

Nationalist Circles in Japan Today: The Impossibility of Secularization

Thierry GUTHMANN

Contrary to what sometimes has been suggested, contemporary Japanese society is no exception to the rule that the more a society modernizes, the more its individuals become secular. Simultaneously, however, since the end of the 1990s the political sphere in Japan has seen a return of religious elements. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the case of nationalist circles. State Shinto, which was imposed in the prewar period by the authorities of imperial Japan, constitutes the ideological foundation for these circles. More specifically, the emperor cult and the cult of the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine are the two main components of this ideology. This article argues that it is unlikely that the ideology and activities of nationalist circles in Japan will acquire a more secular character, given the fundamentally religious character of their vision of the national community. Nippon Kaigi, a large confederation of political and religious movements, occupies a central place in this nationalist revival. Many politicians of the first rank are involved with this organization. As this article demonstrates, the ideological positions of its members are placed on a continuum, ranging from a religious nationalism close to historical State Shinto to more moderate statements suggesting the existence of a type of Japanese civil religion. Ultimately, members and sympathizers of nationalist movements in Japan are all motivated, to varying degrees, by nostalgia for a golden age of the nation.

Keywords: religion, politics, Nippon Kaigi, State Shinto, the emperor, Yasukuni Shrine, Jinja Honchō, Abe Shinzō, civil religion, golden age

Introduction

As Ian Reader has demonstrated in a recent article, Japanese society is becoming increasingly secular.¹ In opposition to a number of academics who have used Japan as a counter-example against the secularization thesis, Reader provides powerful evidence showing that urbanization and education have contributed to the withdrawal of religion from the daily lives of Japanese people. Individual religious practices are losing importance and, Reader explains, religious organizations are suffering continuous decline. However,

¹ Reader 2012.

in an article published in the same issue of the *Journal of Religion in Japan*, Mark Mullins convincingly argues that the secularization of Japanese society has multiple dimensions.² Although secularization is at an advanced stage when it comes to individual religious practice, this is not the case when it comes to political life. Paradoxically, the decrease in individual religious practice has been accompanied, in the second half of the 1990s, by a renewed importance of the religious dimensions of political activities, not in the least when it comes to conservative circles. This development probably corresponds to what José Casanova meant when he used the term “deprivatization of religion” to describe, in four different countries, the reemergence in the public sphere of religious actors who had previously withdrawn to the private sphere.³ Similarly, in today’s Japan, nationalist circles—backed by the Shinto shrine world—are the increasingly influential advocates of a view of the nation that is fundamentally religious.⁴

Throughout this article, I use the term “nationalist circles” to refer to a group of political organizations representing ideological positions that are very similar. Of these, Nippon Kaigi 日本会議 (Japan Conference) and Jinja Honchō 神社本庁 (Association of Shinto Shrines) are the two most important organizations. The online TV channel Nihon Bunka Channeru Sakura 日本文化チャンネル桜 (Japanese Culture Channel Sakura) and the activist group Ganbare Nippon! Zenkoku Kōdō Iinkai 頑張れ日本! 全国行動委員会 (Ganbare Nippon! National Action Committee) are also major actors within this movement. Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai 新しい歴史教科書をつくる会 (Japan Society for History Textbook Reform) is another well-known organization that is part of the “nationalist circles” discussed in this article.⁵

It should be pointed out here that the ideological platform of Japanese nationalist circles is not limited to the religious dimension. In fact, members are primarily concerned with strengthening the nation; that is, reestablishing Japan as a strong country politically. Thus, they strive for a revision of Article 9 of the Constitution, so that Japan can have an official army, and no longer renounce the sovereign right of belligerency. Another of their key priorities is the popularization of a more positive account of the actions of the imperial army during the Pacific War, especially in school textbooks. In fact, in Japanese nationalist circles, the contents of history education since the end of the war are typically described as “masochistic” (*jigyakuteki* 自虐的); according to this view, such history education is the cause of the lack of pride and patriotism in Japan today. Another major political battle for them concerns the defense of territorial integrity, especially against Chinese and Korean claims.⁶

Thus, the majority of the political battles waged by nationalist circles in Japan do not have religious dimensions. Yet the fact remains that within these circles, popular devotion for the emperor and the existence of a national cult of the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine are

2 Mullins 2012a.

3 Casanova 1994.

4 I use the term “nationalism” to refer to an ideology made up of claims that the strength of a national community should be preserved at all costs, since individuals are not able to fully exist outside of this community.

5 Due to internal conflicts and schisms in the first decade of the twenty-first century, this group lost much of its former influence to a new organization with similar objectives, the Kyōkasho Kaizen no Kai 教科書改善の会 (Society for Improvement of Textbooks).

6 On these political activities of the nationalist circles in Japan, see Guthmann 2017.

considered as two fundamental, indispensable elements of a Japan that has regained all its state power. The cult of the emperor and the cult of the war dead are two remnants of State Shinto, which, I argue in this article, have a religious character. It should nevertheless be noted that the majority of ideologues involved with nationalist movements in Japan consider Shinto to belong to the realm of customs, not that of religion, as was indeed the case in prewar Japan. This point of view is still strong today, as the following example illustrates.

I recently interviewed Ms. F., a resident of Mie Prefecture who has been active for many years as the leader of a local branch of Nippon Kaigi.⁷ According to her, Shinto was placed into the category “religion” by the American occupying forces: “Originally, Shinto shrines were not religious places,” she stated. “However, during the occupation, Shinto was put in the same legal category as other religions.”⁸ Ms. F. then declared that she does not consider Shinto to be a religion. This was all the more interesting, since prior to coming to the teahouse where we had our interview, she had entered a shrine to conduct an act of worship. Ms. F. argued: “As a matter of fact, in Shinto there is no founder, there are no commandments, and no proselytization. Shinto consists of customs that are an integral part of Japanese everyday life. This has nothing in common with other religious movements.” When asked to define religion, she replied: “It is necessary to have a founder, followers, the will to disseminate a teaching, sacred books. Shinto has none of those things. The only things there are, are religious festivals (*matsuri* 祭).” I pointed out that when there is a collective belief in the existence of deities, we can speak of religion. Ms. F. retorted: “But Japanese deities are not comparable to those that can be found in Christianity, for example. In Japan, the living and their deities are connected by family ties. They are ancestors. Japanese deities are not absolute, all-knowing and omnipotent, like the Christian God. People in the Meiji period translated the word ‘God’ as *kami* 神, which is why things have become so complicated.”

Ms. F. adheres to a very widespread conception of religion, which has roots in the Meiji period. Jason Josephson has demonstrated that, during this period, the concept of religion was invented under pressure from Western nations following the introduction of Christianity. He explains that Meiji-period leaders were the supervisors of a large project to classify various existing beliefs and worship traditions: “Put briefly, Confucianism was not recognized as a religion, but was instead treated as a scholastic subject. Shinto was bifurcated into a national form of Shinto, *which was not defined as religion*, and various individual Shinto sects, which were. In the end, only Buddhism was legally described as a religion.”⁹ This conception of Shinto as a non-religion was reversed after the war by the American occupying forces, who reclassified Shinto as a religion in law. Nevertheless, like the majority of ideologues involved with nationalist circles in Japan, Ms. F. does not subscribe to the understanding of Shinto as a religion. Instead, she remains committed to a vision of Shinto as “national custom.”

It is interesting to note that the interpretation of religious practices as “customs” is not unique to Japanese society. The French scholar Jean Baubérot recently published his typology of different expressions of the *laïcité* phenomenon, which includes “identity *laïcité*”

7 Interview conducted on 26 May 2015.

8 Ironically, this is what saved Yasukuni Shrine from destruction. On this topic, see Mullins 2010.

9 Josephson 2011, p. 594, my emphasis. In addition to Buddhism, Christianity was also recognized as a religion.

(*la laïcité identitaire*).¹⁰ This notion strongly resembles the view of Japanese nationalists, as it refers to an ideology which considers Catholicism in France as a “cultural” phenomenon, not a religious one. This is the understanding of *laïcité* advocated by former president Nicolas Sarkozy, in particular when he talked about the “Christian roots” of France.

My approach to secularization is strongly influenced by the concept of *laïcité*. Louis-Marie Morfaux has given the following definition: “Independence of the state and public services, especially public education, from any church or religious creed; synonymous with neutrality.”¹¹ In an earlier book devoted to the topic of different types of *laïcité* and secularism throughout the world, Baubérot provides a universal description of this concept: “A process of secularization (*laïcisation*) occurs when a state no longer is legitimated by a religion or a particular school of thought.”¹² Now, for Japanese nationalists, as we shall see throughout this article, Japan cannot do without the emperor cult and its ideological template, State Shinto. Thus, my approach to secularization is limited to the political dimensions of this phenomenon and does not encompass its sociological dimensions (which are taken up by Ian Reader, for example, in the article referred to above).

This article consists of two parts. Following authors such as Shimazono Susumu, Mark Mullins, and John Breen, the first part shows that contemporary Japanese nationalist movements are primarily nourished by the ideology provided by State Shinto.¹³ In the second part, I will argue that the fundamentally religious character of this vision of the national community prevents any secularization of the activities and ideology of Japanese nationalist circles.

1. State Shinto:

The Major Ideological Source of Contemporary Nationalist Movements

In this article, I do not engage with debates concerning the origins and importance of State Shinto prior to 1945. Instead, my focus is on the contemporary period, in which elements of prewar State Shinto linger on. In my use of the term “State Shinto,” I follow the definition given by Shimazono Susumu in his article in *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*: “When I use this term [State Shinto] I refer to Shinto-inspired ideas and practices that are mainly propagated by agencies of the Japanese state or government in connection with attempts to integrate the nation and to strengthen the sense of national loyalty—and which are accepted by many of the Japanese people.”¹⁴ In a book on existing relations between State Shinto and the Japanese people, Shimazono specifies that this national loyalty is constructed primarily around the emperor. In addition, as explained in the following section, Yasukuni Shrine is considered by many in nationalist circles as a sacred center unifying the Japanese nation. As Shimazono writes: “In reality, State Shinto was never dismantled. Surely, it was considerably reduced in size. Nevertheless, it still exists today.”¹⁵

10 Baubérot 2015, p. 118. Translator’s note: the term *laïcité* is used to refer to the particular type of secularism that has developed in France, which is characterized by a strict separation of public and private realms, the first of which is configured as explicitly nonreligious. Since the term is so distinctive, I have chosen not to translate it, but use it as a foreign loanword [APR].

11 Morfaux 1980, p. 190.

12 Baubérot 2007, p. 3.

13 Shimazono 2010; Mullins 2012a, 2012b; Breen 2010.

14 Shimazono 2007, p. 700.

15 Shimazono 2010, p. 185.

(i) The Emperor Cult and the Cult of the War Dead: The Survival of State Shinto

Why is it possible to say that State Shinto continues to exist? First of all, it should be noted that despite his official renunciation of divine status, the emperor still constitutes a fundamentally religious entity. An analysis of the ideology of Jinja Honchō will illustrate this observation.

Jinja Honchō owes its existence to the 1945 Shinto Directive issued by the American occupying forces, which relegated the management of Shinto places of worship to the private realm. Nevertheless, Jinja Honchō is the direct descendant of organizations within the imperial government that had formerly been concerned with the management of Shinto worship, such as the Jinguin 神祇院, the Hōsaikai 奉斎会, and the national priests association. Jinja Honchō represents approximately eighty thousand shrines—that is, the vast majority of Shinto places of worship in the country. In May 2000 former Prime Minister Mori Yoshirō made a famous declaration that Japan is the country of the gods with the emperor as its center in front of a group of members of parliament involved with the political arm of Jinja Honchō: the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership (Shinto Seiji Renmei 神道政治連盟).

At the center of the cult advocated by Jinja Honchō is Ise Shrine, often simply referred to as “the shrine” (*jingū* 神宮). The deity venerated at this site, located in the city of Ise, is Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神, the sun goddess situated on top of the Shinto pantheon. For Jinja Honchō, the worship of this goddess ultimately constitutes an attitude of indirect devotion to the emperor, her descendant. Thus, on the website of this organization, we can read the following in an article on Ise shrine: “At its center is the Great Imperial Shrine (Naikū 内宮), where Amaterasu Ōmikami, the ancestress of the imperial family, is worshipped.”¹⁶ This is presented as an objective fact: the current emperor is the 125th of a long lineage that started on 11 February 660 BC with Emperor Jinmu 神武, descendant of the sun goddess.

It may be worth noting that Japan is the only industrialized country, as far as I am aware, where the date of National Foundation Day, 11 February, is based on a mythical-religious event. In fact, the reign of the first historical emperor (whose existence is proven by historical documents) is generally considered to have been around the sixth century AD, more than a millennium after the official establishment of the nation. This vagueness regarding the historical or mythological nature of the first emperors contributes to maintaining the divine aura of the imperial family.

Likewise, the emperor regularly conducts ceremonies of a Shinto nature, in accordance with the rhythm of the seasons. Many of these are propitiatory rituals, conducted for the benefit of the nation. Actually, there is genuine continuity between prewar and postwar imperial rites since the American Occupation left them untouched. Officially, these ceremonies have a private character. Nevertheless, the prime minister, other ministers, members of parliament, judges, and officials of the Imperial Household Agency are invited to take part in a number of them. Shimazono has commented upon this situation as follows: “It is clear that ceremonies with a Shinto nature are conducted as state ceremonies. Nevertheless, they are treated as ‘internal affairs of the imperial court’: as the private acts of

16 On <http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/izanai/ise/> (accessed 29 January 2016).

the Imperial House. For that reason, citizens are not informed about them.”¹⁷ It should be noted that, while the average Japanese indeed has no awareness of this religious dimension of the activities of their monarch, this is not the case for most members of the nationalist circles outlined above.

Shimazono traces the relations between State Shinto and the Japanese, and reaches the conclusion that after the war State Shinto has survived in three forms: first, in the shape of the everyday rituals of the imperial family; second, in the activism of private organizations such as Jinja Honchō; and finally, in the shape of popular devotion centered on the emperor and thoughts about/sentiments for the national body (*kokutaironteki na kangaekata/shinjō* 国体論的な考え方・心情).¹⁸ Yet, in his book Shimazono does not mention that State Shinto today also survives in a fourth shape, which arguably is at least as important as the other three: the rituals and other ceremonies conducted annually at Yasukuni Shrine.¹⁹ This shrine constituted the keystone of prewar State Shinto, since soldiers of the imperial army who had died for the nation were honored there by the emperor, the sacred embodiment of the nation.

In a recent article devoted to the history of Yasukuni Shrine as a “shrine of the nation,” John Breen demonstrates that this site of commemoration did not acquire a truly national character until the celebrations in the spring of 1938.²⁰ This was the first time that a large number of people participated in its ceremonies. Furthermore, Breen suggests that after the Japanese defeat, Yasukuni Shrine lost its status as “shrine of the nation,” and specifies that it has not recovered this since. He justifies this statement by pointing to the separation between the nation—that is, the Japanese people—and the celebrations with a nationalist character held at the shrine. According to Breen, even though large numbers of people still visit Yasukuni Shrine, many of them do so not in order to commemorate those who died for the nation but in order to participate in the festivities of July (*mitama matsuri* みたままつり) or the New Year. He thus arrives at the following conclusion: “One could perhaps sum up postwar Yasukuni by saying that while ‘nationalism’ is alive and kicking there today, the nation is conspicuous by its absence. The organic linkage between the shrine, its rites and nationalism on the one hand, and the Japanese nation on the other, is no more.”²¹ This analysis of national dimensions of the shrine after the war—or rather, for this period, the absence of a national dimension—certainly corresponds to the reality. However, as will be made clear in the second part of this article, it is precisely this national dimension of the shrine that nationalist circles are trying hard to restore.

The two main festivals of Yasukuni Shrine, now a private religious organization, take place in spring and autumn. In both cases, the emperor sends gifts and an official message. Although the festivities last three or four days in total, the arrival by car of the imperial messenger in the heart of the shrine, the transportation of the gifts and message on a palanquin by shrine priests, and their presentation to the deities constitute the height of the celebrations. Likewise, each year on 15 August, the anniversary of Japan’s defeat, a

17 Shimazono 2010, p. 191.

18 Shimazono 2010, pp. 212–13.

19 It should however be mentioned that in a subsequent article Shimazono writes at length about the Yasukuni Shrine issue and its connection to State Shinto. See Shimazono 2016.

20 Breen 2014.

21 Breen 2014, p. 147.

significant number of members of parliament come to Yasukuni in order to participate in the religious ceremony conducted daily in memory of those who died for the country. They are members of a group called the Association of Diet Members for Worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine Together (Minna de Yasukuni Jinja ni Sanpai Suru Kokkai Giin no Kai みんなで靖國神社に参拝する国会議員の会). Finally, the famous visits of the prime minister in office—if they take place—always provoke a storm of criticism and indignation, internationally as well as domestically. Today Yasukuni Shrine continues to be a site of convergence between religion, the emperor, politicians, and the nation through the worship of those who sacrificed their lives in war. This combination constituted the fundamental characteristic of State Shinto.

For all the reasons listed above, I fully agree with the following statement by Shimazono Susumu: “After 1945, State Shinto has continued to exist.... Since the war, the private organization of shrines and priests (Jinja Honchō) has been one of the leaders of the movement for State Shinto.”²² Although Shimazono mainly addresses the activities and ideology of Jinja Honchō, in this article I am also particularly interested in the ideology of Nippon Kaigi, the biggest nationalist pressure group in contemporary Japan. Significantly, this organization unites a large number of political-religious movements around Jinja Honchō, all of which are motivated, to varying degrees, by a desire to revitalize State Shinto.

(ii) Nippon Kaigi: Ideological Heirs of State Shinto

During the first decades of the postwar period, nationalist groups in Japan lost much of their previous influence as a result of the defeat and the accompanying political-administrative reorganization. Since then, they have worked persistently to regain some of the lost ground. This process of recovery accelerated in the late 1990s, and is currently



Figure 1. Reception desk of the Association of Diet Members for Worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine Together. Autumn Festival, Yasukuni Shrine, 2014. Photo by the author.



Figure 2. Transportation of the gifts and message of the emperor on a palanquin. Autumn Festival, Yasukuni Shrine, 2014. Photo by the author.

²² Shimazono 2010, p. v.

materialized by the establishment of the second government of Abe Shinzō 安倍晋三. As suggested by Mark Mullins, the great earthquake in Kobe and the sarin gas attack on the subway in Tokyo in 1995 caused severe emotional and psychological shocks that might have constituted the catalysts for a return of right-wing nationalism. That is, these events caused chaos in society, demanding, one way or the other, that the order of things be restored. The nationalist right has certainly profited from these crises provoked by a profound challenge to the values on which postwar Japan was built.²³

The regaining of political influence by the nationalist right can be illustrated by the fact that in February 2015, fifteen out of nineteen members of the Abe government were members of the parliamentary association of Nippon Kaigi; meanwhile, eighteen of them were (also) members of the parliamentary association of the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership.²⁴ Of these fifteen ministers, at least five have maintained strong ties with nationalist lobby groups since the start of their political careers—not least Prime Minister Abe himself. Arimura Haruko 有村治子, the minister in charge of women’s empowerment and measures against the declining birthrate, and Yamatani Eriko 山谷えり子, minister in charge of public safety and the abduction issue, are primarily dependent upon the support of Nippon Kaigi for their election and reelection. The same applies to one of the special advisors to the prime minister (Naikaku sōri daijin hosakan 内閣総理大臣補佐官), Senator Etō Seiichi 衛藤晟一.

Abe Shinzō himself has maintained close links with Nippon Kaigi for a long time. For instance, in December 2009, he actively participated in a large rally organized by the nationalist lobby in order to protest the “political use” made of the emperor by the Democratic Party of Japan government.²⁵ On 1 April 2014, after he had become prime minister again, Abe was special advisor (*tokubetsu komon* 特別顧問) of the parliamentary association of Nippon Kaigi.²⁶ A number of newspaper and magazine articles have strongly denounced the ties that unite the new Abe government with this nationalist organization, sometimes even referring to it as the “Nippon Kaigi cabinet” (Nippon Kaigi naikaku 日本会議内閣).²⁷ According to the count done by Tawara Yoshifumi, as of 23 April 2016, 280 members of the Japanese Diet, representing different political parties, took part in the parliamentary association of Nippon Kaigi. A significant majority of these were also affiliated with the parliamentary association of the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership, Jinja Honchō’s political arm.²⁸

But what exactly is Nippon Kaigi? In terms of the number of individual activists involved as well as the various groups and movements affiliated with it, Nippon Kaigi

23 Mullins 2012b.

24 Tawara 2015, p. 155.

25 *Nippon no ibuki* 日本の息吹, March 2010, p. 20. This is a monthly magazine sent to members of Nippon Kaigi. It contains articles written by a diversity of authors (politicians, academics, activists, and so on), as well as detailed accounts of the activities of Nippon Kaigi. The magazine often addresses current affairs, while ensuring that the views presented are in accordance with the position of the nationalist lobby.

26 This is according to Nippon Kaigi’s internal document *Heisei 26 nendo kokumin undō hōshin / Heisei 25 nendo katsudō hōkoku*, p. 15 (not published).

27 See for instance the article published in the weekly magazine *Friday* in August 2014 (*Furaidē*, 22–29 August, pp. 18–21). Similarly, the daily newspaper *Asahi shinbun* published a series of articles on the topic, entitled “Nippon kaigi kenkyū” (Research on Nippon Kaigi), on 23, 24, and 25 March 2016.

28 *Shūkan kinyōbi* 2016.

constitutes the largest confederation of nationalist organizations in contemporary Japan.²⁹ It was established in 1997 as a merger between two older nationalist organizations. The first, *Nihon o Mamoru Kai* 日本を守る会, consisted of a number of new religious movements, as well as *Jinja Honchō*; the second, *Nihon o Mamoru Kokumin Kaigi* 日本を守る国民会議, brought together associations of war veterans as well as a number of other groups advocating nationalist ideas. The Advisory Committee of Japanese Youth (*Nihon Seinen Kyōgi Kai* 日本青年協議会) took care of the administrative management of these two organizations, and continues to do so for *Nippon Kaigi*.³⁰ Currently, *Jinja Honchō* is considered to be the backbone of *Nippon Kaigi*.

When I met representatives of *Nippon Kaigi*, I asked them whether it is true that *Jinja Honchō* makes up the core of *Nippon Kaigi*, as I had been told at a reception following the organization's general meeting in 2014. One of the representatives answered as follows: "As you can see here [showing a text listing *Nippon Kaigi*'s main values], the importance we place on traditional culture inevitably brings us to Shinto and the imperial family. Therefore, it is true that *Jinja Honchō* has a special place within *Nippon Kaigi*." Previously, another representative had told me the following: "As you can see, in the main executive bodies of *Nippon Kaigi* are several representatives of *Jinja Honchō*. This shows that *Jinja Honchō* is an essential constitutive organization for *Nippon Kaigi*."³¹ Among the five advisors (*komon* 顧問) that make up the management board of *Nippon Kaigi*, there is one leader of *Jinja Honchō* and another of *Shintō Seiji Renmei*. Moreover, one of the four vice presidents, Tanaka Tsunekiyo 田中恆清, is simultaneously president (*sōchō* 総長) of *Jinja Honchō*.³²

Ideologically speaking, *Jinja Honchō* and *Nippon Kaigi* are extremely close. In a recent book devoted to the topic of the relationship between religion and politics in postwar Japan, Tsukada Hotaka confesses to being unable to find real differences between the two organizations' ideologies.³³ He argues persuasively that these two organizations, as well as the earlier organizations that merged and became *Nippon Kaigi* in 1997, have been at the center of a "unified conservative movement" (*hoshu gōdō undō* 保守合同運動) since the end of the war. In this movement, and on the board of *Nippon Kaigi*, there are also about ten representatives of new religious movements.³⁴ Although one would expect these religious

29 In July 2014, *Nippon Kaigi* had approximately 35,000 individual members. Membership is voluntary and open to all, regardless of nationality or political or religious affiliation.

30 Uesugi 2016, pp. 27–34; Uozumi 2007, p. 187. The Advisory Committee of Japanese Youth traces its origins to a student movement set up in the late 1960s by the new religious movement *Seichō no Ie*, in reaction at the time to the strong pressure of leftist student movements. See <http://www.seikyoku.org/nihonkyogikai.html> (accessed 23 June 2016).

31 Interview conducted on 18 July 2014 at the office of *Nippon Kaigi* in Tokyo.

32 See the official website of *Nippon Kaigi*: <http://www.nipponkaigi.org/about/yakuin> (accessed 25 June 2016). For an analysis of the views of Tanaka Tsunekiyo on Shinto's "public" character, see the article by Rots in this issue.

33 Tsukada 2015, p. 65.

34 New religious movements represented on the board of *Nippon Kaigi* include *Reiyūkai* 霊友会, *Shinsei Bukkyō* 新生佛教, *Nenpō Shinkyō* 念法眞教, *Sūkyō Mahikari* 崇教眞光, *Kurozumikyō* 黒住教, *Busshogonenkai* 佛所護念会, *Taiwa Kyōdan* 大和教団, and *Gedatsukai* 解脱会. Interestingly, several of these define themselves as Buddhist. For a more detailed analysis of the motivations of these religious groups, see Guthmann 2015.

movements to be rivals, in the nationalist lobby they act together.³⁵ The representatives of these organizations are all concerned with rebuilding a Japan centered on the imperial house, which they consider as the essential constitutive element of the nation.

It is interesting to note that the cult of the Japanese nation and the imperial family is not limited to Shinto-derived new religions, but also extends to Buddhist and even Christian groups. For instance, Buddhist monks close to Nippon Kaigi believe they have taken on, in the last forty years, the mission entrusted to them by the goddess Amaterasu: that is, to protect Japan from decline.³⁶ The indigenous Christian organization Kirisuto no Makuya キリストの幕屋, founded by Teshima Ikurō 手島郁郎 in 1948, likewise has regular contact with Nippon Kaigi.³⁷ This new religious movement with notable nationalistic tendencies encourages in particular the celebration of National Foundation Day and the cult of the first emperor, Jinmu, with the purpose of restoring a feeling of national pride among the Japanese.³⁸

In this great ecumenical gathering of groups with diverse religious faiths, we find the manifestation of a Japanese form of civil religion, that is, a celebration of the Japanese nation that depends above all on devotion to the imperial family. Some government policies have undoubtedly contributed to the revival of this devotion, such as the restoration in 1966 of 11 February as an official holiday commemorating the founding of the nation. Nevertheless, Nippon Kaigi is an organization characterized by strong grassroots mobilization, especially through the different religious groups that are united in it. Therefore, while historical State Shinto used to be imposed from above by those in power, civil religion today—the interiorized version of State Shinto—emanates to a large extent from below and is directed towards the top, that is, the imperial family. Analyzing this phenomenon in Durkheimian terms, it may be seen as a popular celebration of the national body.

2. Impossible Secularization: The Religious Character of Japan's Nationalist Circles

As we have seen in the first part of this article, ideologically speaking, contemporary Japanese nationalism rests on State Shinto. It is not likely, therefore, that this nationalism, based on the cult of the emperor and of the spirits of the war dead enshrined at Yasukuni, will become more secular. However, the religious dimension of nationalist statements may be more or less pronounced, depending on the group and the individual. Viewpoints range from a religious nationalism close to that which prevailed prewar, to more moderate nationalist manifestations of a Japanese civil religion. The ideas of members and sympathizers of Nippon Kaigi can be classified into two large groups: those which resemble

35 It appears that Nippon Kaigi regularly relies on religious movements for mobilizing participants at large mass rallies. For instance, as pointed out by Sugano Tamotsu, during the recent rally for constitutional reform organized on 10 November 2015 at Nihon Budōkan, Sūkyō Mahikari mobilized three thousand of its followers (Sugano 2016, p. 125).

36 *Nippon no ibuki*, December 2013, pp. 24–25. These monks are affiliated with an organization named Kansai Bukkyō Konwakai 関西仏教懇話会 (Kansai Buddhist Assembly).

37 Declining my request for an interview, a representative of this religious organization specified in a letter that Kirisuto no Makuya is not an official member of Nippon Kaigi. In fact, no representative of this movement is directly involved with the administration of the nationalist organization. Nevertheless, the same letter stated that for ideological reasons Kirisuto no Makuya has respect for the work of Nippon Kaigi, so it happens that some of its faithful participate in events and campaigns organized by Nippon Kaigi in an individual capacity.

38 Mullins 1998, p. 127.

the ideology of historical State Shinto, and those which, though influenced by this ideology, belong more to the realm of civil religion.

(i) Religious Nationalism: The Contemporary Shapes of State Shinto

In a recent edition of the monthly magazine *Nippon no ibuki*, published by Nippon Kaigi, the secretary-general of a local branch explains that the imperial palace is the most precious place in Japan, and that the voluntary cleaning of the palace precinct constitutes the first step towards the reconstruction of the country.³⁹ In fact, most nationalist organizations regularly meet at the gardens of the imperial palace for cleaning and tidying up (*kōkyō kinrō hōshi* 皇居勤勞奉仕). Today as in the past, devotion towards the imperial family remains an essential element of the activities of nationalist organizations: people offer their time (and money) for the well-being of the imperial family.

Some, such as a representative of the new religion Taiwa Kyōdan, describe the centuries-old imperial lineage as follows: “It is the most important aspect, the central element of our national character (*kunigara no chūshin* 国柄の中心). This is an ancient male lineage, going back 125 generations, the history of which is intertwined with the history of Japan. Nothing surpasses this institution; nothing could ever replace it.”⁴⁰ The ideas of Nakanishi Terumasa, former professor at Kyoto University, are of a similar order. He claims that China was very close to installing a communist regime in Japan at the time of the negotiations for the Japan-US security treaty in 1960. He refers to a secret document, composed by the Chinese secret service, which analyses the necessary conditions for the success of a socialist revolution in Japan. This document supposedly explains that as long as the Japanese retain their ties to the Imperial House and to Shinto shrines, the revolutionary project will not succeed, as it is there they will continue to find the strength to resist. Nakanishi concludes by calling for a general realization that “protecting Japan, ultimately, means protecting the shape of the country symbolized by the Imperial House and by Shinto shrines. It should be understood that, if those are no longer protected, that would mean the end of Japan.”⁴¹

I asked Professor Nitta Hitoshi, a scholar at Kogakkan University who regularly collaborates with Nippon Kaigi, why there are so many new religious movements active in the nationalist lobby. He replied as follows: “I believe that the person of the emperor is an important factor. New religions that do not include the emperor in their teachings do not join Nippon Kaigi. The fundamental nature of the person of the emperor is religious, is it not?”⁴²

It is clear that protecting the imperial family from any slight is a first priority. For instance, in 2007, there were plans to publish the Japanese translation of a book on Princess Masako, *Princess Masako: Prisoner of the Chrysanthemum Throne*, written by an Australian journalist.⁴³ Japanese nationalist organizations used their influence to prevent publication. This book alleges that Princess Masako, wife of the crown prince, was bullied and harassed by the Imperial Household Agency (Kunaichō 宮内庁). Nationalist circles—most notably

39 *Nippon no ibuki*, December 2010, p. 27.

40 Interview conducted on 20 December 2013.

41 *Nippon no ibuki*, January 2013, p. 12.

42 Interview conducted on 18 October 2013 at Kōgakkan University, Ise.

43 Hills 2006.



Figure 3. Nationalist posters at a Shinto shrine in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture. The poster on the left states how fortunate one is to be born Japanese; the one on the right emphasizes the importance of patrilineality in imperial succession. Photo by the author.

Nippon Kaigi, but also the Japanese government led by Abe Shinzō—perceived this book, which is highly critical of palace morals, as an insult to the imperial institution. An article by literary critic Takemoto Tadao, published in *Nippon no ibuki*, begins as follows: “When I read Grand Chamberlain Watanabe’s protest letter to the Australian writer of a book on Princess Masako which slanders the Imperial House, I could not resist my desire to take up the pen.”⁴⁴ Criticism of the imperial institution can lead to severe punishment, sometimes even to physical violence by nationalist extremists; as a result, such criticism is

almost absent from the public debate.⁴⁵

The nationalist circles in general, and Nippon Kaigi in particular, are also against the reform of the Imperial Household Law that would make matrilineal succession of the imperial throne possible. These nationalist organizations are not opposed to the enthronement of an empress *per se*, but to this empress giving birth to her successor. The logic at work here is that if this empress married a commoner and gave birth, the imperial lineage would be polluted; only the imperial male seed is considered sacred. Thus, even if this is not made explicit, the fierce opposition of the nationalist circles to matrilineality is grounded in the idea that the imperial lineage is of divine origin.

Nippon Kaigi holds a fundamentally religious conception of Yasukuni Shrine. The remarks of the former president of Nippon Kaigi, Miyoshi Tōru 三好達 (former president of the Japanese Supreme Court), illustrate this well. Referring to a report on the possibility of constructing a site of commemoration for the war dead from which all religiosity would be excluded, he commented ironically: “Exclusion means ‘expulsion.’ Since only religion can give meaning to notions such as venerated spirits or souls, [the exclusion of religiosity] would mean the expulsion of the venerated spirits.”⁴⁶ Likewise, the comments of a municipal councilor of the city of Tsu, a member of Nippon Kaigi, reveal a similar religious sentiment. When I interviewed him, I remarked: “Since official commemoration ceremonies are conducted in the presence of the emperor at Nihon Budōkan, it may be argued that it is not necessary to hold them at Yasukuni as well.” The municipal councilor commented:

⁴⁴ *Nippon no ibuki*, April 2007, p. 18.

⁴⁵ The Shimanaka affair in 1961 constitutes the best-known case of physical violence committed by a right-wing extremist in response to a perceived insult of the imperial house. The perpetrator attacked the private residence of the director of a publishing company, killing his maid and severely injuring his wife. He wanted to punish those responsible for the publication of a short story entitled *Fūryū mutan* 風流夢譚 (The Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance) by Fukazawa Shichirō 深沢七郎, which he considered blasphemous towards the emperor.

⁴⁶ *Nippon no ibuki*, June 2015, p. 21.

“Nevertheless, I do wish that the prime minister would also visit Yasukuni, even though I cannot clearly explain my reasons.” “But why?” I insisted. He replied: “I cannot tell you exactly. The official commemoration is one thing; going to the shrine is something else. Perhaps it is because I would like him to visit the place where those who died for their country rest.” “Is that not some sort of a religious sensitivity?” I remarked. He admitted: “Yes, perhaps. Yes, certainly...”⁴⁷ This conversation suggests that a civil (that is, nonreligious) commemoration alone can never suffice to satisfy the sympathizers of Nippon Kaigi.

(ii) Nationalist Manifestations of a Japanese-type Civil Religion

Following Robert Bellah, I understand civil religion as a celebration of the national community; a collective devotion centered on the community that may be grounded in preexisting beliefs and religious practices, but that is not explicitly connected to one particular religion.⁴⁸ Would it be possible, then, to consider civil religion as a type of secularization? In my opinion, it is not, for the unity of the nation still rests on notions of a religious nature: divine protection (“One nation under God”) in the case of the USA; the emperor and the enshrined spirits of the war dead in the case of Japan—at least in the case of the nationalist circles. I therefore consider civil religion to be a hybrid phenomenon, which is both political and religious.

Kamei Shizuka is a Japanese political veteran, who currently occupies the position of councilor in the parliamentary association of Nippon Kaigi, and whose ideas are situated somewhere in between State Shinto-inspired religious nationalism and the nationalist manifestations of civil religion. His declarations are first of all reminiscent of civil religion: “The emperor reminds us of our Japaneseness; more, even, than seeing Mount Fuji.” I suggested that this may be a sensitivity of a nonreligious nature. But he replied: “No. It is religious: the emperor is a Shinto priest (*kannushi* 神主).”⁴⁹ Other members of the Diet whom I have interviewed were not as explicit about the religious nature of the emperor. Their attitude is quite understandable in the context of the state secularism characterizing today’s Japan. Nevertheless, all the politicians whom I interviewed agreed on the indispensability of the imperial institution: without the emperor, Japan would cease to be Japan. This position is the prerequisite for joining the Diet organization of Nippon Kaigi. MP Sakurai Hiroshi told me that he openly said to members of Nippon Kaigi that he is a Christian, whereupon he was asked how he feels about the emperor. When he declared his profound respect for the imperial institution, he was told that this is sufficient for joining the organization.⁵⁰

This profound respect for the imperial family, which here has a secular character, is apparent in the pages of Nippon Kaigi’s monthly magazine. As a matter of fact, the second page of this magazine is often devoted to an account of recent activities of the imperial family, written in extremely respectful language. Similarly, the publishing house associated with Nippon Kaigi, Meiseisha 明成社, has published a book for children, which deals with the topic of the origins of Japan. The author, the aforementioned Nitta Hitoshi, explains

47 Interview conducted on 21 November 2014 at the city hall in Tsu.

48 Bellah 1967.

49 Interview conducted on 3 March 2015.

50 Interview conducted on 11 November 2014.

that all countries in the world have their own typical features. Some countries have much political power, others are strong culturally, and others are good at sports. The unique characteristics of Japan, he argues, are grounded in the fact that the country has such a long history, and that the gods have been worshipped since ancient times. Most of all, those characteristics are based on the existence of the emperor.⁵¹

This point of view may remind one of former Prime Minister Mori Yoshirō. On 26 May 2000, he gave a press conference in order to justify, based on the logic of civil religion, his statements that Japan is the country of the gods, centered on the emperor.⁵² In the perception of Mori, the belief in deities (*kami* 神) and the faith in the reassuring presence of the emperor do not have explicitly religious connotations, as these are nothing but the concrete manifestations of the national tradition: “The expression ‘country of the gods’ did not refer to any religion in particular. I wanted to express a very ancient way of thinking in our country, which consists of seeing the presence of elements that transcend human beings in natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers, and the sea.”⁵³ Mark Mullins analyzed Mori’s statement similarly: “Mori’s concluding statement is representative of a widespread understanding of Shintō as something ‘non-religious’ (in the sectarian sense, that is), but still regarded as something that is essential for defining what it means to be Japanese.”⁵⁴ MP Mori Eisuke, member of the Liberal Democratic Party and vice-president of the parliamentary association of Nippon Kaigi, illustrates this point of view well. When we met, I presented him with a list of MPs affiliated with Nippon Kaigi, and asked whether the people represent a diversity of ideological positions. Mori replied as follows: “Yes, they do, but I do think there is a common spirit. There is a shared nostalgia and attachment to Shinto shrines. They are a bit like the ‘homeland of our hearts’ (*kokoro no furusato* 心の故郷).”⁵⁵

Presented by the nationalist circles as the only legitimate site for the commemoration of the war dead, Yasukuni Shrine is also often perceived from a civil religious perspective. Nippon Kaigi rejoiced in the fact that more than 200,000 people visited the shrine on 15 August 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat.⁵⁶ The same issue of Nippon Kaigi’s magazine contains an article written by former diplomat Okazaki Hisahiko, pleading for a resumption of imperial visits to Yasukuni, concluding as follows: “If the official visits of the prime minister to Yasukuni Shrine take root, they would pave the way to visits by his majesty the emperor. Such imperial visits would constitute a proof of the spiritual regeneration of our country as a sovereign state. I wish our statesmen would become deeply aware of this fact.”⁵⁷

By way of conclusion, I would like to quote the municipal councilor of the city of Tsu whom I already introduced in the previous section. It was he who—probably

51 Nitta 2004, pp. 59–60.

52 The controversial statements had been made ten days earlier, in front of members of the parliamentary organization of Shintō Seiji Renmei.

53 Guthmann 2010; Guthmann 2014, p. 54.

54 Mullins 2012a, p. 79. On the topic of Shinto as a non-religion, see also the articles by Ernils Larsson and Aike Rots in this volume.

55 Interview conducted on 23 March 2015.

56 *Nippon no ibuki*, September 2005, p. 2. On this day in 2013, there were about 175,000 visitors (*The Wall Street Journal* viewed online at <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/08/15/huge-crowds-pour-into-yasukuni-shrine-on-war-anniversary/>. Accessed 2 July 2016).

57 *Nippon no ibuki*, September 2005, p. 7.

involuntarily—put his finger on the “civil religious” dimension of the popular devotion to the imperial family when he said: “I believe that a majority of the Japanese feel a natural love and respect (*keiai suru* 敬愛する) for the imperial family. I also think that, contrary to most other countries, there is no true religion in Japan; the imperial family plays that role.”⁵⁸

Conclusion

When it comes to individual Japanese, there is no denying the fact that the majority are increasingly cut off from religion, as a result of the process of secularization that started at the end of the war. However, as I have tried to show in this article, for nationalist circles in Japan—whose influence has grown since the end of the 1990s—the secularization of the political sphere has never been a feasible option. For them, as I wrote, State Shinto survived Japan’s wartime defeat, especially in the form of emperor worship and ceremonies for the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine. I proceeded by explaining that today’s nationalist circles, headed by Nippon Kaigi, draw primarily on the ideological sources of State Shinto. In the second part of the article, however, I pointed out that even among the supporters of Nippon Kaigi, the ideological links with State Shinto fall on a spectrum, ranging from a political-religious nationalism close to the one that existed in the past to nationalist manifestations of a Japanese-type civil religion.

In Japanese nationalist circles, we can observe a constant moving back and forth between a religiously grounded nationalism and the affirmation of the legitimacy of civil religion. The pendulum movement between these two positions is well illustrated by the responses of the president of Nippon Kaigi, Takubo Tadae 田久保忠衛, to the numerous criticisms and attacks recently levied at the group. In a recent article, President Takubo confirms that, throughout Japanese history, the emperor has only rarely had real political power, even though he has always been a source of authority. He then asks the following question: “Is it forbidden to respect the eternal unbroken line of the Imperial House?” This is a reference to the Imperial House as the historical unifying force of the Japanese nation, made from the perspective of civil religion. In the same article, Takubo writes about visits to Yasukuni Shrine:

Some people say visits to Yasukuni Shrine are scandalous. However, this is a “shrine where the spirits are invited to come together” (*shōkonsha* 招魂社); therefore, there are no more Class A war criminals, and no Class B war criminals either.⁵⁹ These visits express nothing but the will to respect the memory of those who died during the war, and who have said: “Let’s meet again at Yasukuni!” Criticism [towards Yasukuni] is based on a total lack of understanding of what Japanese Shinto is.⁶⁰

To justify official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, the president of Nippon Kaigi here relies on an understanding of life and death belonging to a particular religion, Shinto, while simultaneously stating that visitors are only motivated by a desire to commemorate those

⁵⁸ Interview conducted on 21 November 2014 at the city hall in Tsu.

⁵⁹ *Shōkonsha* is the original name of Yasukuni Shrine.

⁶⁰ Takubo 2016, pp. 36–37.



Figure 4. Front cover of *Nippon no ibuki*, no. 334, September 2015. Illustration by Takenaka Toshihiro.

illustrations is unequivocal: in the old days, the Japanese were happier and more virtuous than today. The Japan presented here is one of bygone days, without TV, video games, or cars, when families were simply happy doing their daily activities together. The front cover of the September 2015 issue shows a mother with three children in a traditional house during a thunderstorm. We see the mother on the veranda, surrounded by her children; she has opened the wooden sliding door, and is closing the external shutters, also made of wood. Of course, the large majority of Japanese families today no longer live in such traditional houses, which are generally considered to be cold and impractical. The Japan desired in nationalist circles exists in a past that has taken on legendary proportions. “Images of a mythicized past; visions of a present and a future defined in terms of what was or what is believed to have been”—this is the state of mind of those who believe in the myth of the golden age.⁶²

According to Nippon Kaigi as well as nationalist circles in general, it is crucial for the future of the country that the values of the past be restored. The past idealized by them is the prewar period, during which Japan was a powerful colonial empire (Dai Nippon Teikoku 大日本帝国). Devotion to the emperor on the one hand, and to the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine on the other, constitute the links that bind today’s Japan to this golden age of the Japanese nation. Now, as I have attempted to show, these two essential elements of State Shinto still contain important religious dimensions. Therefore, the secularization of the nationalist circles appears to be completely impossible.

Translated by Aike P. Rots

61 Girardet 1986, p. 98.

62 Girardet 1986, p. 97.

REFERENCES

- Baubérot 2007
Jean Baubérot. *Les laïcités dans le monde*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2007.
- Baubérot 2015
Jean Baubérot. *Les 7 laïcités françaises*. Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2015.
- Bellah 1967
Robert N. Bellah. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus: Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96 (1967), pp. 1–21.
- Breen 2010
John Breen. "Resurrecting the Sacred Land of Japan: The State of Shinto in the Twenty-first Century." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37:2 (2010), pp. 295–315.
- Breen 2014
John Breen. "The Nation's Shrine: Conflict and Commemoration at Yasukuni, Modern Japan's Shrine to the War Dead." In *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations*, eds. Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods, pp. 133–50. Routledge, 2014.
- Casanova 1994
José Casanova. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Girardet 1986
Raoul Girardet. *Mythes et mythologies politiques*. Éditions du Seuil, 1986.
- Guthmann 2010
Thierry Guthmann. *Shintô et politique dans le Japon contemporain*. L'Harmattan, 2010.
- Guthmann 2014
Guthmann, Thierry ゲットマン・ティエリー. "Gendai Nichifutsubeikan no hikaku o tsūjita shūkyō to seiji no sōgo kankei moderu no kōchiku" 現代日仏米間の比較を通じた宗教と政治の相互関係モデルの構築. *Mie Daigaku hōkei ronsō* 三重大学法経論叢 31:2 (2014), pp. 49–62.
- Guthmann 2015
Thierry Guthmann. "Religion et nationalisme dans le Japon contemporain: Les nouveaux mouvements religieux au sein de la Conférence du Japon." *Monde Chinois: Nouvelle Asie* 42 (2015), pp. 74–83.
- Guthmann 2017
Thierry Guthmann. "Dynamiques de l'extrême-droite au XXIe siècle: La Conférence du Japon." In *Japon Pluriel 11*, eds. Julien Martine and David-Antoine Malinas, pp. 147–55. Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2017.
- Hills 2006
Ben Hills. *Princess Masako: Prisoner of the Chrysanthemum Throne*. Penguin, 2006.
- Josephson 2011
Jason Ānanda Josephson. "The Invention of Japanese Religions." *Religion Compass* 5:10 (2011), pp. 589–97.

Morfaux 1980

Louis-Marie Morfaux. *Vocabulaire de la philosophie et des sciences humaines*. Armand Colin, 1980.

Mullins 1998

Mark R. Mullins. *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.

Mullins 2010

Mark R. Mullins. "How Yasukuni Shrine Survived the Occupation: A Critical Examination of Popular Claims." *Monumenta Nipponica* 65:1 (2010), pp. 89–136.

Mullins 2012a

Mark R. Mullins. "Secularization, Deprivatization, and the Reappearance of 'Public Religion' in Japanese Society." *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1:1 (2012), pp. 61–82.

Mullins 2012b

Mark R. Mullins. "The Neonationalist Response to the Aum Crisis: A Return of Civil Religion and Coercion in the Public Sphere?" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39:1 (2012), pp. 99–125.

Narusawa Muneo 2016

Narusawa Muneo 成澤宗男, ed. *Nippon kaigi to jinja honchō* 日本会議と神社本庁. Kinyōbi, 2016.

Nippon no ibuki

Nippon no ibuki 日本の息吹. Nippon Kaigi.

Nitta 2004

Nitta Hitoshi 新田均 ed. *Kodomotachi ni tsutaetai Nihon no kenkoku* 子供たちに伝えたい日本の建国. Meiseisha, 2004.

Reader 2012

Ian Reader. "Secularisation, R.I.P.? Nonsense! The 'Rush Hour Away from the Gods' and the Decline of Religion in Contemporary Japan." *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1:1 (2012), pp. 7–36.

Shimazono 2007

Susumu Shimazono. "State Shinto and Religion in Post-War Japan." In *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, eds. James A. Beckford and N. J. Demerath III, pp. 697–709. Sage Publishing, 2007.

Shimazono 2010

Shimazono Susumu 島藺進. *Kokka Shintō to Nihonjin* 国家神道と日本人. Iwanami Shoten, 2010.

Shimazono 2016

Shimazono Susumu. "Kokka Shintō no keisei to Yasukuni jinja, gunjin chokuyu" 国家神道の形成と靖国神社、軍人勅諭. In *Meiji ishin to shūkyō, bunka* 明治維新と宗教・文化, vol. 11 of *Kōza Meiji ishin* 講座明治維新, eds. Meiji ishinshi gakkai 明治維新史学会. Yūshisha, 2016.

Sugano 2016

Sugano Tamotsu 菅野完. *Nippon Kaigi no kenkyū* 日本会議の研究. Fusōsha, 2016.

Takubo 2016

Takubo Tadae 田久保忠衛. "Nippon kaigi e no hibō, kyokkai o tadasu" 日本会議への誹謗・曲解を正す. *Gekkan Hanada* 月刊 Hanada (August 2016), pp. 32–41.

Tawara 2015

Tawara Yoshifumi 俵義文. “Dai san shō: Abe seiken o sasaeru uyokudantai no omowaku to jittai” 第3章: 安倍政権を支える右翼団体の思惑と実態. In *Gunji rikkoku e no yabō* 軍事立国への野望, pp. 93–155. Kamogawa Shuppan, 2015.

The Wall Street Journal

Tsukada 2015

Tsukada Hotaka 塚田穂高. *Shūkyō to seiji no tentetsuten* 宗教と政治の転軸点. Kadensha, 2015.

Uesugi 2016

Uesugi Satoshi 上杉聰. *Nippon kaigi to wa nani ka: “Kenpō kaisei” ni tsukisusumu karuto shūdan* 日本会議とは何か: 「憲法改正」に突き進むカルト集団. Gōdō Shuppan, 2016.

Uozumi 2007

Uozumi Akira 魚住昭. *Shōgen Murakami Masakuni: Ware, kuni ni uragirareyō tomo* 証言村上正邦: 我、国に裏切られようとも. Kōdansha, 2007.