



# Reports

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*Thomas Paul Schirrmacher*

## The Japanese Yasukuni Cult – Soldiers as Martyrs?

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International Institute  
for Religious Freedom



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for Religious Freedom

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## **The Japanese Yasukuni Cult – Soldiers as Martyrs?**



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# The Japanese Yasukuni Cult – Soldiers as Martyrs?

## The Yasukuni Shrine

Over the course of my research on the glorification of soldiers, revolutionaries, and terrorists as saints or martyrs in various religions, (see my recent visit in Edinburgh Castle: <https://www.thomasschirmmacher.net/blog/troops-killed-as-martyrs-for-god-something-startling-in-edinburgh/>) I have visited a number of shrines in Tokyo, among them the Yasukuni Shrine in the heart of the city.

The Yasukuni Shrine<sup>1</sup> was founded in 1882 as a center of state Shintoism. The final state rites took place in Yasukuni in November 1945. Present were Emperor Hirohito, the Prime Minister, the entire Cabinet, and heads from the Army and Navy. After that, state Shintoism was ended by the so-called Shinto Directive



01: The gate of the forecourt of the Yasukuni Shrine at the end of a long avenue © Schirmmacher (© Schirmmacher).



02: Entry Hall of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo (© Schirmmacher).

<sup>1</sup> Literature on the Shrine: Kalus Antoni. *Der Himmlische Herrscher und sein Staat: Essays zur Stellung des Tennô im modernen Japan*. München: iudicium, 1991. pp. 155–166. | John Breen. “The Dead and the Living in the Land of Peace: A Sociology of the Yasukuni Shrine”. *Mortality* 9 (2004) 1 (Febr): 76–93. | John Breen. “Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory”. *Japan Focus*, <https://apjif.org/-John-Breen/2060/article.html> (3.6.2005). | John Breen. “A Yasukuni Genealogy”. pp. 1’21 in: John Breen (Hg.). *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. | John Nelson. “Social Memory as Ritual Practice: Commemorating Spirits of the Military Dead at Yasukuni Shinto Shrine”. *Journal of Asian Studies* 62 (2003) 2: 445–467. | Michael Pye. “Religion and Conflict in Japan with Special Reference to Shinto and Yasukuni Shrine”. *Diogenes* 50 (2003) 3: 45–59. | Sven Saaler. “Ein Ersatz für den Yasukuni-Schrein? Die Diskussion um eine neue Gedenkstätte für Japans Kriegsoffer”. *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens (NOAG)* 175/176 (2004): 59–91. | Mark Selden. “Japan, the United States and Yasukuni Nationalism: War, Historical Memory and the Future of the Asia Pacific”. *Japan Focus*, <https://apjif.org/-Mark-Selden/2892/article.html> (10.9.2008).



03: Prayer cards are sold and hung in front of the Yasukuni Shrine (© Schirrmacher).



04: The main shrine, which 2.5 mio. spirits are said to inhabit, was constructed in 1872 and renovated from 1986–1989 (© Schirrmacher).

issued by the American occupation forces. Initially, the Yasukuni Shrine was even going to be completely razed. However, the occupation forces then only insisted upon complete privatization (details in John Breen's "A Yasukuni Genealogy," p. 19). Repeated motions on the part of the Democratic Party in later decades in Parliament to repeal this were rejected by the majority (details, *ibid.*, p. 20).

Members of the Japanese military are revered as 'kami' (= invisible spirit). They were members of the Imperial Japanese Army and have died in battle for the Emperor since the time of the so-called Meiji Restoration, beginning around 1860, until the end of World War II or, more specifically, the War in the Pacific. The 2,466,532 souls lost as listed by the Yasukuni Shrine itself – the number is still rising – consists of 2,133,915 fatalities in the War in the Pacific (1941–1945), 191,250 in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), and 17,176 in the First Sino-Japanese War ("Manchurian Incident") (1894–1895).

Included are the kamikaze suicide bombers of 1944/1945 and the members of the notorious "Unit 731," which in the Manchurian war (i.e., in China) conducted experiments with biological weapons on prisoners of war and civilians. Above all, there are 1,068 members of the Imperial Army, who in what were the Japanese equivalent of the Nuremberg Trials (the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, i.e., the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or IMTFE) were convicted as war criminals. Among them were 14 Class A convicted offenders ("crimes against peace") – who correspond to 'leading war criminals' of Nazi Germany (e. g., Göring).

These last 'kamis' were, however, secretly taken up within the shrine – Emperor Hirohito has not visited the shrine again since he learned of this in 1979. Astonishingly, his son, who otherwise has reintroduced Shinto ceremonies with respect to his divinity, has also held to this since 1989. The shrine's military museum, in its inscription, its brochures, and on its website (see below on this point), refers to the Tokyo War Crimes Trials as show trials.

## Yasukuni Visits<sup>2</sup>

Even though there have been all sorts of attempts since 1952 whereby individual Prime Ministers have in one form or another attempted to honor the ‘kamis’ (a list can be found in Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*, pp. 58–64) and between 1969 and 1974 (unsuccessfully) submitted laws to Parliament five times on the reestablishment of the Yasukuni Shrine as a holy state shrine (Peter Fischer. “Versuche einer Wiederbelebung von Staatsreligion im heutigen Japan ...”, pp. 238–240), the actual breaking of the tabu was when Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visited the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, 1985 upon the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II. He did this despite the fact that the primary war criminals are exalted there, paid the offering out of government coffers, and declared his visit to be an official one. This visit, however, unleashed so many protests that nothing similar to this has occurred since (see Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*, p. 61 and Kalus Antoni. *Der Himmlische Herrscher und sein Staat*, p. 156).

The most severe protests did not come from China or Korea. Rather, they came from Christian churches, Buddhist and other religious groups in Japan, parties, unions, scholarly associations, and almost all mass media in Japan. The most extensive criticism came from (and comes) from the left end of the spectrum and the so-called liberal historical school, to which the Tokyo history professor Takahashi Tetsuya, above all in his Japanese book *Yasukuni* (in English “The National Politics of Yasukuni Shrine,” op. cit.; *Can Philosophy Constitute Resistance?* op. cit.; about him see Kevin M. Doak. *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan*, op. cit., pp. 124–125). The private visit by Prime Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi at the Yasukuni Shrine on October 17, 2005 attracted considerable media coverage in Japan (investigated by Philipp Seaton. “Pledge Fulfilled,” p. 163ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Literature on Yasukuni Visits: Japanese Prime Minister’s website on the Yasukuni visits: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/yasukuni/index.html> | <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/yasukuni/index.html> | [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni\\_Shrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni_Shrine) | [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversies\\_surrounding\\_Yasukuni\\_Shrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversies_surrounding_Yasukuni_Shrine) | John Breen (Hg.). *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. | John Breen. “A Yasukuni Genealogy”. *Ibid.* | Kevin M. Doak. *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan*. *Handbook of Oriental Studies* 13. | Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007. | Peter Fischer. “Versuche einer Wiederbelebung von Staatsreligion im heutigen Japan unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Staats-Shintō”. pp. 209–247 in: Peter Schalk. | *Zwischen Säkularismus und Hierokratie: Studien zum Verhältnis von Religionen und Staat in Süd- und Ostasien*. Stockholm: Uppsala, 2001, here pp. 234–241. | Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto: Eine Einführung*. München: Juridicum, 2001. pp. 58–64 u. ö. | Philipp Seaton. “Pledge Fulfilled: Prime Minister Koizumi, Yasukuni and the Japanese Media”. pp. 163–188 in: John Breen (Hg.). *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. | William Daniel Sturgeon. *Japan’s Yasukuni Shrine: Place of Peace or Place of Conflict? Regional Politics of History and Memory in East Asia*. Dissertation.com, August 2009. | Takahashi Tetsuya. *Can Philosophy Constitute Resistance?* Tokio: UTCP, 2008. | Takahashi Tetsuya. “The National Politics of Yasukuni Shrine”. pp. 155–180 in: Philip A. Seaton. *Japan’s Contested War Memories*. London: Routledge, 2007 (also chapter 7 in his book „Can Philosophy Constitute Resistance?“ Tokio: UTCP, 2008, <https://utcp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/from/publications/pdf/Takahashi127-160.pdf> and elsewhere in the web).

Japanese society is, at the same time, split when it comes to this question, whereby what was once a majority of people who advocated such visits has shrunk so much that today more than half of all Japanese are against such visits. In 1985, 25 % of adult Japanese were against such visits, while in 2001 it was 34 % (and in other surveys 40 %). In 2005 – which was at the time of Koizumi’s visit – a survey in Japan indicated that 45 % of Japanese were against the visit by the prime minister and 45 % in favor of it. In 2006, the number of opponents had risen to 53 % (ibid., p. 183 with source references).

In 2007 the newspaper Asahi commissioned a survey among Japanese regarding what their stance is regarding colonialism in Asia. The results were as follows: 32 % were of the opinion that a large amount of remorse was necessary, 53 % some remorse, 9 % little remorse, and 2 % no remorse (ibid., p. 183).

## The Tenno as the highest Shinto Priest

The Japanese Emperor is the “symbol of the state and of the unity of the Japanese people.” ‘Tenno’ actually means ‘the ruler (coming) from heaven’<sup>3</sup>. In 1945, Emperor Hirohito dropped the claim to divinity (‘arahitogami’).

“The Tenno also continues to be the highest Shinto priest. On the palace grounds there are, as it stands, ‘3 shrines of the imperial court’ ... in which ... the sun goddess, the imperial ancestors as well as all gods are revered ... . About 20 Shinto ceremonies occur there annually with the participation of the Tenno, of which he conducts the most important ones himself. The leaders of the state participate in at least one of these, the niina-mesai, a thanksgiving ceremony: The prime minister, the presidents of the Lower and Upper Houses, and the president of the Supreme Court” (Ernst Lokowandt. Shinto. p. 46).

At the beginning of 1989, the Showa Kaiser (the official designation) died. In 1990, the Daijosai (the great food-offering ritual) was conducted as the high point of the crowning rites in the shrine at the imperial palace. During this ritual, the new Emperor became one with the Amaterasu Omikami, the mythical creator god of Japan, which elevated him to the status of a divine being“ (Yoshiaki Yui. “Kehrt der Kaiserkult zurück?“ pp. 1 and 158; comp. Kalus Antoni. Der Himmlische Herrscher und sein Staat, p. 11). “The ceremonies upon the occasion

<sup>3</sup> Literature on the ‘heavenly’ Emperor: Kalus Antoni. Der Himmlische Herrscher und sein Staat. Ibid. | Peter Fischer. “Versuche einer Wiederbelebung von Staatsreligion im heutigen Japan ...”. Ibid., pp. 216–234. | Christoph Kleine. “Religion im Dienste einer ethnisch-nationalen Identitätskonstruktion: Erörtert am Beispiel der ‚Deutschen Christen‘ und des japanischen Shintō”. Marburg Journal of Religion 7 (2002) 1 (sept): 1–17. | Yoshiaki Yui. “Kehrt der Kaiserkult zurück? Zur aktuellen Lage der Religionsfreiheit in Japan”. Querschnitte 15 (2002) 5: 1–4; wieder abgedruckt in Max Klingberg u. a. (Hg.). Märtyrer 2003: Das Jahrbuch zur Christenverfolgung heute. Bonn: VKW, 2003. pp. 158–161. | From the Japanese Constitution: Article 20 of the Constitution of Japan reads as follows: “Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity”. | Article 89: “No public money or other property shall be expended or appropriated for the use, benefit or maintenance of any religious institution or association, or for any charitable, educational or benevolent enterprises not under the control of public authority”.

of royal succession were of a more or less deeply religious character.” What is at the same time central is the ceremony in which the Tenno becomes one with the sun goddess and thereby truly becomes a Tenno (Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*, p. 47). This ceremony stood in a long list of ceremonies in the imperial house which were celebrated in the style of the Meiji Era prior to 1945, above all the burial of the empress mother in 1951, the coming-of-age ceremony of the crown prince in 1952, and his marriage in 1959. On May 2, 1952, four days after achieving independence, Japanese who died in World War II were honored in the presence of the Tenno in a Shinto ceremony (details in Peter Fischer. “Versuche einer Wiederbelebung von Staatsreligion im heutigen Japan ...“ pp. 238–240).



05: *The Japanese Emperor Akihito in 2011 in the USA* (© WikiCommons, CC BY 3.0).

## Christian Opposition to a State Yasukuni Cult

It has already been mentioned that resistance on the part of Christians was a significant factor in the prevention of the resurgence of the state Yasukuni cult. That is astonishing since the almost 2 million Christians only make up 1.54 % of the inhabitants of Japan (roughly stated, there are about one-quarter each Catholics, Protestants, independent Protestants, and special groups).

What is interesting at the same time is the attitude of the Catholic church.<sup>4</sup> While two popes in 1951 and 1980 (in 1980 it was, mind you, in the course of a papal visit to Japan) indicated that Catholics in Yasukuni could pray and show respect to the dead as long as they did not worship or idolize the dead, the (Catholic) Japanese bishops' conference ruled out all visits to Yasukuni and were among the most severe critics of visits made by prominent political figures to the Yasukuni Shrine (see John Breen. “Popes, Bish-



06: *Entry hall of the Yushukan War Memorial Museum at the Yasukuni Shrine* (© Schirrmacher).

<sup>4</sup> Literature on the Catholic Church and the Yasukuni Shrine: John Breen. “Popes, Bishops and War Criminals: Reflections on Catholics and Yasukuni in post-war Japan”. *Japan Focus*, <https://apjff.org/~John-Breen/3312/article.html> (3.6.2005, 1.3.2010). | Kevin Doak. “A Religious Perspective on the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy”. pp. 47–69 in: John Breen (Hg.). *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

ops and War Criminals”; comp. the essay of a Catholic American Kevin Doak. “A Religious Perspective on the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy,” which demonstrates much understanding for veneration of the dead and for the criticism of the war crimes trials).

## The Yushukan Museum at the Yasukuni Shrine



07: “Kamikaze” pilots in the Yushukan War Memorial Museum at the Yasukuni Shrine (© Schirmmacher).



08 and 09: Over 100 suicide bombers died in one-man submarines. They carried 1.5 tons of explosives each in order to ensure the sinking of ships. (© Schirmmacher).

The Yushukan Museum, which was established 13 years after the founding of the Yasukuni Shrine in 1882 and by 2002 had been elaborately expanded, renovated, and in part furnished with English inscriptions, refers to itself as the first and largest Japanese military museum.<sup>5</sup>

Even if it is privately maintained by the Yasukuni Shrine, it must be recognized that there is no state equivalent in Tokyo and that Yushukan contains large and unique artworks, as only the government or the military is able to make available. Examples are an original one- man kamikaze submarine or a rocket-driven kamikaze airplane, both of which were produced at the end of 1944 – almost all of the units produced had been destroyed in the course of attacks.

The sacrifice of oneself for the Emperor and the fatherland is presented as a sacred offering in the Yushukan Museum. This is made just as clear in the English version of the impressive and official website (<https://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/>) as it is in the English translation of the official guide (Records in Pictures of Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan. Tokio: Yasukuni Shrine, 2009) – that the Japanese version

5 Websites on Yushukan & Kamikazes: John Breen. “Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory”. Japan Focus, <http://japanfocus.org/-John-Breen/2060> or <http://hnn.us/articles/12297.html> (3.6.2005). | <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pazifikkrieg> (Abschnitt 7.2.1) | <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yūshūkan> | <http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/kamikaze/museums/yushukan/index.htm> (19.4.2008) | <http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/kamikaze/index.htm> | Amerikanische und japanische Sichtweise zu Kamikaze: <http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/kamikaze/monuments/yushukan/index.htm>

should be even more clear in this regard is something I cannot verify due to a lack of language skills.<sup>6</sup>

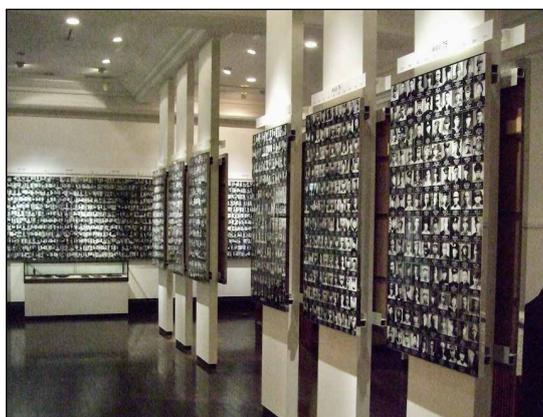
The orientation of the entire facility is provided in a bronze plaque unveiled in 2005 at the 40th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor:

“Almost six thousand men died in suicide attacks, and their tragic heroism, for which there is no precedent, struck the hearts of our enemies with awe. The entire nation shed tears of gratitude in the light of their unswerving loyalty and their self-sacrifice.”

A sign next to the bronze statue of a kamikaze fighter next to the entrance is dedicated to the same, and it has been translated by John Breen as follows (here excluding a list of how many soldiers belonged to which unit):

“In the last stage of the Greater East Asia War when the war situation increasingly worsened, a total of 5,843 men in the Army and Navy gave their lives by bravely plunging into enemy warships and making other types of attacks. These men who became the cornerstone of today’s prosperity included: ... These utterly pure and noble spirits who gave their lives for our country should be honored and remembered equally by our nation, and their stories should forever be passed on to future generations. June 28, 2005 Tokkotai Commemoration Peace Memorial Association.”

There was an addition monument erected in the courtyard between the Yasukuni Shrine and the Yushukan War Memorial Museum in 2005 for the Indian judge Radha Binod Binod Pal.



10 and 11: Thousands of photos in the Yasukuni Shrine where ‘kamis’ are honored (© Schirmmacher).



12: Memorial for kamikaze pilots in front of the Yushukan War Memorial Museum (© Wiki-Commons).

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 66–67 in particular on suicide attacks [“Special Attack Corps (October 1944–August 1945)”], pictures with captions on p. 73 (rocket-driven airplane for suicide attacks, first delivered in September 1944), and p.83 (one-man suicide submarine beginning in November 1944).



13: The Indian judge Radha Binod Pal between the Yasukuni Shrine and Yushukan War Memorial Museum (© WikiCommons).



14: Map in the Yushukan War Memorial Museum depicting the war against the USA as a defensive war (© WikiCommons).



15: Children can buy kamikaze pilot key rings in the Yushukan War Memorial Museum (© Schirrmacher).

He voted against the judgments of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. (The other judges came from Australia, China, France, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, and the USA.)

The suicide attacks take up only a small portion of the museum. Much more problematic is the overall orientation of the museum since it reflects the point of view of nationalist circles which do not accept Japan's war guilt. Thus, one sees the following on the website:

“Japan's dream of building a Great East Asia was necessitated by history and it was sought after by the countries of Asia” (translated from Japanese by John Breen).

According to the information in the museum, colonialism and the Pacific War took place solely due to the wishes of the other Asiatic countries or for their or Japan's protection and defense. The opponents or enemies are practically not mentioned at all (also according to John Breen. “Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory”), which is a strange way for a museum to operate. Nowhere is there reference to the fact that non-Japanese also died, to measures the opponent took, or to how things went for civilians, for instance in Korea.

In the museum bookshop there are many devotional objects available for purchase dealing with the topic of sacrifice for the Emperor or which make heroes out of the suicide squads. Thus, children are able to buy kamikaze pilots as key chains and in many other forms.

## State Shintoism

This can only be understood if one occupies oneself with state Shintoism<sup>7</sup>, which was binding until 1945. Since then, it has been forbidden as a state activity. Influential Shinto shrines seek to reinstate Shinto's former importance as well as to win back individual political power.

“One can characterize Shinto as a mixture of having much to do with nature worship and with some ancestor worship, with both being enriched by a strong political component. This is indeed a vast simplification, but at its core it is accurate ...” (Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*, p. 12). At the same time, one finds a high number of revered gods and spirits. The almost unlimited proliferation of gods is a striking characteristic of Shintoism; it has gone so far that through that one looks into the essence of the religion having to do with kami” (Edmond Rochedieu. *Der Schintoismus*, p. 69). At the same time, the idea of “the hero cult” (ibid., pp. 80–82) plays a central role.

State Shintoism was established in order to produce patriotism and loyalty towards the Japanese nation. It was a brilliant move (according to Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*, pp. 54–55). Religions were separated from the (alleged) areligious Shinto cult and was able to expect the fulfillment of Shinto duties without touching people's religion. That many Christians, Buddhists, and others in Japan (and in Korea, for instance) have viewed this completely differently has certainly not been surprising.

The contradiction between religious freedom and the claim to a cultic worship of a heavenly ruler, participation in obligatory Shinto ceremonies as well as school instruction in Shinto mythology has been solved in a rather peculiar way. One declares Shinto, so to speak, to be a non-religion and transforms it into the status of an areligious state, national, and people's cult. Participation in this cult has been a natural duty beyond all questions of religious confession. Thus, one has been able to justify religiously legitimate rule by the divine Emperor within the framework of a family state increasingly construed through the means of biology without injuring freedom of belief. The divine ruler counted as the head of the state organism, to whom belonged the natural leadership over the members and organs of this organism” (Christoph Kleine. “Religion im Dienste einer ethnisch-nationalen Identitätskonstruktion ...”, p. 13).

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<sup>7</sup> Literature on Shintoism in general: Peter Fischer. “Versuche einer Wiederbelebung von Staatsreligion im heutigen Japan ...”. Ibid. | Hirose Kazutoshi. *Beruf: Shinto-Priester*. Tokio: OAG, 1997. | Ernst Lokowandt. *Shinto*. Ibid. | Edmond Rochedieu. *Der Schintoismus und die neuen Religionen Japans. Die großen Religionen der Welt*. Genf: Edito-Service S. A., 1973.

## Suicide Attackers<sup>8</sup>

“In 1944, when the defeat of the Japanese Empire in the Second World War began to loom, the Japanese Army leadership put squadrons of flying suicide bombers into action who crashed their aircraft into American war ships. It was dishonorable for a pilot to return alive. One could speak of a systematic institutionalization of suicide as a weapon of war. Although the use of ‘kamikaze pilots’ was unable to effectively halt the advance of American troops, their use had a great influence on their fighting morale” (Volker Trusheim. “Selbstmordattentäter”).

The Japanese knowledge that has been amassed from the suicide attacks undertaken by kamikaze fighters has continued to live in certain circles in Japan and in particular in North Korea and was first used again in a suicide attack by the ‘Japaneses Red Army’ terror organization for Palestinians on May 30, 1972 at Lod International Airport in Israel. It was a devastating bloodbath conducted on civilians (Joseph Croitoru. *Der Märtyrer als Waffe*, pp. 73–75). There was dismay in the Arab world that non-Muslims advanced against the enemy more daringly than Muslims and that Arafat and the Palestinians let themselves be informed by Asians with historical knowledge about suicide attacks.

## Concluding Remarks<sup>9</sup>

Please note that this article is not to be understood as a culturally insensitive scolding of Japan. From the ashes of the defeated nation of Japan, as in Germany, a functioning democracy has arisen. If something contained within the aforementioned is astonishing, then it is not that the Japanese honor their war dead – as almost every people does – and use traditional ways to do so. Instead, it is the fact that a suggested return to a pre-war cult has never truly happened and that the broad population desires religious freedom as it is found in the Constitution of Japan and seeks to protect that and deny support for a return to a national or state religion.

There is no ‘kamikaze’ mentality on the part of the Japanese, just as there are also other cultural stereotypes about Japanese circulating among us. They unfortunately were ‘parroted’ immediately after the flood disaster and the nuclear accident on a daily basis and have nothing to do with the real Japan. Ethnologist and Japanologist Till Philip Koltermann has made this clear in an excellent essay.

<sup>8</sup> Literature on the Legacy of Japanese Suicide Attackers: Joseph Croitoru. *Der Märtyrer als Waffe: Die historischen Wurzeln des Selbstmordattentats*. München: Carl Hanser 2003. | Christoph Reuter. *Mein Leben ist eine Waffe: Selbstmordattentäter*. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 2002. • Joseph Croitoru. “Qantara.de – Selbstmordattentate ursprünglich nicht islamistisch”, [http://de.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-468/\\_nr-90/i.html](http://de.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-468/_nr-90/i.html), (3.3.2004). | Volker Trusheim. “Selbstmordattentäter”, <http://www.bpb.de/themen/NTUS8X.html> (27.8.2007).

<sup>9</sup> Till Philip Koltermann. “Das deutsche Japanbild: Klischees oder Nächstenliebe”. evangelisch.de vom 23.3.2011, <https://chrismon.evangelisch.de/meldungen/2011/das-deutsche-japanbild-klischees-oder-naechstenliebe-8179>. | Katja Triplett. “‘Religionsfreiheit’ und die religiöse Vielfalt Japans”. pp. 256–259 in: Christoph Elsas (Hg.). *Interreligiöse Verständigung zur Glaubensverbreitung und Religionswechsel*. Berlin: EBVerlag, 2010.

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