.” This complaint, founded and reasonable, is actually far more multidirectional than it appears in media representations made for the general public. For years, a general but still insufficient focus has been given to the once colonized, war-torn neighboring countries like the Koreas and China, who suffered at the hands of Japanese Imperialists, but until recently hardly any attention has been paid to the role of imperialism exerted by Western countries through their self-justifying socio-political

²⁴ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-191.

practices. In the same way, bilateral discussions are, at a critical point, self-limiting; bringing to the diplomatic and academic tables concern only for issues bounded by national borders is no longer enough to beget progress. This section attempts to recount some key historiographical events that now loom behind discussions of moving past those old regional traumas, and reasons that discussions of redress ought not to always be contained within a single national or single bilateral discourse.

To talk about any sort of current events relating to the lasting tensions involving the Japanese government, we have to include the details of what catalyzed those detested imperial relationships of the past. One place to trace the roots of Japan's old imperial origin is the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854. After roughly two centuries under the *Sakoku* Policy,²⁵ the Edo period drew to a fitful close as the country was forcibly opened to the world under Commodore Perry and the U.S. government's threat. By fourteen years later, a new government had risen out of the Meiji Restoration and began to consider that the country's prior hermit status may have left society comparatively behind the times. Soon new social programs were implemented as tactics to alleviate that perceived need to play catch-up; delegations of students and a variety of researchers were sent around the world to absorb the Western arts and sciences, and upon their return, they contributed this accumulation of different knowledge and experience toward the internal forces that were already working to transform Japan from a feudal society into the successful industrial state it was starting to become.²⁶

However, this effort did not merely stop at intellectual and industrial "catching up." Although we may colloquially refer in awe to Japan as a country that

²⁵ (Seclusion 鎖国/쇄국) Totman, Conrad. "From Sakoku to Kaikoku: The Transformation of Foreign-Policy Attitudes, 1853-1868." *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 1-19.

²⁶ Beasley, William. *The Meiji Restoration*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972. Kindle.

accomplished 200 years of modernization in a single generation, those drastic changes could not come without consequences. The First Sino-Japanese War (July 1894 – April 1895) erupted out of The Qing Dynasty's and the Empire of Japan's desire for influence over Korea.²⁷ A clear shift in the balance of international power away from China and toward Japan for the first time in history resulted from Japan's superior military modernization compared to that of the Qing by that time—the Qing could but resort to suing for peace in the face of such might.²⁸

In addition to this realization of firepower inferiority, the loss of Korea as a tributary state became another catalyst for social uprisings in China, generally thought to have culminated in the Xinhai Rebellion of 1911.²⁹ Taking into consideration their recent success against China, the growing chaos and disorganization in Russian society became another opportunity for the Empire of Japan to compete and win to solidify influence over Korea and also Manchuria. The Russo-Japanese War (Feb. 1904 – Sept. 1905) again brought fighting near to Korea.³⁰ With two such victories in short succession, it is no wonder that Japanese military leaders, politicians, and to some degree the citizenry, found themselves with increasingly patriotic and imperialist thoughts and desires. From this time and escalating consistently onward through the Asia-Pacific War, the Empire of Japan truly ventured to give meaning to the name *Dai Nihon Teikoku*.³¹

So far, this overview could be seen as just a recounting of normal war-making and state-making activities, but it is exactly this view that is problematic. Simply fighting over territory and resources is certainly not an issue that has diminished in our so-called modern times. However, looking at the periodically escalating tensions over

²⁷ It is notable that this war was fought mainly on Korean soil.

²⁸ http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_power.htm

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ 大日本帝國 / 대일본제국 / The Great Empire of Japan

the Senkaku/Diaoyu and Dokdo/Takeshima islands, for instance, have been portrayed as huge red flags of dangerous nationalism brewing. For whatever reason, these current events are portrayed not merely as matters of saber-rattling and calls for increased military involvement, but *also* as issues to invoke fear of a widespread underlying societal unrest.

Although some scholars claim it is wrong to utilize the lens through which we see things in our own present time as a way to look at the past, in the instance of looking at not only such territorial disputes but also related transnational memory wars, doing so may be warranted. In other words, through the lens of calling out nationalism and imperialism after having gained hindsight of their dangerous potential, what should prevent a concerned researcher from turning that same lens backward onto the past to assess the process of “the un-making of empire”³² in the Post-Asia Pacific War context? The point would not be to place blame on prior generations—we have *acquired* the experience to see things this way, after all—but to reason out why the region’s redress diplomacy has grown so entrenched. Though there is no way to remake the past, I suggest we might overlay its original stories with the critical knowledge of nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism we have gained at its price.

THE TOKYO TRIAL

For now, let us move beyond the well-hashed events of the First and Second World Wars to the months immediately following Emperor Hirohito’s unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945. At that juncture, one memory site in particular—that of the Tokyo Trial—swiftly became and has since remained at the center of debate about Japanese war responsibility. However, despite voluminous writing (not all of it equally accessible) on the proceedings and their outcomes, ordinary citizens in both Japan and

³² Koga, 2016.

the international community still seem to lack a constructive understanding of the event. For many the trial seems an event of the distant past, and what we as individuals can or should have to do with it now is even less clear. This question is addressed in fascinating detail in historian Herbert P. Bix's book, "Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan," from which much of the following section was informed.

Reiterating the importance of naming within this paper, let us first address the formal title of the Tokyo Trial: the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). The Tokyo Trial does seem the far more apt moniker as the "Far East" was effectively forgotten in the proceedings, and "International" may as well have been replaced with "American." Even calling it a "trial" is pushing it, but it is true that the event did take place in Tokyo and for a long time appeared, at least to those who were fed a certain narrative, to have been a perfectly acceptable method for wrapping up the end of the war. For a second extensive reading on the Tokyo Trial, legal scholar Madoka Futamura's book, "War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy" is crucial, but there are two particular points very worth extracting here.

First is regarding the efficacy of international war crimes tribunals in general—What exactly is achieved when foreign powers step in to prosecute suspected war criminals? In the murky arena of international law and justice, the idea behind these types of trials is that they are to achieve peace in the immediate aftermath of armed conflict. However, the definitions of peace and justice become far too blurred in such an event—the founded belief that the Tokyo Trial is an example of victor's justice³³ comes from this elision of concepts.³⁴ Just think for a moment; would you immediately feel more inclined to be peaceful toward former enemies if they suddenly

³³ However, to say that the Tokyo Trial was a case of *only* victor's justice would be to paint an incomplete picture. On page 16, Emperor Hirohito's complicit role is addressed.

³⁴ Futamura, 2008. pp. 16-29.

occupy your homeland, declare that they will harshly judge the actions of your leaders to root out some terrible evil, and afterward keep most of the details to themselves and never really return from whence they came? Aside from utilitarian backlash to that statement which would claim international ethical standards were breached and that an international tribunal was unavoidable because corrupt military leaders needed to be immediately removed from power, the idea that military tribunals exist *to exact peace* is farcical.

Futamura's second damning point is that when looking at the original Japanese language records of the trial, we face a dilemma of relative accessibility. The tribunal did have the stenographic record in Japanese published, however, it seems the originals were not widely circulated. We can now find only its 1968 reproduction.³⁵ While the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper's court staff also published nine volumes of their own records during the time of the trials (1946-1948),³⁶ there was no official state-sponsored publication. In comparison with the forty-two volumes of documentation given in evidence, their indexes, and the stenographic records in four languages published for the Nuremberg Trial, the difference is clear.³⁷

Without forgetting our critical mind toward imperialism, we should note that the CIA's Foreign Documents branch had the vast majority of physical records of the Tokyo Trial removed from Japan upon the trial's completion.³⁸ The accompanying lack of general knowledge or memory of this trial's existence and outcomes by ordinary Japanese citizens and the transpacific community is in stark contrast with that

³⁵ Futamura, p. 10.

³⁶ The staff reported that was very difficult to take printed materials out of the courtroom at that time—presumably due to restrictions set by the Occupation forces. Additionally, stenographic records in English stopped being distributed to news agencies in Japan partway through the trial as a purported relief measure on the U.S. taxpayers who had been paying for the paper used in the trial. *Asahi Shimbunsha Chosa Kenkyushitsu* (1953) pp. 3-4.

³⁷ Futamura, p. 9.

³⁸ Futamura, pp. 24-26.

of the so-called Nuremberg Legacy. Although created for the same purpose—to “bring peace through justice to the vanquished of WWII for their war crimes”³⁹—and often lumped together in discussions of history and law as if totally similar, just with Nuremberg *happening to be* the better recorded of the two, we begin see a curious trail of breadcrumbs pointing toward erased injustices at the Tokyo Trial.

Bernard Röling, the Dutch justice of the Tokyo Trial,⁴⁰ in response to a question of the scarcity of trial documentation, recalled:

I suppose that [the British and the Americans] were perhaps a bit ashamed of what happened there... I suspect they didn't want the Tokyo Trial to become very well known. But I have no evidence for that. It's just strange that the 'biggest trial in recorded history', as it has been called, was so over-looked.⁴¹

In fact, there is plenty of evidence. To further implicate this blatant erasure of U.S. imperialism, we need look no further than the preparations for the Tokyo Trial itself. To start, the occupation of Japan by U.S. forces was not simply a show of power or a monitoring system installed in place of the vanquished leadership. Rather, at the very top there was a general willingness to collaborate; Hirohito desired to preserve the *kokutai* and his position as Emperor while General MacArthur aimed to preserve the people's attachment to the Emperor system in order to prevent social unrest. However, in the face of such a total defeat for Japan and the U.S.'s obsession with preventing the spread of communism, the only way to achieve such a working relationship between the former enemies was to construct a revised image of recent

³⁹ i.e. They are the only two military tribunals that were ever seen through to completion.

⁴⁰ Borch (2017). Röling's comment is especially interesting considering that the Dutch were concurrently holding their own trials on war crimes in Indonesia (1946-1949), and on an even larger scale. More than 1000 Japanese soldiers and civilians, as well as a number of Dutch citizens who had collaborated with them, were tried. Roughly one quarter were executed, and only 6 were acquitted. The rest received varying sentences from less than five years to life. Borch, fluent in Dutch and with a 25-year career as a military lawyer for the U.S. army, is one of the first to make available in English extensive writing on this topic.

⁴¹ Futamura, p. 11.

historical events; one that would be palatable to the public both in Japan and the U.S.⁴²

To put it in a simplified way, Hirohito was cast as a peace-minded emperor whose opinions had lacked enough influence to prevent the nation from becoming embroiled in a state of total war. Unable to prevent involvement, his hope to was then to make the best effort at victory, but when the inevitable defeat was at hand after the atomic bombs had been dropped, he generously strove to save the nation by accepting defeat. He soon quietly distanced himself from his closest advisors including his favorite Prime Minister, Tojo, and had prepared an historical account that would sacrifice them in order to preserve his own innocence and title. His compliance with GHQ and their efforts to democratize Japan were branded as the road to lasting peace Hirohito had imagined for his nation. While many Japanese noticed the contradictions of this story, the real weight of the occupation prevented deeper reflection and public discussion of the matter.⁴³

This environment, constructed from the strength of the U.S.'s imperialist agenda and the shrewd political awareness and fear that was part of Hirohito's character, were the enabling mechanisms for both the occupation in general and the Tokyo Trial in particular. At that time, the U.S. had three distinct political objectives that can be summarized as: 1) disarmament/ demilitarization of Japan, 2) prosecution of war criminals, and 3) democratization. This second task was specifically addressed in the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee on September 12, 1945, whereat policies being applied in Europe (e.g. Nuremberg) related to trying and punishing war criminals were deemed applicable for general use in dealing with the Far East. Also responsible is the Far Eastern Commission, a group commissioned to oversee the writing of the terms of surrender; they effectively placed the "American policy" on

⁴² Bix, pp. 487-579.

⁴³ Bix, pp. 581-688.

war criminals at the center of the “Allied policy.”⁴⁴ Therefore, support of the U.S. plan to try Japanese individuals⁴⁵ in a military tribunal was solidified. Thus, although each judge assembled for the Tokyo Trial was from one of the nine signatory countries⁴⁶ of the finalized Instrument of Surrender (plus one from India and one from the Philippines),⁴⁷ the trial’s underlying framework dominated by U.S. policy was cleverly masked under the appearance of such an international assemblage.

Nuremberg set the example that individualization of responsibility and creation of an authoritative historical record are two key factors of helping a post-conflict society return to peace and normalcy. However, since the Tokyo Trial took place just six short months after the Nuremberg Trial, it is obvious that insufficient time had passed for the longer-term social outcomes of Nuremberg to be assessed. It was on this reckless basis that the U.S. imagined the Tokyo Trial as a fitting method for achieving immediate postwar change. The hope that the general public of Japan could be returned to a state of peace and be free to rid their society of the racist views raised to prominence by the top influential few was based on the superficial appearance that Nazism was quickly being excised from Europe thanks to Nuremberg. But ultimately, when we look at the Tokyo Trial we are forced to see that *the* top figure, Emperor Hirohito, was exempted from being tried. And it is from this point that we can tie the first and third U.S. political objectives (demilitarization and democratization) directly to the Tokyo Trial.

As mentioned above, the U.S. government desired a foothold in East Asian military, political, and economic affairs that would long outlast Japan’s temporary

⁴⁴ Futamura, p. 56.

⁴⁵ Article 10 of the Potsdam Declaration states, “We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners.”

⁴⁶ Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

⁴⁷ Futamura, p. 53.

occupation. They recognized the need to create a path that could allow for the construction of a completely new and closely cooperative relationship with Japan.⁴⁸ Of course that could never be a simple task for two enemy countries full of people who had just spent many months in intense armed conflict. So, in order to be accepted by Japanese people as the military protector for the newly demilitarized Japanese state, it can be seen that the Emperor's war guilt was purposely absented in his being spared from the Tokyo Trial as well as from nearly any form of media criticism in the years following.⁴⁹

Despite the Emperor's title as Supreme Commander of the war, by way of painting him as the puppet of military and political leaders as described in previous pages, the Tokyo Trial served to both restore the sore American psyche after the defeat at Pearl Harbor *and* preserve the Japanese people's international respectability by trying 28 of the 80 suspected war criminals originally detained at Sugamo Prison in the Emperor's stead.

This critical decision is instrumental in analyzing the both the claim of the U.S. exacting "victor's justice" through the Tokyo Trial and the progress of Japanese people's personal feelings of responsibility (or lack thereof) toward the war. By not trying the Emperor, his presumed innocence could then be passively internalized by the many Japanese people who had been mobilized for the war effort in his name.⁵⁰ Censorship of the press from both sides encouraged the initial amnesia of the war's facts and effectively created the habit of denying war responsibility that the Japanese government still seems unable to break. For U.S. purposes, the Emperor was to be

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Young-hwan Chong, "The Tokyo Trial and the Question of Colonial Responsibility: *Zainichi* Korean Reactions to Allied Justice in Occupied Japan." *International Journal of Korean History* 22, no. 1 (Feb. 2017): 77-105. And Bix, p. 619-688.

⁵⁰ Jemima Repo, "A Feminist Reading of Gender and National Memory at the Yasukuni Shrine." *Japan Forum* 20, no. 2 (May 2008): 219-243.

taken down from divine status and made the human face of democratic ideals on which Japan could be reborn—for surely that would be hurdle enough for the recently occupied Japanese people to accept.

Futamura also found in her recent field research that interviewees still could not really separate discussions of war responsibility from the Emperor's responsibility. Having come to accept the story that the military leaders deceived the Emperor, they too feel that they (or their elders) had been deceived. Knowing of this immunity granted to the Emperor precludes reflection by individual Japanese people on what war responsibility means. It also concatenates the unhelpful victim mindset stemming from the outcome of the Tokyo Trial with the undeniable and unique victim mindset resulting from being the only habited country on Earth to have experienced an Atomic bombing.⁵¹ This mindset silences the voices of non-Japanese victims by erasing the space in which they can be seen as victims *that matter*.

A TROUBLED NATIONAL IDENTITY

Acknowledging this obfuscated U.S. imperialism makes visible a backdrop of particular injustices experienced by the Japanese people, but it also unfortunately complicates the broader picture of injustices experienced throughout the Asia Pacific. In order to avoid the Tokyo Trial's mistake of erasing the space in which to hear out the voices of other war victims from the region, we can start by investigating the resultant fragility of Japanese national identity. This can help pinpoint the causes of several of the major longstanding transnational memory and redress disputes: namely the Yasukuni Shrine conundrum, constitutional revisionism, and historical amnesia regarding the suffering of "foreign others." To generally outline the following section,

⁵¹ Han, Dongyu. "An Analysis of Japan's Interpretation of History over the Seven Postwar Decades." *Social Sciences in China* 38, no. 3 (Jul. 2017): 47-64.

separation of religion and state, state control of national and transnational bodies, the creation of taboo via “historical amnesia,” and the cost of habitual silence will be addressed. I also include a brief overview of my field research in Tokyo during the summer of 2018.

The Three “Yasukuni”

If there were one thing any average world-news-watcher could recall if asked about the “memory wars” in East Asia, it would almost certainly be some recent tidbit related to the Yasukuni Shrine. Similarly, despite having already been a major topic of discussion in the fields of Asian studies, political science, and history over the seven decades following the Asia Pacific War’s end,⁵² unraveling its complexities continues to take up a preponderance of researchers’ time and effort. Thus, this persistent collective interest (or furor) over “Yasukuni” makes it a prime target for my interrogation as well. However, rather than pick apart particular instances of current politically colored visits by officials, or which demonstrations have sprung up in their protest, I will focus on the ontological problems at the foundation of this so-called “conundrum.”

The general tendency to reify “Yasukuni” as some sort of singular actor that causes international relations between Japan and neighboring countries to crumble is problematic along the same lines as the naming practices I have taken issue with in the above sections. Even in Japanese language discourse and media we bump into the blanket phrase *Yasukuni mondai*,⁵³ which could be taken in either the singular or plural sense. So again, I ask: *What are we really talking about when we talk about “Yasukuni”?*

⁵² Sakamoto, Rumi. “Mobilizing Affect for Collective War Memory.” *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 2 (Mar. 2014): 158-184.

⁵³ 靖国問題 tr. *Yasukuni Problem(s)*. I advocate considering this phrase in the plural.

Author Akiko Takenaka brings to light the utility of partially subdividing our consciousness of this term in the process of unraveling conflicting postwar memories in the Asia Pacific, so I adopt her strategy here. It involves locating the origin of a relevant “Yasukuni” topic within one of the three following components: Yasukuni the belief (*Yasukuni shinkō*), Yasukuni the site (*Yasukuni Jinja*), and Yasukuni the (social/political) issue (*Yasukuni mondai*),⁵⁴ and then considering how that topic intertwines with the other components. She synthesizes broadly it in this way:

The operators of “Yasukuni the site” are complicit in promoting “Yasukuni the belief” and therefore play a major role in intensifying “Yasukuni the issue.”

Yasukuni the Site

To discuss these three aspects of Yasukuni as we see them today, it is useful to begin with the creation and evolution of Yasukuni the site. In 1869 at the start of the Meiji Restoration, new Imperial Advisor, Kido Takayoshi, noted after passing by the bustling Ueno area that it might prove a valuable location for a national memorial honoring the war dead; he may have been the first to plant the idea of what would later become the Yasukuni Shrine. At the same time, Imperial Minister of War, Omura Masujiro, had dreams for a similar project; however, he proposed a different site, one atop Kudan Hill, claiming enemy *bakufu* spirits of the recent rebellion would likely haunt Ueno. Kudan Hill overlooked Tokyo all the way to the bay and was in close proximity to the old Edo Castle, which would become the site of the new Imperial Palace. Omura, also known as the “Father” of the Imperial Japanese Army, mused that such a location might also serve a more strategic purpose should Japan become

⁵⁴ Akiko Takenaka, pp. 5-6, 靖国進行、靖国神社、靖国問題

In other words, we could sort this as: problems with religion, problems with physical location/symbolic meaning, and political problems. The translation of *mondai* in this case should be thought of it in the plural sense; i.e. there are a variety of politically oriented *mondai* connected with Yasukuni Shrine and its activities.

embroiled in any future armed disputes.⁵⁵ It was with this prophetic mindset that both Yasukuni the site, and later Yasukuni the belief, were born.

As I just mentioned, the original intent for the site was to make it a national memorial for the war dead. While different places around the world all have their own traditions regarding war death, the practice that inspired activities at the Kudan Hill memorial site came from the Chōshū region, which was home to central actors of the Meiji Restoration. There the local Shinto practice of memorializing fallen Imperial loyalists had started around the late 1850s⁵⁶ but soon was transformed into a national practice in 1862 when war dead from several adjacent regions were collectively enshrined in Kyoto, the former capital, for the first time. However, through this gradual process of collectivizing the memorialization of the war dead, discrepancies in local practices would be erased. One interesting thing to note is that in some domains, the war dead of both sides would be memorialized together, a trait noticeably absent from the collectivized version of this practice that is familiar to us now.⁵⁷

Shortly after Tokyo was named the new capital in 1868, those spirits were transferred on government order to the aforementioned new memorial site at Kudan Hill, at the time under its first official name: *Tokyo Shonkonsha*.⁵⁸ Constructed in just ten days during June of 1869, it was first comprised of just a few temporary structures, much like any other local memorial space. It was not until the completion of the permanent structures and the addition of the *Yushukan* (a war museum) that the site started to gain a more noticeable presence in the lives of Tokyoites.

⁵⁵ Takenaka, ch.1 “Mobilizing Death.”

⁵⁶ Takenaka, pp. 27.

⁵⁷ Takenaka, pp. 28

⁵⁸ *Shokonsha*, a place where a *shokon* ritual is performed. A *shokon* ritual is a type of death-related practice in Japan which serves to ritually placate recently passed spirits into accepting their death. It is believed that the spirits of the dead could linger on in the world of the living for some time, especially if they were confused or displeased about their death. See Jeffrey Richey, 2015.

Interestingly, it was more for the sake of the surrounding novelties beginning to appear in the Kudan Hill area at around the same time that visitors started to populate the grounds of *Tokyo Shokonsha*. Local artists found inspiration from the picturesqueness of the grounds and their view of the bay while locals enjoyed entertainment at the festivals frequently operated there. The precincts quickly gained a reputation as a place of spectacle, thanks in part to *Yushukan*'s fantastical displays of wartime scenes, but also because they often played host to such events as horse races, *sumo* matches, and even circuses. This metropolitan atmosphere can be seen in the famous wood-block print by Yousai Nobukatsu (*below*). Note the vibrant clothing of the patrons as well as the central presence of Okuma Ujihiro's 1893 Western-style bronze statue of Omura Masujiro—the first of its kind in Japan. From this depiction, we can see that at least initially, influential Tokyoites paid relatively little attention to the Shinto activities regarding the war dead and favored instead the novelties of Tokyo's burst of urbanization.



Amid this popularization of *Tokyo Shokonsha* (later Yasukuni the site), a large number of other smaller local memorials had also been constructed to honor fallen Imperial loyalists. In 1874 the government declared that all local memorials be

designated as *shokonsha*. This created a national network of sorts as they began receiving government financial support. The problem with the former *Tokyo Shokonsha*, however, was that the souls that had been transferred there as national heroes and as *kami* needed a more permanent residence; a *shokonsha* was meant to be only a temporary ritual space for the recently apotheosized war dead, not their long-term residence. This was a function only a fully-fledged Shinto shrine could serve.

Originally, the *Tokyo Shokonsha* was not especially different or higher in status than the other memorials that had undergone nationalization. It was due to its close proximity to the Imperial Palace and the high foot traffic it generated that called attention to the value it could serve if it were to be transformed into a National Shinto Shrine. So, on June 4, 1879, amid the relative public apathy toward the function and status of *Tokyo Shokonsha*, Imperial Minister Sanjo Sanetomi issued a special directive that the site was to be designated as a Special Government Shrine (*bekkaku kanpeisha*) and be officially renamed “Yasukuni Shrine.”⁵⁹ This move not only placed Yasukuni Shrine (Yasukuni the site) on a higher level within that national network of war memorials, but also served to institutionalize the use of Shinto war dead memorial practices for Imperial and military purposes.

Yasukuni the Belief

In early modern Japan, it was not unusual for religion and entertainment to be closely related. When Buddhism had been the favored state religion, temples had often served as both religious spaces and entertainment facilities. This meeting of sacred and secular could coexist due to the construction of such activities as forms of ritual offering; and, for financial reasons, they often helped to keep regular temple activities possible.⁶⁰ At the start of the Meiji Restoration, when Shinto came to be favored by

⁵⁹別格官幣社，靖国神社

⁶⁰ Takenaka pp. 53-54

the Emperor and Imperial government,⁶¹ the same relationship followed for Shinto Shrines, especially Yasukuni.

As for the entertainment to be had at the *Yushukan*, which was installed on the Yasukuni Shrine grounds in 1882, visitors could experience an ever-growing range of vivid and glorified snapshots of what war was like far from home. While information on domestic conflicts was also made available there, a general focus was placed on international conflicts, especially as Japan's modernized military strength began to surpass that of its neighbors. During the wars against China⁶² and Russia⁶³ overviewed in the first section of this paper, *Yushukan* served as a base from which militarism and a sense of celebratory nationalism began to overshadow the perception of loss of life and mourning, therein obscuring the original purpose of Yasukuni Shrine, which was supposed to be the honorable memorialization of fallen soldiers.

Here is where we reach an important crux in the formation of the “Yasukuni Conundrum”: the passive reception by everyday Japanese people of the state ideology that aestheticized war death and silenced stories of suffering. While we cannot say that this was a case of unquestioning acceptance of news from the fronts, the social expectation that led many to celebratory participation in Shrine events allowed for a view of Japan's ethno-national superiority to take root via the dissemination of Imperial messages voicing the benefits of expanding as an Empire. By way of everyday citizens' physical participation in the spectacles at Yasukuni the site, Yasukuni the (state-sanctioned) belief came to permeate the popular/collective conscious.⁶⁴

⁶¹ For more details on the period of *haibutsu kishaku* (廃仏毀釈) see Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007.

⁶² 1894-1895

⁶³ 1904-1905, these two wars were reviewed in the historical background section.

⁶⁴ Takenaka pp. 52-54.

Other than the lack of focus on memorialization, the reality of Yasukuni turned out just as Omura had originally predicted—that the central location of Kudan Hill could effectively serve as a place to strategically mobilize the nation in the face of military action. Particularly from the late 1930s and on through the end of the Asia-Pacific War, more concrete traces of this mobilization became visible. Referred to in the Japanese context as “mobilizing death” by Akiko Takenaka,⁶⁵ and similarly in the European context as the “Myth of the War Experience” by George Mosse,⁶⁶ we can see the undeniable attempt to construct a higher meaning for war participation in films, literature, school curriculum, and a wide variety of other public media. In the face of mass death, the public was made to view war death as less a loss of life and more a form of glorious sacrifice followed by hallowed resurrection.

Such resurrection was exactly what Yasukuni the belief touted to those young recruits and their worried families primarily during the latter years of the Asia-Pacific War. Through the reinvention of the original Japanese term *eirei*⁶⁷ within the context of Yasukuni the belief, military strategists were able to accomplish two things that would interminably affect Japanese national memory and identity. One was simply the provision of hope for an honorable resurrection of the spirit—totally cleansed of any wrongdoing potentially committed in life—for any individual who may die in the name of the Emperor. The other is the post-mortem transformation of those individuals into an irreversible collective.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Takenaka, ch. 1.

⁶⁶ Mosse, George. “Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21, no. 1 (1986): 491-513.

⁶⁷ Takenaka, p. 91. *Eirei* is a term that originally meant something closer to venerable person and had no particular Shinto connotation. The term was used in its current context for the first time in the *Yasukuni Jinjashi* published in 1911. 英霊

⁶⁸ It is important to note here that a considerable number of non-Japanese bodies were also mobilized for total war in the name of Emperor Hirohito. For example, the families of Korean and Chinese men who had been forced into armed service during the war had no say in whether or not they wanted their family members to be enshrined at Yasukuni. In most cases, there was no way they could have been notified. Upon later discovering the fates of their sons and brothers, some families would vehemently

While the first result is appealing in an obvious way, the second had to be packaged as an appealing eventuality. This was achieved by virtue of the fact that later in the war it had become nearly impossible to retrieve the bodies of the fallen from the distant battle theaters. Military leaders thus began to capitalize on the concept of *eirei* as a way to appease the *izoku* (bereaved families) who would fear their relative had been forced to die a bad death in a faraway land and would be prevented from ever resting in peace.⁶⁹ While funerary practices in Japan generally placed emphasis on proper ritual involving the physical body,⁷⁰ in the numerous cases that the military could not retrieve the bodies for these purposes,⁷¹ war death was made more tolerable via the aforementioned *shokon* rituals, which would call the faraway spirits of the *eirei* back home temporarily for their honorable enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine. However, in the process of enshrinement, the souls of the *eirei* are erased of individuality and are absorbed into the permanent entity that is believed to be the protective ancestor of Japan: the *kami* housed at Yasukuni Shrine.

This practice elevated otherwise normal citizens' deaths to something roughly equivalent to nationalized ancestor worship and attempted to bestow on those left behind a pride and right to be respected in society. But understandably, many could not perform that ideal emotional response, as no amount of pride or gratitude could replace the time lost with a loved one in their eyes. In order to cement an image across the nation to those not present at the ceremonies but who would still be forced to give up their loved ones to the war effort through the conscription system, traces of

request their removal from Yasukuni Shrine only to be told that it was an irreversible process. After Class-A, -B, and -C war criminals also came to be enshrined there in the 1970s, it should be understandable why the international furor and demands for change only continue to grow.

⁶⁹ Bad death meaning a belief that death without sufficient closure or proper recognition through ritual could result in the creation of a vengeful spirit.

⁷⁰ Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007.

⁷¹ This was the case particularly for deaths in the Chinese and South Pacific theaters.

negativity had to be actively filtered out. A memory of one NHK Radio announcer who conducted a live broadcast of a Yasukuni enshrinement ritual admitted to his corroboration in the literal silencing of his fellow citizens. He expressed regretfully that although he felt great emotional difficulty in following orders to muffle the voices of despairing *izoku* in the audience while using his microphone during the broadcast, he found he could not physically act otherwise.⁷²

Even for those who did speak out, there was little open support to be found. Respected but controversial political philosopher Yoshino Sakuzo⁷³ released the following fiery critique of the concept of *eirei* in 1921:

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.⁷⁴

Unsurprisingly, while many intellectuals concurred with this view, there was little mental/emotional space left in wartime Japanese society for everyday people to question how it could be possible that anyone, regardless of the accumulation of their lifetime of deeds, could become a god.

The institutionalization of grief exhibited through this replacing of sorrow and anguish with gratitude and pride became a self-reinforcing phenomena. Just as children were instructed in school to bow when passing any home that displayed the wooden plaque recognizing an *eirei*, adults were encouraged by the actions of their peers who had also lost family members to show respect and express gratitude to each other. This led to an environment of mutual surveillance as one's own comments had

⁷² Takenaka, ch. 4 "Institutionalizing Grief."

⁷³ Yoshino Sakuzo is noted for his criticism of Japan Leader Theory and also supported Korean Independence. Fujimura, Ichiro. "Toten Miyazaki and Sakuzo Yoshino: Thoughts on Asian Solidarity and Universalism in Pre-war Japan." *Asian Culture and History* 9, no. 1 (Sept. 2016): 1-6.

⁷⁴ Takenaka, pp. 91-92.

the potential to either increase perceived patriotism and civic participation or express ingratitude toward the sacrifices of others. This was exacerbated by the fact that later in the war some would even be arrested for shows of public dissent.⁷⁵ So from start to finish, Imperial military leaders were able to gain formidable control of all bodies in the nation, not just those affected by mandatory conscription. It was under this umbrella of state-censored media combined with the military's control of national subjects' bodies that Yasukuni the belief was solidified and Yasukuni the site was cast as the place at which the highest human honor a Japanese person could achieve could be bestowed.

Yasukuni the Issue

Knowing all of this, let us re-evaluate the physical and symbolic existence of Yasukuni the site through the lens of Yasukuni the issue as it is seen today. In general, I believe outcry (i.e. Yasukuni the issue) sparked by events at Yasukuni the site—most notably the veiled process through which numerous Class-A, -B, and -C war criminals came to be enshrined at Yasukuni in the 1970s⁷⁶—can be linked to certain expectations originally formed by the following two key postwar documents. The first is a policy issued by the General Headquarters called “the Directive for the Disestablishment of State Shinto” (December 15, 1945). According to the directive, by formally divesting Shinto shrines from any form of state financial or symbolic support, the U.S. Occupation forces hoped to divorce the Japanese people, especially young and impressionable school-aged children,⁷⁷ from the social atmosphere that had

⁷⁵ Sadanobu Aoki, “Watashi no Yasukuni Jinja.” In his *Buraun kan no shisō: Taishū sōsa no kōzu*, 73–88. Tokyo: Sekai Shisōsha, 1976.

⁷⁶ Mike Mochizuki, “The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum: Japan's Contested Identity and Memory.” *Northeast Asia's Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory*, eds. Barry Schwartz and Mikyoung Kim, (2010): 31-52.

⁷⁷ All public educational institutions were forbidden from including Shinto-related matters in their curriculum. For instance, class field trips to local shrines were forbidden, and all existing textbooks had to be censored of any mention of Shinto beliefs or stories.

“deluded the Japanese people into embarking upon wars of aggression.”⁷⁸

However, contrary to how this doctrine appears to be an exercise promoting a hardline ethics of Western-style democratic separation of religion and state, I believe what it actually created was an expectation, rather like a porous boundary, over which the sensitive question of how the defeated are *allowed* to remember their fallen comrades would come to be tested. In this way, Yasukuni the site, which had long enjoyed a status as the most prominent symbol of State Shinto, became a ground zero for the competing memories of a problematic war. The decades long reactionary attitude to this doctrine by Japanese leaders also indicates that Yasukuni the issue is not a problem that can be remedied by the simple destruction or repurposement of Yasukuni the site. What politicians (including the Emperor) say and do regarding Yasukuni the issue is to appropriate Yasukuni the site as a microphone through which Japan’s fragile national identity and conflicting memories as both aggressor and victim are made most uncomfortably and one-sidedly vocal.

The second document, or rather, speech, is Emperor Hirohito’s “Humanity Declaration” delivered on New Year’s Day of 1946.⁷⁹ From the statement it contained calling for the abolition of “the false conception that the Emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world,” we see another foundation of that same porous-boundary-like expectation materialize. Contrasting the intent of the Humanity Declaration with the fact that the U.S. had spared the Emperor from being tried for any crimes at the Tokyo Trial helps pinpoint exactly what memory space was erased as a result of these actions; the safe space for the creation of a *cohesive* Post-War Japanese national identity and memory.

⁷⁸ *Shinto-shirei* 神道指令, “The Shinto Directive.” Published by Nanzan University, *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 1, no. 2 (June 1960): 85-89. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30232810>

⁷⁹ *Ningen-sengen* 人間宣言, or “Imperial Rescript on the Construction of a New Japan” *Shin Nippon Kensetsu ni Kan suru Shōsho* 新日本建設に関する詔書

In other words, the individualization of responsibility at the Tokyo Trial onto those deemed Class-A, -B, and -C war criminals contrasted with the innocence of the now non-divine Emperor blurred out how the people should make sense of their own postwar feelings and memories—there was no space to accept being both a victim of Imperialism and an aggressor that had once wielded it. That, added to the fact that the East and Southeast Asian “other” victims of the Asia-Pacific War were left by the Tokyo Trial without even a right to *have* an identity, is what allowed for the continued unscrupulous collection of war memories and control of unwilling transnational bodies at Yasukuni the site.

Yasukuni the Silence

To broaden the discussion of the three “Yasukuni,” to four, I will touch on my most recent visit to observe the shrine grounds and the *Yushukan* Museum. The photo below, which I casually took on Thursday, June 28, 2018 at just past 2:00pm, caught my attention later that night. Upon realizing that it was neither a holiday, nor lunch-time, I was surprised at the number of people present in front of the main shrine. I



stood to watch for a long while (possibly looking lost), and the silence all around was almost tangible.

Visitors did not greet or even acknowledge each other after paying their respects, and each visitor only

stayed for a few minutes. Unlike almost everywhere else I had visited during this research trip, no friendly and helpful guide approached me to offer information, pamphlets, or enquire about my activity.

I spent three hours in the *Yushukan* Museum (just up the walkway to the left) each day from Wednesday to Friday, each visit at a different time of day, and I crossed

the paths of only 4 other parties during that time. When I spoke to a staff member at the information desk about taking pictures of certain exhibits, I mentioned that I was surprised at how quiet it was. She kindly replied that it does tend to be quiet at the museum, but that it would probably be more lively the following Monday as a field trip for a nearby elementary school was scheduled.

Other than the unexpected quiet, the museum exhibits remain exactly as Herbert Bix described them in his book; one could enter and exit the museum having viewed all its contents and never draw the conclusion that Emperor Hirohito had played a significant role in the war.⁸⁰ The naming and description of events like “the Manchurian Incident” and “the Mukden Incident” follow the revisionist stance, and the stories of foreign others are generally absent. The emphasis on the suffering of women on the homefront, and the sacrifices made for the nation were abound, much the same as at the Tokyo *Showakan*. Near the exit to the final exhibit were several large books for visitors to write their parting thoughts. Most entries were scrawled in children’s handwriting and expressed awe at the bravery of the soldiers or happiness that they can live in a much better Japan. The lengthier notes, presumably written by university students or other adults, expressed a much wider array of opinions.

Overall, this experience of silence at Yasukuni, as well as the relative quiet of the other museums I visited in Japan that summer, made me wonder what the status of the mourning and memory process is for the people who visit these sites now. Although I cannot say for sure, it seemed that the expression of personal, deeper thoughts on matters of the war are still kept very private, and that Japan still lacks a public environment conducive to critiquing the carefully constructed images of Japan’s past.

⁸⁰ Bix, p. 683

It is at the cost of silencing those foreign others' stories, memories, and worries that Japan may bring to light their own. Unfortunately, the "Yasukuni Conundrum" is but one venue through which influential Japanese public figures portray dissatisfaction with Japan's postwar status and fractured national identity. A socio-political wave by the name of revisionism is another venue through which Japanese organizations sustain victimization in the popular conscious, habituate silence in resolving matters of their own past aggressions, and attempt to spackle over the walls of history wherever an unsightly stain appears.

Constitutional & Historical Revisionism

As noted above, Post-War Allied expectations drove a vanquished but still defensive Japanese government to seek outlets for their tumultuous feelings of loss and anger. In addition to voicing informal but still state-sponsored displeasure through Yasukuni the issue, constitutional revisionism can be seen as its formal counterpart. To acknowledge the current realities of Japan's postwar constitution⁸¹ and why it sparks such desire in some groups to pursue drastic revision means to acknowledge the uncomfortable nature of its creation.

The "Committee to Study Constitutional Problems" was a group established in 1946 by order of the SCAP and was headed by Japanese legal scholar and prewar cabinet minister Joji Matsumoto. Although General MacArthur had hoped for the Japanese side to initiate democratic reforms of their own volition so as to avoid international criticism, the draft constitution eventually proposed by Matsumoto's team was quickly rejected outright. Citing that the Japanese draft lacked significant changes when compared to the original Meiji Constitution, the SCAP ordered his own

⁸¹ Full-text of the Constitution of Japan available at:
https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

staff, headed by Major General Courtney Whitney, to draft a new document, including an article totally renouncing war. Created in less than one week, the new draft was presented to the Japanese side in February 1947 under threat that “the person of the Emperor could not be guaranteed” should they refuse to proclaim it.⁸²

Through the reluctant acceptance of the U.S. version of the document, the country of Japan was forcibly democratized, demilitarized, and expressly forbidden from ever possessing war potential again.⁸³ Since the end of the U.S. Occupation, the constitution has never been subject to formal amendment. But in recent years, we are now witnessing repeated attempts by Prime Ministers (Abe Shinzo only being the most recent of these) and their cabinet members to revise, or at least drastically re-interpret, the constitution. With much of the fire aimed at Article 9⁸⁴ we can view this revisionist wave as a reminder that the embers of the Asia-Pacific War, the Tokyo Trial, and the U.S. Occupation are still burning memory spaces refusing to be silenced or forgotten.

While formerly exploited neighbors like the Koreas and China may have been fairly content with the creation of Japan’s constitution, which seemed would shield them indefinitely from worries of attempted re-colonization and military belligerence, Japanese leaders today feel strongly that after spending more than 70 years’ time on creating a new track record as a peaceful country, it is high time to regain the status and rights of a normalized country. Never forgetting the memory of the victor’s justice

⁸² Yongwook Ryu, 2018. pp. 4-5

⁸³ Interpretations of “war potential” have varied from administration to administration, but a general logic seems to be that anything in excess of purely self-defensive capabilities is to be considered “war potential.” See Hisako Motoyama, “Formulating Japan’s UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan.” 2018.

⁸⁴ Chapter II: Renunciation of War, Article 9. “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

that was exacted upon the Japanese people at the end of the Asia Pacific War, it is in this environment that the two major claims for constitutional revision have been legitimated by a variety of Japanese politicians and organizations.

The first claim is that such an “imposed” and “un-Japanese” constitution renders it impossible for the Japanese people to feel pride in being Japanese. The adjacent issue of history revisionism, in which Japanese school textbooks and other print media glorify, water down, or even delete certain events of Japan’s wartime endeavors, bolsters this claim. Like some who insist that the Holocaust was a hoax, their Japanese counterparts try to downplay events like the Rape of Nanking, and claim that the stories like those of the “comfort women” are a fabrication, among other things. Historian Ienaga Saburō, famous for his life-long work of holding school textbook creators accountable for accurate representation of Japan’s wartime past, puts it this way:

If postwar prosperity came at the expense of the war, those who are able to enjoy this (including the postwar generations) should be willing to take responsibility for the war.⁸⁵

A boom of international news coverage regarding this issue is largely responsible for the critique that Japanese leaders engage in a contradictory back-and-forth of a “politics of regret” followed by periods of “historical amnesia,” all while proclaiming to be invested in upholding the ideal of international peace and continuing prosperity. This leads to the second claim, which is that current perceived regional security threats, particularly the nuclear weapons and missile threat posed by North Korea and the belligerent nature of territorial disputes namely with China, cannot be dealt with sufficiently due to constitutional restrictions.

⁸⁵ Saburo Ienaga, “The Glorification of War in Japanese Education.” *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 113-133.

Most visible of all such revisionist attempts are those by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. During his first term in office from 2006-2007, Abe passed the National Referendum Law, which appeared to be the first step toward lowering the bar to official constitutional change. As Article 96 states, any proposed amendments should be initiated by the Diet, then voted on by all the members of each House. Should it pass by a two-thirds majority, the proposed amendment would then be left to the people's vote through a special referendum with requirements to be determined by the Diet.⁸⁶ The National Referendum Law is notable in that it specified passing by only a bare majority would be the requirement, not a two-thirds majority as in the House.⁸⁷

Then, shortly after his re-election in 2012, Abe quickly began with efforts to revise Article 96 itself. Although this was met with insurmountable opposition, his revisionist efforts did not stop there. By July 2014 his cabinet announced their pursuit of a new policy of "collective self-defense." This policy would re-interpret Article 9's second paragraph to allow for Japan's Self-Defense Forces⁸⁸ to participate in foreign conflicts for the purpose of providing "collective self-defense" alongside their allies. This legislation was passed on September 19, 2015 and became fully effective from March 29, 2016.⁸⁹ While Abe has not yet technically achieved a formal revision of the content of the constitution, his re-interpretation is a major political move that was ultimately just as powerful.

⁸⁶ "Article 96. Amendments to this Constitution shall be initiated by the Diet, through a concurring vote of two-thirds or more of all the members of each House and shall thereupon be submitted to the people for ratification, which shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of all votes cast thereon, at a special referendum or at such election as the Diet shall specify.

Amendments when so ratified shall immediately be promulgated by the Emperor in the name of the people, as an integral part of this Constitution."

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

⁸⁷ <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/02/21/abe-and-constitutional-revision-round-two/>

⁸⁸ The Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are a creation of the Cold-War era during which Japan became entangled in US-led anti-communist regional military strategy. See Hisako Motoyama, 2018.

⁸⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34287362>

This legislation proved very unsettling in the eyes of neighboring countries like South Korea and China who had long enjoyed that particular sense of security provided by Japan's longstanding pacifist constitutional interpretation. And as the record of Abe's nationalist public remarks and legislative actions grows ever larger, the space in which to acknowledge the origins of that nationalist anger threatens to shrink. Without doing injustice to the memories of those who suffered at the hands of the Imperial Japanese forces, there must also be acknowledgement from global citizens that at the end of the war, the Japanese people were made to experience a few injustices of their own.

While the more peace-loving and truth-seeking among us may rightly feel very averse to things like Abe denouncing the 1993 Kono Statement⁹⁰ and the claims of the former "comfort women" and his pro-revisionist stance on history textbooks, it would still be hypocritical to refuse to acknowledge that in some ways, Japanese people were not given a voice either at the end of the Asia Pacific War. In a similar vein, Japan's tormented national identity in light of the individualization of war responsibility at the Tokyo Trial is further complicated by the elder generation's self-imposed silence. Even though those very people may now feel upset to hear of the plight of such "foreign other" victims like the "comfort women" and former forced laborers, and may have grown to take great pride in Japan's pacifist constitution as a step in the right direction, to readdress history in any way risks the potential de-individualization of guilt for wartime events. That would force them to come to terms with their long suppressed guilty conscious of having once lived as pro-war supporters. This in turn instigates taboo and a sort of apathetic habitual silence in the general Japanese public around revisiting the more unsavory matters of history.

⁹⁰ The 1993 Kono Statement is available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>

CONCLUSION

Though I hardly feel that I have said enough on these matters of postwar habitual silence, by now at least my initial two points should have been validated. Through the discussion of the Tokyo Trial and its failure to fulfill the legacy imagined at Nuremberg, we see that regional specificities and cultural practices are integral factors that cannot be ignored in the pursuit of post-conflict peace-building. The outcomes of the Tokyo Trial have transcended generations and are still eating away at the Japanese sense of national identity as well as their ability to vocalize and come to terms with aggressions committed in the past. The trial also foreclosed the possibility of open postwar redress efforts when transnational bodies such as those of the comfort women and of other forced laborers were completely ignored in the proceedings. Despite some eventually breaking the silence of their suffering and officially bringing their cases before their oppressors, the long passage of time had rendered their memories suspect, and subjected them to the Japanese legal system's long embedded attitudes of gendered violence and the limits of international law.

In discussing the complexities of the Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum, we could see numerous instances of political expediency taking precedence over the well-being of individuals. The silencing of Japanese citizens who may have disagreed with the Asia-Pacific War was achieved through the government's repurposing of the concept of *eirei* and the aestheticization of war death. The mutual surveillance between families who both had and had not lost loved ones forced everyone to show respect for sacrifices no one should have to make, and erased citizens' ability to mourn freely. For those who had supported the war effort, the shock of the Emperor's unconditional surrender and the ensuing U.S. Occupation status would force them into silence as well. In order to rebuild a Japan that could be respected again in the world, war responsibility was individualized onto a select few, Emperor Hirohito was exempted

from judgment, and the general public was left with little direction, which resulted in their passive adoption of his innocence as their own.

Over the seven postwar decades, Japanese politicians have sought a return to normalized sovereignty, and opposition to the imposed peace constitution is gaining traction. The wave of constitutional revisionism in Japan is just one part of the wider movement of historical revisionism that has been brewing as a result of that adopted sense of postwar innocence and victimization at the hands of U.S. Imperialism. The truth that Japanese people were not given a voice on certain occasions at the close of the Asia-Pacific War thus complicates the regional politics that constantly place nationally bounded victim narratives in competition with each other. Gendered and nationalist traditions are certainly not unique to Japan, but the uncomfortable truths and complexities of history tend to keep the volume up for some groups while toning down the details of others.

Attempted erasures of memory space have been committed to varying degrees by all parties involved in commemoration practices related to the Asia-Pacific War. Thus it is for that reason that we should now look to the perspectives of those silenced, rather than those already well recorded, in assessing the aftermath of the Asia-Pacific War's transnational violence. Making porous the boundaries of our understanding of collective memories while asking the hard questions about history will be just one way to pay for the prosperity many now have. Although the 20th century was a truly unfortunate time, it does not cry for revision. Instead it calls for dedicated and repeated re-evaluations by those who can wield both critical thinking and compassion. The least we can do from now on is refuse to let habitual silences continue to spackle over our memories.

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