

## REVIEW DISCUSSION

# Religion, Politics, and the Law in Postwar Japan

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Mark R. Mullins, *Yasukuni Fundamentalism: Japanese Religions and the Politics of Restoration*. Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture and the University of Hawai'i Press, 2021. 258 pages. Paperback, \$28.00. ISBN 978-0-8248-9015-5.

Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*. University of Chicago Press, 2019. 356 pages. Paperback, \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-226-61882-1.

**M**ATTHEW McMullen: Hello from Nagoya, Japan. Welcome to the first-ever *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* review discussion on the topic of religion, politics, and the law in postwar Japan, featuring Mark Mullins and Jolyon Thomas.

This discussion will review two recent publications on religion, politics, and the law in Japan, specifically the postwar period. *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*, by Jolyon Thomas, was published by University of Chicago Press in 2019, and the second book we will be discussing is by Mark Mullins, *Yasukuni Fundamentalism: Japanese Religions and the Politics of Restoration*, which was published in the Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture book series along with the University of Hawai'i Press in 2021.

Both of these books are available on their respective press websites, as well as other online booksellers, and, depending on where you live, perhaps in your local bookstore as well. If you like this discussion but haven't read these books, please take a look at them.

I also must confess my selfish intentions for this event. I am the editor of the *JJRS*, and I asked both of the discussants today to review the other person's book.

I'm sure that Mark and Jolyon are too busy to write book reviews. It's something that takes a lot of work and that you don't always get a lot of credit for. To entice them to review the books, I had the idea of a discussion, to which they agreed.

As for the structure of the event, for the first fifteen to twenty minutes, I've asked Mark Mullins to discuss Jolyon Thomas's book as a review, and then we'll switch, and Jolyon Thomas will discuss Mark Mullins book. Then each author will respond to anything the other person said. The second half will consist of open discussion. I'd like to save the last fifteen minutes to take questions from our online audience. That's basically a breakdown of our structure for today.

Without further ado, let me introduce our first discussant, Mark Mullins, who is Professor of Japanese Studies and Religious Studies and the Director of the Japan Studies Centre in the New Zealand Asia Institute at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. He is the author of the book we are discussing today, *Yasukuni Fundamentalism*, as well as another book in our series, one of the first books in the Nanzan Library series, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (1998), which is also available on sale on the University of Hawai'i website in paperback. He's also the author of numerous articles. He's going to discuss Jolyon Thomas's book, and then we will switch. Our second discussant, Jolyon Baraka Thomas, is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Besides the current book, in 2012 he published *Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan* through the University of Hawai'i Press. So, I'm going to turn it over to Mark Mullins.

Mark Mullins: First, let me thank Matt and also the whole team at the Nanzan Institute for proposing this event, hosting this event, and also for supporting my work for so many decades. I do want to mention that my first academic article published early in my career was in the *JJRS* in 1987. Over my almost three decades of academic work in Japan, I was fortunate to be able to participate in a couple of *kaken* 科研 projects hosted by Nanzan, I worked on special issues of the *JJRS* a couple of times, and co-edited books with Paul Swanson, Bob Kisala, and others. Of course, I'm indebted to Jim Heisig and many others who've been at the institute for so long, editing, designing, and correcting the work of many like myself. I'm grateful to Nanzan, and consider it a home away from home when I get back to Japan, which has been each year since I moved to New Zealand until COVID restrictions kicked in.

I should also mention that I've known my co-panelist, Jolyon, for a number of years, and we've been engaged in some conversations about our mutual interest for quite some time. We were on a panel on the Occupation at the Asian studies meeting in 2011.

We also collaborated with Nanzan and Erica BAFPELLI and Ian READER (2012) in the special issue of the *JJRS* dealing with Aum Shinrikyō. Our paths have crossed a number of times, and we share this particular interest on the Occupation period and how to make sense of it. If your readers look at our acknowledgments and footnotes, you'll see that we wandered in many of the same archives, such as the National Archives of the United States, the Holtom Archives in Claremont, and the Woodard Archives in the University of Oregon. We've been grappling with a lot of the same material, including also the Gordon Prange Collection that has all the censored material from the Occupation period. We drew on these sources to try and make sense of the impact of the Occupation, what it accomplished, and what issues surround it when we think about religious freedom. We're drawing on a lot of similar materials, but we do end up differing in some of our interpretations and conclusions, which is not unusual.

Now to a few brief comments on *Faking Liberties*. Since this monograph has been out a couple of years now already, it's attracted a number of reviews, some, I would say, rave reviews. It was also selected last year as a co-winner by the American Academy of Religion for the award of Excellence in the Study of Religion. The work that went into this monograph has been recognized as a significant and an important contribution, and I would add to that and say that I regard it as an important addition to the literature on religion in occupied Japan, also in postwar Japan, and rethinking the period from the Meiji Restoration until 1945.

I'll briefly highlight what I see as some of the distinctive contributions of this study, but also indicate some places where I found myself unconvinced by some arguments. Although the focus of the study is on the treatment of religion during the Occupation and how that shaped the development of religious studies in the postwar period, the first half of the book deals with what is referred to as prehistory. This is the first four chapters. These chapters aim to correct some mistaken views. First, that Japan lacked religious freedom until the occupiers supposedly arrived with the real thing in 1945, and second, that the United States somehow represented the bastion of religious freedom.

All of the prehistory chapters are used to present evidence that challenges the accuracy of the images of Shinto that guided the occupiers as they developed policies to manage religious affairs in the postwar period. This was seen largely as a negative view of an oppressive State Shinto that prevented the Japanese from enjoying religious freedom until the start of the Allied Occupation of Japan. The counternarrative documented in these early chapters is that a fairly normal form of religious freedom was guaranteed by the Meiji Constitution in Article 28, and that it was comparable to the guarantees provided by contemporaneous European constitutional monarchies for that time period.

Chapter 1 seeks to show that the government not only established the protection of religious freedom defined as *shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由, which is a focus

on the creed or the belief, but also attempts to show that the Meiji constitutional regime was a secularist one, which means that “a supposedly neutral social field (the ‘secular’) had been created under the jurisdiction of the state” (25–26). In any case, the politics of religious freedom is all about who decides what constitutes religion and not-religion—or the secular—and what is appropriate conduct for life in the public sphere.

In the administrative framework adopted by the government in 1900, Shrine Shinto was designated as nonreligious and managed under the *Jinja Kyoku* 神社局 (Bureau of Shrines), separate from Buddhism, Christianity, and new religions, which were put under the *Shūkyō Kyoku* 宗教局 (Bureau of Religion). This solidified the government’s position and understanding that Shrine Shinto was secular and the base institution for the support for public life, national morality, and state rituals.

Religions were free to the extent that they fulfill the expectations the government deemed necessary to maintain peace and order. I would add here that this cognitive notion of religious freedom guaranteed by the Meiji Constitution did not extend to the behavioral dimension, that is, freedom to practice one’s faith without interference. This becomes significant when we look at the Occupation period.

Both chapters 1 and 4 were particularly valuable to me in making new information available in English on the multiplicity of Buddhist views on religious freedom, and how involved many Buddhist leaders were in the public debates in the late 1890s, and again later in the 1920s and 1930s when the controversial Religious Organizations Bill and Religious Organizations Law were being proposed, revised, and finally passed. Detailed evidence is presented to show that the issues surrounding religious freedom and appropriate legislation were hardly unfamiliar or foreign, but a regular part of the public discourse. Buddhists were fully engaged. I find this Buddhist comeback rather remarkable. Recall that in 1868, the new Meiji government announced its intention to restore the *saisei itchi* 祭政一致 tradition (the unity of government and rights), which involved the promotion of Shinto as the foundation for the new emperor-centric social order, and the reestablishment of the Council of the Divinities (*Jingikan* 神祇官).

This was quickly followed with the *shinbutsu bunri rei* 神仏分離令, a decree to separate gods and buddhas and later unleash the *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 movement (“abolish Buddhism, destroy the images”), which led to the destruction of thousands of Buddhist temples and sacred objects. Here, just a decade or so later, Buddhists recovered enough to join public debate about religious freedom, and they ended up playing a significant role throughout this period.

A threefold typology is employed to make sense of the diverse Buddhist responses and competing interest groups engaging religious freedom. First, statist approaches, which gave preference to the government’s prerogative to grant

or rescind religious freedom based on the state's perception of the public good. Second was the corporatist approach, which prioritized customary privileges for Buddhism as Japan's majority religion. Finally, latitudinarian approaches, which treated religious freedom as a civil liberty devolving upon individuals rather than a group. While all three types may have appeared in Buddhist discourse, it was the statist approach that continued to define what counted as religious and non-religious and what practices would be permitted until the end of the war. The latitudinarian approach, although embraced by some Buddhists in this period, was only realized later in the Occupation. I'd like to add here that even though Shinto views are not taken up in these chapters, Shinto leaders advocated a corporatist stance at one point. AZEGAMI Naoki (2012, 81–82) documented that Shinto priests at the national meeting in May 1927 passed the motion to refer to Shrine Shinto as “public state religion” (*jinja wa kokka kō no shūkyō* 神社は国家公の宗教).

Chapter 3, an excursus on the fate of Japanese Buddhist immigrants in the American territory of Hawai'i, is used to highlight the racist nature of American empire and its treatment of Japanese immigrants in the territory of Hawai'i. This is to prepare us to better understand what form of religious freedom the occupiers would eventually bring to Japan. Both the treatment of Japanese Buddhist immigrants in Hawai'i and the unfair regulation of their language schools, as well as the later arrest and internment of Japanese Americans on the mainland following Japan's Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, are used to show the true face of religious freedom in the United States and its expanding territories.

These policies, Jolyon explains, represented both racial and religious discrimination, giving life to the American conceit that Americans had religious freedom while Japan lacked it. This was some of the baggage that is understood to have shaped the occupiers' views as they developed their policies on how religion would be managed during the Occupation. Religious freedom in the United States and its territories prior to the end of the war and the Occupation of Japan, may have worked well for an Anglo-Protestant majority, but was hardly extended equally to Japanese Buddhists in Hawai'i. Of course, this is a familiar narrative of the experience that has been shared by Catholics and Jews in earlier periods of American history, and Muslims in more recent years in the United States.

I know I'm whizzing through this very quickly, but I just wanted to highlight a few things that I thought were significant and important. Now I turn to just a couple of queries and concerns about part one of the book. It enriches our understanding of religious freedom in this period through its treatment of Buddhists and its analysis of the diverse views that were circulating widely during this period. However, I do have some lingering doubts about some claims.

First, I find myself unpersuaded by the claim that the Meiji constitutional regime was a secular one. While I recognize that the Meiji government was keen on incorporating modern science and education to address the problem with superstitious beliefs and practices, particularly with reference to *shinkō shūkyō* 新興宗教, or the recently emerged new religions, I'm unconvinced that this made the public sphere an entirely neutral or secular one. There is so much evidence to me that indicates Shinto beliefs and rituals were incorporated into the sphere, and the claim that it was in fact a neutral domain was contested by numerous Japanese religious leaders over the decades until 1945. I'm more inclined to seriously entertain the views of these religious actors than to privilege the claims of the state. This, of course, puts me in the latitudinarian camp, to use the typology employed here.

As many of you know, the notion of the Shinto secular was elaborated by Jason Josephson in *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, which looks at the Meiji period and how Japanese came to terms with Western terminology and created their own indigenous, or emic, interpretations of what to do with it in the Japanese context. Josephson writes, and I'm quoting here, "The concept of nonreligious Shinto was useful to the Meiji state, because it allowed them to interweave into the fabric of government and to mandate the performance of Shinto rituals without contravening new guarantees of religious freedom" (JOSEPHSON 2012, 94). Whether one chooses to use the term "State Shinto" to refer to this social reality or not, it is clear to me that the public sphere was not entirely neutral.

A second concern I have has to do with how the repressive and coercive nature of the Japanese government during this period is treated. It's recognized in a number of places that from the Meiji period to 1945 there was a lot of oppression, repression, and coercion by the government. This is attributed to the fact that it was a secular system rather than due to the existence of an oppressive form of State Shinto.

Although the book mentions the coercion and enforced obeisance at shrines both in Japan and in the Japanese empire, I think that the experience of religious minorities is not taken seriously. The word "normal" is used a number of times to characterize the Japanese government's treatment of religion, but this would be challenged by many groups at different periods until 1945. Also, unlike the treatment of the Japanese Buddhist immigrants, which is used to show the Americans failed to implement religious freedom for people of other faiths and colors, the many cases of state intrusion and suppression of religion that occurred in Japan and in the larger empire are not really judged similarly to show how problematic the Japanese version of religious freedom was for religious minorities there. There is mention of the special police (*tokubetsu kōtō keisatsu* 特別高等警察, or "*tokkō*") and their treatment of new religions and Christian groups. I think a more detailed study of some of the groups, not just Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai

創価教育学会, whose founder was imprisoned for antisocial behavior rather than religious freedom issues, would have provided a richer understanding of what religious freedom actually meant for Japanese during this period.

One other brief comment: a lot of Protestant sources are referred to here, as well as Catholic sources. For the most part, the sources used are ones that suggest that everything was fine, and religious freedom and liberty was quite available to the Japanese during this period. My own view, having looked at this period, and looking at a lot of other documents, would suggest a very different picture. I think a fair use of some of those sources, and even the Catholic Church whose new policy it advanced in 1936, is viewed here as fairly normal. I would argue that the changes made by the Catholic Church in this period were changes made under duress. The mainline Protestant churches, the United Church of Christ in Japan in 1941, which had been formed by a forced union of the government, its adoption of the *kokumin no girei* 国民の儀礼, which involved bowing in the direction of the Imperial Palace, singing the Kimigayo 君が代, and shrine visits—these were more of an accommodation for survival and hardly reflected the honest view of practicing Christians at the time.

Anyway, these are just a few of my concerns. These are some of my reflections on part one, the strengths and contributions, but also areas where I have some questions and concerns. Part two of the book shifts to looking more directly at the Occupation and the postwar period. This section is entitled, “The Occupation of Religious Studies,” which does indicate that the book is concerned with more than just the policies of the Occupation authorities and extends to how the reshaping of Japanese religion and law impacted the study of religion in the postwar period and even extended to global religious studies.

Here, I’ll just briefly highlight a few things and raise a couple more questions at the end. In chapter 5, there’s an analysis of the Religions Division’s work on important divisions within SCAP, and particularly the role of Lieutenant William Bunce (1907–2008). The chapter does a good job of showing the various sources that shaped his understanding of Shinto as a religion and how he viewed State Shinto as problematic. Of course, this became a part of those important documents of the Staff Study of Shinto, which was followed by the Shinto Directive in December 1945 (GENERAL HEADQUARTERS 1960).

It’s quite remarkable that this much was produced within the first three months of the Occupation. Many of you will be familiar with the names that are coming up in this chapter, such as Katō Genchi 加藤玄智 (1873–1965), who was writing about State Shinto during the 1920s, Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), the founder of religious studies at the University of Tokyo, his son-in-law Kishimoto Hideo 岸本英夫 (1903–1965), and then, of course, Daniel Clarence Holtom (1884–1962), who had studied the work of Katō and given his own interpretation of State Shinto in somewhat negative terms. These are the sources

that Bunce drew on as he tried to develop a policy to shape the postwar period. I think it's important to remember that Bunce played the central role. He is someone who was not trained in religious studies or Japanese religion. He was an academic trained as a historian. He brought some critical skills to his work, but he was scrambling to implement what the Occupation authorities said must happen once the Occupation began: that is, to establish religious freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and so on. How do you do that?

Now, one claim that is made in this chapter, and that I feel is an overstatement is, and I'm quoting, "The occupiers invented the concept of State Shinto, so that they could eradicate a state religion and replace it with religious freedom as a universal ideal" (144). Just pages later (159), it's noted that Katō Genchi had used the term "State Shinto" as an academic category in his English work, *A Study of Shinto*, published in 1926. They meant somewhat different things, but I think it's very clear that Bunce is drawing on Japanese scholarship to come up with his categories and with his understanding.

All of these scholars I mentioned appear in the chapter: Katō, Anesaki, Kishimoto, and also Miyaji Naokazu 宮地直一 (1886–1949), the former chair of Shinto Studies at the University of Tokyo before he lost his job during the Occupation. He was also writing about State Shinto and Shinto being a religion. Bunce wasn't working in a vacuum. He was scrambling to pull together information on the Occupation period. I don't agree that Bunce was involved in inventing it. What he was involved with is identifying elements for deconstruction, or what I refer to as the privatization of Shinto, removing the role of Shinto from these public institutions and public life.

Those decisions, of course, that came out from the Shinto Directive shocked, disheartened, and diminished Shinto leaders, politicians, and bureaucrats, but many Japanese welcomed the changes. I should also mention here that an important part of Bunce's education, as well as the education of others in the Religions Division, is that Kishimoto and Miyaji were taking Bunce and others on field trips to shrines and temples in Kamakura, Tokyo, and Nikko. Basically, they were learning that Shinto was much more than patriotic or nationalistic militaristic rites.

Chapter 6 documents serious disagreements among the occupiers about how religious freedom should be implemented and promoted. One of the things that both of us discovered is that Bunce was living in a very difficult situation. He was trying to develop and implement a view of religious freedom, equal treatment under the law, separation of religion, and state-free practice. He was up against General [Douglas] MacArthur, and some people who followed him, that the Occupation needed to be involved in Christianization, which was required for the democratization of Japan. In my view, Bunce continued to push for equal treatment, but at the same time, the Occupation continued to use the quasi-



official resources of the Occupation to promote Christianization, which was problematic.

The book does provide great coverage of how religious studies developed in Japan with Kishimoto and William P. Woodard (1896–1973) collaborating from 1953, when Woodard, a onetime Protestant missionary who had served for a while in the Religions Division, came back to Japan and worked with Kishimoto to develop the International Institute for the Study of Religions, and established the journal *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, a journal that after a decade closed but was relaunched in 1974 as the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*.

Due to time limitations, let me just conclude with a couple of areas of concern that I have from my reading of part two of this book. I do part company with Jolyon in his interpretation of State Shinto as an invented problematic concept in postwar religious studies. I share Helen Hardacre's earlier view that the invention of State Shinto occurred in the early Meiji period and that it evolved over the decades (HARDACRE 1989, 3–4).

Let me read one quote: “The tendency to view State Shinto as a coherent national religion that existed with minimal change between 1868 and 1945 interferes with the ability to see how the Meiji Constitution actually created a secular system” (238). Jolyon goes on to note the critical scholarship coming out of Shinto institutions, Kokugakuin and Kogakkan, who are challenging, and I'm quoting here, “Murakami's claim that Shinto was a unified monolithic system that held all Japanese subjects in its thrall from the time of the major restoration until 1945” (239).

Now, this presentation of Murakami Shigeyoshi 村上重良 I find a little misleading, because most of Murakami's work, and Shimazono Susumu 島蘭進, who's also writing in this postwar period, carefully looks at the development of State Shinto in four or five different periods and its changing features, emphases, and so on. It's not an intact monolithic system that starts in the Meiji period. Most people who are using the term “State Shinto” continue to use it in a more nuanced way. I agree with Jolyon's argument that the Meiji Constitution never made Shinto the state religion. In spite of that, I agree with Isomae Jun'ichi 磯前順一 and some other scholars that it in fact functions as a state religion by the policies and administrative structures that were put in place during this period (for example, ISOMAE 2014, 272).

Let me mention one last comment. I want to end on a positive note here. In spite of all the inconsistencies and unfair policies, the censorship, and things that went on during the Occupation period, I think what Bunce was able to pull off as a non-Japanese religion specialist was quite remarkable. The book highlights the fact that a new and improved, broader vision of what constitutes religious freedom, that is, as a human right, had emerged in this critical period as a result of, and I'm quoting, “A robust multilateral interaction in which all parties involved

learned from each other and in which all parties exerted on operative definitions of religion and freedom” (198).

Bunce develops, and Jolyon quotes from, a policy memo in 1946 that I think really advances our understanding of religious freedom in this period and is still relevant for Japan and American religious studies today. He says, “Religious freedom involves not only the right on the part of an individual to choose for himself, but to be safeguarded against potential coercion. Accordingly, it must embrace two factors, a maximum of choice on the part of individuals and groups and a minimum of propagation, restraint, and interference on the part of the government” (200).

In the end, I think something good emerged out of this struggle to formulate new policies in the Occupation period. It wasn’t a perfect Occupation. There was censorship. There was suppression on the part of American authorities as well. What the Occupation did accomplish and what was celebrated by many Japanese at the time was the release of religious prisoners from prison, the fact that no religious institutions or Shinto shrines were destroyed, even though they did monitor Yasukuni and *gokoku* 護国 shrines right up until 1951. The fact is they didn’t actually build churches or force Japanese to participate in this imported foreign religion of Christianity.

A rich book. Lots of things to talk about that I know we don’t have time for at this point, but maybe in our discussion we can pursue some of these. Anyway, thank you, Jolyon, for a very stimulating book. I learned a lot.

Matthew McMullen: Thanks, Mark, for your very thorough and enlightening review of Jolyon’s book. Certainly, Jolyon probably has a lot of things he wants to respond to in the comments, but maybe before we get to that, I’m going to turn it over to him and ask him to discuss Mark Mullins’s book in turn.

Jolyon Thomas: Thank you so much. I want to just begin by thanking Moriya Tomoe and Matthew McMullen for the invitation to participate in this event. I’m really glad that it’s an inaugural event, and I’m very excited. I hope to see more things like this. I also want to express my deep gratitude to Mark Mullins for his careful, generous, and critical reading of my book. I think one of the best gifts that we can ever get from a colleague, especially a senior colleague that we respect very much, is a critical pushback on some of our claims.

In that spirit, some of the things that I have to say about Mark’s book will also be critical. As he mentioned, we have some points of disagreement, but I’m going to save most of that discussion for the Q&A. I’ve written down some things for my response to his book.

I’m going to dive right in to discussing his book, *Yasukuni Fundamentalism: Japanese Religions and the Politics of Restoration*. I think this is a really timely

publication. It helps to elucidate some of the main players, the operative ideas, and the groups that are participating in contemporary debates about religion and politics in Japanese society today.

I want to state right at the outset that it's clearly targeted primarily to specialists of Japan. The book is also designed as a contribution to a broader scholarly literature on religious nationalism and the comparative study of religious fundamentalism around the world. Mark Mullins describes his book "as an exercise in historical sociology of religion that critically engages the contemporary debates surrounding secularization in light of postwar developments in Japanese religions" (27).

Now, while his title suggests that his primary interest is Shinto generally and Yasukuni Shrine specifically, this is actually somewhat misleading. I want to say here that this is not a critique. I'm very sympathetic. My own title omits at least half of the content of my book. Writing titles is hard. I want to highlight for everyone who's here today what's left out of that title. In the first part of the book, Mark shows us how a group of actors including the Jinja Honchō 神社本庁, the Japan Conference (Nippon Kaigi 日本会議), and the Shinto Association for Spiritual Leadership (Shintō Seiji Renmei 神道政治連盟)—responded to Occupation-era reforms, and then subsequently capitalized on disasters such as the earthquakes in 1995 and 2011 to advance their political agendas.

That's a full book in itself, but he doesn't stop there. His story continues. In part two, he shows us how minority groups, including Christian schoolteachers, trans-denominational organizations, and Buddhist activists have pushed back against some of these Shinto apologists' proposed reforms. In this second part, in particular, he traces some of the ironies that characterize the restorationist project. For example, he shows that the Japanese public is not necessarily supportive of constitutional revision. He shows that even though the restorationists frequently highlight the importance of the emperor, members of the imperial family regularly indicate their discomfort with rightwing political stances. That's important. The imperial family is being more and more outspoken about that.

Mark situates these two halves of the book through an opening introduction that provides some of the key concepts driving his inquiry. He describes his project as an investigation of "the role of religion and resurgent nationalism" and how organized religions have contributed to a rightward shift in Japanese politics, which he describes as "a religiopolitical agenda to reshape public life and institutions according to a shared vision" advanced by the Jinja Honchō, Nippon Kaigi, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), focusing specifically on concerted attempts to make Shinto public culture rather than private religion (3, 5). Mark describes this agenda as a religious reaction to the secularizing forces of modernization in general, and the American-led allied Occupation in particular. Borrowing from N. J. DEMERATH (2007), he treats the Occupation as a type of

imperialist secularization. That is, as an externally driven top-down separation of religion from the state that followed an earlier period of coercive secularization under the Meiji regime, mostly in the late nineteenth century. Drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas and José Casanova, he describes a general trend of the deprivatization of religion in the post-Occupation decades.

You've just heard about my book. You know that Mark and I are both looking at the same archive. I was really pleased to see in chapter 1 how much overlap there was insofar as Mark also stresses the fact that Occupation policy clearly reflected the influence of Japanese actors. I was really happy to see him show that different actors within the Occupation disagreed about what counted as an appropriate reform in the arena of religion.

Beyond these points, which I think are very important and can't be stressed enough, two crucial takeaways from chapter 1 include the fact that the Shinto Directive did indeed subject Shinto shrines to special surveillance based on the occupiers' perception of Shinto as a threat. While it is definitely and unambiguously an overstatement to say that the occupiers imposed a specific religious worldview on Japan—especially to say that they made Japan Christian, that's obviously false—the fact that MacArthur and others gave preferential treatment to Christian missionaries is indisputable. As Mark suggests, the roots of religious nationalism in postwar Japan can be traced back to the Shinto experience of marginalization. That's crucial for everything that comes after.

He picks up the next part of the story by looking at what happened after the Occupation, or during and then immediately after. He performs very crucial historical work by showing first of all how shrine priests had to accommodate themselves to the new status quo by accepting the position of Shinto as a private religion that received no direct funding from the government. While the vast majority of shrines banded together under the aegis of the newly formed Jinja Honchō in 1946, a small number of shrines, including but not only Yasukuni, decided to maintain their independence.

Mark shows that Yasukuni's priests had to work assiduously to allay the occupiers' suspicions about the shrine's nationalistic and militaristic leanings, and they got creative. Some of the changes they introduced included alterations to the yearly cycle of rituals and the creation of voluntary confraternities to show the occupiers that Yasukuni was a private religious organization supported by charitable donations.

Once the Occupation ended, shrine priests, including those at Yasukuni as well as others, quickly pivoted. They tried to recode shrines as public institutions. This included attempts to redefine Yasukuni specifically as a public memorial for veneration of the war dead, and also the establishment of new political lobbies affiliated with the Jinja Honchō, such as Shinseiren 神政連 that was founded in 1969. These lobbies immediately got to work. They tried to

accomplish some changes that rolled back Occupation reforms, such as restoring National Foundation Day to the annual calendar (3 February), or reintroducing imperial reign dates into the public calendar. Despite these victories that link the public calendar to the imperial house and to the mythology of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, the restorationists were mostly unable in the 1960s and 1970s to accomplish their direct objectives. That didn't really happen until the 1990s, and chapter 3 tells us why.

Now, the years 1995 and 2011 were both major turning points that prompted shifts in popular understanding of the public role of religion. Religious groups' disaster responses including both humanitarian aid and ritual care garnered a lot of attention in the media at the time. At the same time, reforms to the Religious Juridical Persons Law (Shūkyō Hōjin Hō 宗教法人法) in the wake of the Aum Shinrikyō gas attacks focused popular attention on public safety. Those presage a raft of legal reforms that took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Chapter 3 shows how disasters and perceived social crises allowed religious conservatives to reframe debates about several issues including security, education, citizenship, and law. From the mid-1990s until the present, a close and symbiotic relationship between Jinja Honchō, Shinseiren, Nippon Kaigi, and the LDP has enabled a gradual rightward shift in policy. Increasingly brazen politicians have violated longstanding taboos on topics like constitutional revision, experimenting with reforms of lower-level laws like the Fundamental Law in Education, and also reinterpreting the existing constitution, which both prime ministers Koizumi Junichirō 小泉純一郎 and Abe Shinzō 安倍晋三 had done.

Now, there's a lot more that I can say about this, and I will indeed have more to say about it in my questions but I'm going to tidy it up by saying that Mark describes these trends through Peter van der VEER's (1994, 660) notion of the "politics of inclusion." There's potential for confusion here, so I want to be really clear. This is not inclusion in the positive sense of making diverse groups feel welcomed. This is a coercive agenda that aims to fold all citizens under a normative understanding of Japaneseness that is premised on Shinto normativity. I'm tipping my hat with the word "Shinto normativity" to the really fabulous work of Ernils Larsson, whose 2020 Uppsala University dissertation is a must-read.

In part two, Mark Mullins goes on to describe this "politics of inclusion" in more detail, even as he introduces his readers to various attempts to push back on it. I was really glad to see him highlight early in chapter 4 that even though the Shinto apologists would presumably be focused primarily on Ise as a ritual site, it is Yasukuni that tends to garner the most attention as a key site for their political action. This is a weird choice. Why would they pick such a hotly contested site? It's hotly contested in Japan but is also a site that serves as a lightning rod for the ire of people in Japan's former colonies.

Now, I think most people in this audience are going to be generally familiar with what Akiko Takenaka has called “Yasukuni the issue” (TAKENAKA 2015, 6). Rather than talking about all of the different aspects of that, I’ll just say briefly here that Mark walks us through some of the key critiques that have emerged of politically controversial and journalistically sensational practices like prime ministerial visits to the shrine. Every time a prime minister does this people lose their minds and so forth. The optics are all over the place.

Mark also introduces some of the proposals that have emerged to establish an alternative memorial site that’s not hampered by the theological constraints that Yasukuni presents. When I say theological constraints, the priests at Yasukuni claim that they can’t de-enshrine somebody who’s been enshrined, although Mark points out, intriguingly, that it’s happened at least once. Anyway, I don’t want to belabor my summary here but while there have been various lawsuits and protests that have pushed back against the Yasukuni-centric “politics of inclusion,” Mark argues that the pro-Yasukuni camp, at least for now, seems to have the upper hand. At the same time, as he concludes the chapter he rightly shows—I think this is something that often gets lost—that ordinary citizens still draw solace from Yasukuni as a site of remembrance. If we take something like religious freedom seriously, then we also have to take their desires to be able to take advantage of that ritual site seriously as well. In other words, it’s all very, very complicated.

Now, we’re talking about two books that have been published, but I need to lay my cards on the table here. I am almost done with a book on religion and education in Japan and the United States from 1945 to the present. Everything that Mark was saying about education in this book was just really stimulating for me. I want to highlight that in chapter 5 I was particularly heartened to see Mark address an issue that I think is crucial. This is an issue that I think says much more about the politics of education and the “politics of inclusion” than the relatively tired debates over history textbooks and the allegedly masochistic historical consciousness.

Let me put this as a question. Which ritual behaviors can be reasonably expected of students and teachers in public school spaces? After the Diet voted to make *Kimigayo* the national anthem and the *Hinomaru* 日の丸 the national flag in 1999, governors and boards of education (especially in Japan’s most populous prefectures like Tokyo and Osaka) swiftly made standing for, musically performing, and singing the national anthem a requirement for students and teachers at school ceremonies. Faced with docked pay and formal reprimands for refusing to participate in these patriotic rituals, several teachers sued on freedom of conscience grounds. Some of them were Christians, as Mark highlights, but not all of them were. They actually had a wide range of freedom of conscience claims.

Now, to make a very long legal story very, very short, these teachers lost at

the Supreme Court in 2011 when a petty bench ruled that their duties as public servants outweighed their rights as private citizens. Duties as public servants are more important than religious freedom or freedom of conscience, the Supreme Court said.

When we pair this with the 2006 revision of the Fundamental Law in Education, this ruling helps us understand how restorationists are trying to set the stage for constitutional revision, and indeed that's the topic of chapter 6, the last chapter of the book. It is well known that the LDP has made constitutional revision a primary goal since it was founded in 1955. With the aid of relatively new political lobbies like Shinseiren and Nippon Kaigi, the party has gotten closer to this goal than at any previous point in Japan's post-defeat history.

In chapter 6, based on readings of the LDP draft constitution of 2012 and also analysis of the ambiguous role of religion in contemporary Japanese society, Mark shows that the LDP is trying to recode Shinto shrine rites as public culture or traditional custom rather than religion. The main focus here is a concerted attempt to revise Article 20, Clause 3, and Article 89. I'll just say my particular interest in Article 20, Clause 3, is not only that it prohibits state funding of religious rituals or direct state support of religious rituals, but it also prohibits religious education. These clauses prohibit direct state support of religious institutions, religious rituals and... if the LDP, or the restorationists, were able to revise these clauses, this would affect a major shift from the current constitution, although I should also note that the interpretation that they advanced in this draft ten years ago is generally in line with some existing Supreme Court rulings that have identified shrine rites as customs rather than religion.<sup>1</sup>

Mark introduces us to some of the critiques of revision that have been advanced by religious minorities such as Japanese Christians as well as by some people such as Buddhist clerics, but one lingering question that I had when I was reading this chapter concerns the various sources not of public critique but of actual political drag on the constitutional revision agenda. It struck me as being a little bit weird that Komeito is largely absent from Mark's account. Now, it appears there are references on a few pages, for example on page 187. To be clear, I think we should take Komeito's boast that it prevents constitutional revision as the junior coalition partner with the LDP with a big grain of salt. I don't think we should trust that claim exactly, but I also think that it matters that the LDP relies on Komeito for votes. They can't win elections without Komeito. They're beholden to Komeito.

This means that Abe Shinzō and his ilk have ultimately opted for paying pragmatic lip service to the topic of revision without using the bully pulpit to actually

1. Editor's comment: The speaker is referring to the Tsu City *jichinsai* 地鎮祭 case. For details on this case, see LARSSON (2017, 231–236).

make it happen. It's never happened. Even when he was in office, Abe always promised his base that he would pursue revision but when he had initiative and momentum as he did for example in November of 2018, he tabled the topic. He always figured out a way to put some more pressing domestic policy issue out in front of it. In that case, it was a revision of immigration law and the guest-worker program.

In addition to the tepid approach to revision, I think we should say there is little popular support for it. There are often intra-coalition dynamics and domestic policy issues that make revision impractical, although I am not saying that it's impossible. I don't think that Mark or I am in the business of prediction, but I do really like the way that he highlights in the second half of the book the various types of things that will make the restorationists' project problematic, or that will make it difficult. For example, pushback from the imperial house is a major one.

Now, I am about to move into my questions. Let me just say that it really struck me that this book ended without a formal conclusion. I'm not big on conclusions that just recap the main points of the book. I like conclusions that tell us where we're supposed to go next, and so I left this book wanting to know about what Mark sees as the next steps for the field. I think this book stakes out some really capacious ground for future research. As I turn to my questions, I want to ask Mark, what are the big questions that remain unanswered? What are the topics that require further investigation? What are the methods that we can use?

I'm going to close things up with three methodological questions. Mark describes this project as a "historical sociology of secularization" (27). I have three questions basically about how he accounts for change over time. One of these is going to be a little bit longer than the others.

First of all, I'll admit to being a little bit confused about whether this book describes an attempt to revive the system that some people call "State Shinto," or whether it's rather about a series of political agendas that use the language of tradition to create an alternative ideal future. "Past, or future?" is my question. At times, Mark is clear that even the most ardent of the restorationists don't actually want to return to the Meiji Constitution. He says that explicitly on page 21. And yet at other times he suggests that that's exactly what they aim to do. They want to revive State Shinto, he says on page 184. Which one is it? What is the past that they're going back to? Or are they using the language of the past to describe a future that's never existed?

Second question, also about change over time: secularization. When we describe religion as secularized or as deprivatized, what original (or even natural) state are we imagining that preceded that macro-social process? What does Mark imagine as the baseline for the proper distribution of capacities for governance and ritual care? These are two things that we could put in a much longer list.



My last comment about change over time extends this question about temporal baselines and adds in the factor of geographic scale. I will be as brief as I possibly can. Mark helpfully outlines some of the main reinterpretations of policy and law that have taken place over the last three decades. He does this in chapter 3 most explicitly, and even provides these handy charts on pages 91 to 93 and 108 to 109. When viewed in aggregate, these charts show a concerted attempt on the part of the LDP to engage in restorationist politics. But timelines can be misleading. They're constrained by our choices concerning periodization and they reflect our decisions about who we think the main actors are.

I want to explain what I mean with the example of moral education. At first blush it seems like the push for moral and patriotic education was a direct response to the Aum affair and contemporaneous media panics about bullying and compensated dating. Conservatives had actually changed moral education decades before. After the occupiers discontinued *shūshin* 修身 (self-cultivation) courses in December 1945, it was already April 1958 when the LDP reintroduced morality education to Japanese schools under the name *dōtoku no jikan* 道徳の時間. They did this at the height of a national moral panic about juvenile sexuality, which should sound familiar, and drug addiction, and also over the fierce protests of the Japan Teachers' Union.

We already have a long history here that predates the reforms that took place in the 1990s, but the story gets even more complicated when we consider that Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro 中曽根康弘 (1918–2019) promoted educational reform in the 1980s with this specific goal of changing students' subjectivity to create citizens who'd accept the idea of constitutional revision. Nakasone was playing a long game and he wasn't doing it alone. He went to the United States and the United Kingdom and borrowed neoliberal policy models from people like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, models that privileged notions of personal responsibility. He bypassed the Ministry of Education bureaucracy to implement his proposed reforms.

Now, he left office in 1987 without accomplishing his entire agenda, but then the Japan Teachers' Union dissolved, or broke in two, which removed one major brake on right-leaning educational policy, and then the bubble economy collapsed in 1991 and we have a crisis. Suddenly the Ministry of Education has to tack to the right in order to retain at least some control over the policymaking process. The bureaucrats were on their back foot, Nakasone had put them there, and these background factors largely predate the rise of groups like the Society for Textbook Reform (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai 新しい歴史教科書をつくる会), the manga of Kobayashi Yoshinori 小林よしのり, or Nippon Kaigi.

I'm mentioning these things not because I dispute the general contours of Mark's historical account, but rather to just show that there's a little bit of danger in hewing too closely to the claims and the timelines of the rightwing

themselves. Another way of putting this is that crisis can be just as seductive to the scholarly analyst as it can be to the rightwing demagogue.

I think there is a danger in looking exclusively at Japan, when Japanese conservatives were clearly looking to the USA and to the UK for models to emulate. Far too frequently, conservatives in any one of these countries have downplayed their policy successes and have brazenly claimed a position of marginalization, even as they've successfully shifted political discourse to the right.

If you're looking for evidence of this, look at the New Christian Right in the United States and the discussions happening in the U.S. Supreme Court this week. Abortion.<sup>2</sup> I'm not asking Mark to explain the inconsistent logic of the Shinto apologists. That would be unfair. But, I am curious to hear from him about what other timeframes and what other geographic scales might do to change his account. I'm also curious about what other modes of periodization or what other types of evidence he considered and rejected as he conducted his project.

Now I've already gone longer than I intended to. I'm going to cut myself off and just turn things over to Mark for his responses.

Matthew McMullen: I would like to thank both discussants for ending with questions. I'm just going to hand it over to Mark first if he wants to reply to Jolyon's questions and then we'll give Jolyon a turn to reply to Mark's questions.

Mark Mullins: I'm very pleased to know at least one person has read my book carefully. Thank you, Jolyon. It hasn't been out that long, but you've clearly done a good job of reviewing it and I'm grateful for that. I don't think I got very good notes on your questions that came out very quickly, and we may have to do a little back and forth to clarify some of the questions and what you might be asking. One of the things you highlight is that Komeito is missing. I mentioned it in a few places, but I'm counting on Levi McLaughlin, Alex Klein, and some other people to fill in the blanks. I guess I gave them less attention because I felt the work on Soka Gakkai was being addressed pretty well with some other very active scholars in the field. Maybe that's a bit of a cop-out, but one can only do so much in so many pages. Certainly, Komeito is an important player.

I know there is a great deal of division within Komeito, and the Soka Gakkai Fujinkai 婦人会 (Married Women's Division) being opposed to some of the com-

2. Editor's comment: On 1 December 2021, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a landmark case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, that posed a significant challenge to the precedent established in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion at the federal level. Thomas is referring to those oral arguments, and to the fact that the political mobilization of religious conservatives around the issue of abortion has been successful despite conservatives' claims of marginalization.

promises Komeito was willing to make regarding cooperation with the LDP, and so on. I'm sure Levi and some others are going to continue to give us some good coverage and analysis of Komeito's ongoing role in this coalition.

The question of what next, I know there's no conclusion, and it ends abruptly. What's next, I think, which would be great for more energetic, and younger scholars is actually serious field research on some of the groups that I work on. I'm using primarily documentary evidence to chart what's been going on, who's representing what views, and how religious organizations line up. I'm trying to synthesize the findings of Japanese researchers in the field on some of these groups that I haven't had time to pursue field research on. I think one of the things that's really needed going forward is more people who are actually on the ground doing ethnographic work. I know Levi started this with some of his trips back to Japan, and it's in progress. I look forward to seeing that.

In terms of what's next, I'm struggling to figure out what's next because I was rather surprised with political developments after I finished my book, with Prime Minister Abe resigning again, and different people coming into the leadership role. I thought that the whole *kempō kaisei* 憲法改正 revision of the constitutional issue was back on the back burner, and it seems now there is renewed enthusiasm among the leadership about taking it up again.

I still think that the popular sentiment about revision is more negative than positive in the sense that Article 9 is still embraced as an ideal by a lot of the general public, and clearly by the imperial household in the statements it makes. With the threat of China or North Korea and these external forces, those macro-political relations between Japan and other nations could, in fact, shape a growing support for a more robust military and revision of the constitution. It's really hard to predict, but I can see elements there that are reappearing in this context.

Jolyon Thomas: What's the baseline state? What exists before secularization? What exists before deprivatization? It seems to me that if we don't establish that and establish it very clearly, then we tell a story about a macro-social change where we can't peg it against anything. One of the things that I found myself wondering was what has changed exactly, from what to what?

Mark Mullins: Well, that's certainly an area of debate, but the sociological literature that I work in usually analyzes secularization in terms of three dimensions: measuring individual belief in practice, organizational strength or decline depending on the situation, and then the degree of public influence and public shaping of the broader culture and life. Of course, even if you look at Europe and so on, you don't have great survey data or documents to measure some of these things.

The baseline is not always that clear in terms of what was practiced high or low, or belief high or low. I don't have survey research from Tokugawa or from Europe from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. It's hard to measure in that long span of time, but in terms of the modern period that I'm looking at, people who would be measuring what happened to the number of temples or the number of adherents, we know dealing with modern Japan it's very hard to get accurate figures on that. The official figures reported by shrines and temples every year are inflated. Survey research gives us some idea of religious belief, or personal faith, but it also tells us that for a lot of people ritual behavior isn't religious to them, it's customary practices.

I admit the difficulty of unpacking this, but I think it would be clear to say that in the early Meiji period, the Buddhist institution faced a real impact that scholars would talk about in terms of secularization—the loss of priesthood and the destruction of temples and so on. The public influence, of course, varies. I think one of the strengths of your study brings out.... In fact, the Buddhists, even though they had a rocky time in the early Meiji, they came back and they were players. That side of the story, at least for me, it was a new one. I don't know the literature on that period, so that's a real contribution. Obviously those Buddhist figures were operating within that statist framework that you outline in your chapter.

What public influence can they have? In terms of the framework I'm looking at, in the postwar period, Shinto that was privatized by Bunce and his policies, removed from public schools—whether it be moral education, *kamidana* 神棚, or shrine rites, and so on—a number of groups who were in that private sphere are saying, “We want to shape public life and institutions.” Certainly, Soka Gakkai was about that. It's not just about our religious practice, it's about the state, the nation. That's a Buddhist case that certainly has reentered the public sphere from having been in the private one.

I'm just saying, along with that, a rather neglected case is Jinja Honchō, and some of these other players saying, “Hey, we want back what we lost.” I guess this is also one of the reasons why I have questions about State Shinto. What does it mean? Certainly, Jinja Honchō leaders in the literature I'm reading in the 1950s and 1960s—the Shinto representatives were so upset with how they were treated by the Occupation. They believed they once had that public role and it's unfair, but they've been marginalized and privatized. They may not call it State Shinto, but they want that public role and that elevation of status that they feel they lost.

One of the things that I also discovered in doing this study looking at Shinto in the postwar period.... One of the things that we're seeing is shrines are shrinking, the adherents are shrinking, at a time when this social movement, the religion-political restoration movement, is actually growing. These are mixed signals.

At one level, you've got secularization, at another level, you might have a fuller engagement in public life and institutions.

I think how religious groups navigate that line between private, public, and what's religious and not religious is very different. I frequently go back to an example from the United States, since that's one of my homes. I'm familiar with fundamentalism there, and the rise of Jerry Falwell (1933–2007) and the fundamentalist Moral Majority movement. After decades of viewing the world as corrupt and unredeemable and creating this small private subculture, they had a rethink and said, "Wait a minute. America's ours, let's reclaim it," and launched into this public life and institution and issues surrounding abortion or prayer in public schools, and have an agenda that compares with what maybe some of Jinja Honchō or the LDP are doing in the public sphere.

Groups can change. The disasters that piqued my interest in my project—I was like, "What happened with all of this?"—and I was seeing this resurgence of nationalism as a reaction to a lot of things. You rightly point out there was a whole lot going on before that in terms of moral education and other things. Basically, I didn't take it up. I was just focused on something else. What you're doing now on Japanese education, and what was going on, and trying to think about what the appropriate role of ethical teaching or civics education that you do in the classroom—this is an ongoing debate and an important one. Certainly, the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education pushed through by Abe changed the game a bit for how that's being negotiated and played out.

You rightly point out there's always a baseline issue on dealing with issues of secularization and it should be distinguished from the ideology that you point out. It's not like the theory trying to analyze the shifts and changes in individual, institutional, and societal levels. It's not saying it should be or it's not promoting it. It's simply saying these seem to be the changes that are occurring over time. More detailed studies might look at the impact of secular public education on disaffiliation from religion, and different things like that. Roughly, that's the framework, what I was working with.

Jolyon Thomas: Along the way, you addressed my third question, many thanks. So, if I can respond to some of your questions, first of all, I just want to say thank you so much for, again, the critical engagement with *Faking Liberties*. I knew when I published this book that it would be.... The book is a documentation of a number of things that I found counterintuitive. When I published it, I knew that some of those things would not only be counterintuitive but would actually be irritating, if not enraging, for some readers. One of the things that I think has happened is that, sometimes, I think people mistake my project for being an apology for what people like Murakami or Shimazono have described as State Shinto, and it is decidedly not that.

I want to respond to your first question or critique. In your response to my question, you talked about sociological theory, about secularization, which I'm familiar with. I situate myself not in that literature, but rather in a literature that some people call critical secularism studies, which is less focused on telling a story about change over time, not focused on secularization, and more focused on a constructivist question: How do different parties make religion? They do that by gerrymandering social life. They call some things religion and other things not-religion.

My perspective is that we're never all going to agree on what those things are. My perspective is also that scholars have for far too long assumed that we know what's really going on. If we say we know what's really going on, we say, "Oh, that stuff over there is religion," and there is less of it, we're already engaging in a secularist project. That is secularism. It's distinguishing between something being religion and something not being religion. When we do that, then we lose our ability to describe secularism because we're already doing it, we're already performing it, we're engaging in a secularist activity. There's an ideology there because then we start to say this is good governance and that's bad governance. Because I'm interested in trying to describe the way that all of these binaries that you were referring to rely on one another for their coherence, I end up trying to.... I'm trying to talk around a bunch of things that we all take for granted in daily life.

I don't say that religion is the opposite of the secular. I say religion is the opposite of non-religion because I think that sometimes the opposite that is set up against religion is something like superstition and sometimes it's something like morality. I also say the opposite, or that these binaries like religion and not religion are often premised on other things, like public and private. There is a gender dimension to this, male and female. Although admittedly, *Faking Liberties* didn't deal with gender, my new book definitely does.

I'm belaboring this point just to say that when I described the Meiji constitutional regime as secularist—not as secular but as secularist—I'm saying that it is a regime that assumed from the outset that religion exists in the world and that religion can be separated from not-religion. That is not to say that it is neutral. To say that somebody or some parties are trying to separate religion from not-religion is to say that none of them are ever doing so in a neutral fashion. That whole imaginary space of neutrality is an impossibility. That's my claim. That's why I say that the Meiji constitutional regime was normal because every secularist state any place in the world has always been characterized by this problem.

If that's true, if France and Canada and the United States and the UK and Japan all have this problem, it means that some people are going to gerrymander social life this way, and they'll call this part "religion" and that part "not-religion." Other people are going to carve up social life in a different way. They're

going to disagree. As scholars, all we have are their disagreements. That's what we can analyze.

Once we start doing that, then our traditional stories about repression and coercion start to look different. I agree with you wholeheartedly that we have to pay attention to the people who are claiming that they have been treated unfairly by the state. One of the regrets with my book is that I didn't do what you suggested, which was to provide a balance where I had the Buddhists in territorial Hawai'i and a similar story with a similar amount of detail for non-Buddhists and non-Shinto practitioners in Japan to give equal weight to those things. That's water under the bridge. I can't change it, but I think that even as we pay attention to those things, we also can't assume that those people are always the only authoritative sources about what counts as real religion or what counts as religious freedom.

I'm talking about this because it makes me uncomfortable. Secularism as a political doctrine is freaky. Secularism as a political doctrine is dangerous. That's not to say that we should just scrap it and that we should have authoritarian top-down religion, far from it. I'm saying if we assume that secularism has made us free, we're already trapped and we're already allowing ourselves to think that we have solved a problem that we have only exacerbated.

Those claims, the really strong claims that I'm making, are coming from a point of me being freaked out about a pervasive mode of governance that denies more freedom to people than we think. That doesn't mean that—I just want to reiterate this—I'm giving the Japanese government a free pass and saying, "Oh, they were fine." When I describe it as normal, I'm saying secularism is creepy, and it's normal creepy.

I am not an expert on prewar Christianity. The differences in sources concerned the Catholic Church bowing to the will of the Japanese state. I also cited some Protestants, mostly non-Japanese Protestants, who were saying, "We're looking around..." they're telling the U.S. State Department, "Everything is fine here. We don't feel like we're being too oppressed." That changed a lot as of 1941. I think we have to situate the work of people like Holtom as a response, an emotional response. It's there. You've been to the archives. You've seen his essays. There's one called "The Foreign Scapegoat," which I think was published in the *Christian Century*, where he's talking about feeling appalled at being kicked out of the country that he had grown to love. He's also talking about that as a Baptist with all of the things that come into that with the Baptist understanding of the proper relationship between religions and the state.

I think that I'm trying to capture how we can account for Holtom's perspective to take him as an example. He's saying that this is a problem, but he's also saying that it's a problem because of his particular denominational proclivities. Because he had spent the last twenty years of his life living in this country, and

then he got kicked out unceremoniously. There's a historical context there that matters. I agree with you that there should have been another chapter in the first part on Christians; I should have just made that happen, and I didn't.

You got rushed in your comments at the end about part two. Let me just say one thing. As I describe in chapter 5, I said that State Shinto had to be created to be destroyed. You described my talk of it as an invention. I agree. Katō Genchi used the phrase *kokkateki Shintō* 国家の神道. We have a few other scattered references to that. They're not systematic. We also know from context that, although in retrospect, we see Katō Genchi as being a very influential figure, he was marginalized by the Anesakis of the world at the time. I don't think that his ideas were taken seriously. Anesaki also disagrees with himself within his book about whether Shinto is religion or not religion. I'm just trying to capture that State Shinto as it's been bequeathed to people like you and me as a concept of a mode of governance is one that was not the version that Katō tried to describe. It's one that Bunce had to invent because somebody told him to do research that had a specific outcome.

When the State Department tells Bunce, "You have to do this research and we already know what the outcome is going to be," that's a problem for us as scholars. That's not good scholarly ethics. That means that if that's the way that State Shinto was created as a concept, and I do think it was created in the Occupation from these parts that had been generated by other people before, then that means that we have to think about when we're going to use that phrase and to think very carefully about it. I loved that in your book you didn't double down too much on the State Shinto concept. You described things as restoration. I think that's a much more productive way of talking about things without trying to collapse them into this concept that's a little bit messy.

Let me just end on a positive note and say that I saw *Faking Liberties* in a new way as I read your book. I was looking at some of the primary sources that we both used, and I was thinking, "Oh, now that Mark has put it this way, if I were rewriting the book, I would do things differently." Similarly, for the book that I'm writing right now, there's a lot of really good work that you've done to provide context for some things that I've been trying to make sense of. I just want to thank you for the work. I'm really looking forward to how this conversation continues now that we can bring everybody else into it.

Mark Mullins: If I can ask one question. Your title, like mine, doesn't reveal what the whole book is about, but I'm just wondering who are faking their liberties? When you use "faking liberties," is this the Japanese during the Occupation or the occupiers who are faking it because they know behind the scenes they're manipulating things and using censorship? When you think of that term "faking liberties," what is the main thrust, or who are the actors you have in mind?



Jolyon Thomas: I actually meant it in several different ways. One of the things that I was thinking was that the occupiers.... One of the common claims that the occupiers made, but then a lot of scholars writing since—you mentioned Helen Hardacre so I'll mention her here—people like the occupiers and then Helen later had said things like the Meiji Constitution included a guarantee of religious freedom, but it only paid lip service to the principle. That's faking liberties.

I also wanted to suggest that, take the chapter on territorial Hawai'i, Japanese Buddhists were unable to make a religious freedom claim at the U.S. Supreme Court, even though they had been suppressed specifically because of their religion, because the U.S. didn't see them as having a legitimate religion. Their religion was illegible, fake. That's not real religion. That's the worship of the emperor.

Similarly, in the Occupation era, we also have the notion that the occupiers are trying to come up with things, but they're faking it. They are making it up as they go. It's happening when Bunce is responding to MacArthur, and Bunce is responding to these missionaries who are a real pain in the neck—like they were really irritating to him—and he's responding to people like Kishimoto. All of them are trying to tell him, "This is real religion. This is what needs to be protected." He is just like, "I don't know what I'm doing." You look at Woodard's memoir. He's like, "I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm just trying it out. I'm faking it till I make it." "Fake it till you make it" is particularly important to me because of the constructivist claim that I made before, which is that I think religion is made; it doesn't just exist out there. These people were making religion come into being, and that's important to me.

Mark Mullins: Thank you.

Matthew McMullen: There are some questions rolling in, and I think I'll start with a question from Tsuyoshi Nakano, who asked a question to Mark specifically about the title, and Mark was asking Jolyon about the title of his book. Nakano asked why you called it *Yasukuni Fundamentalism* and not *Shinto Fundamentalism*, because in the book you're talking about Shinto more broadly?

Mark Mullins: Well, I think probably like Jolyon struggled with the main title for his book, I did too, and I finally decided on this. The reason *Yasukuni Fundamentalism* is used is because a lot of the critics of that movement that I began to document began to talk about Yasukuni fundamentalism. The Communist Party, Christian critics, and other people identified it under that umbrella of Yasukuni, because that symbolized for them the central concerns being promoted by the restorationists, but whether it be the kind of history you... the account of the war you get at Yūshūkan, or the concern with the emperor being more central and recognized at Yasukuni, and so on.

That is what went into latching onto that as a title, but it's broadly looking at Shinto influences and people who are supportive of some of those restoration ideals. As Jolyon just mentioned, I'm not saying these people want to go back to so-called State Shinto. None of the priests—I've been asking lots of people who are specialists on Shinto, which I'm not, but I've had fun catching up the whole time I worked on this book—but no one could tell me of someone who's promoting, "we want to go back to Jinja Kyoku."

They don't want to be under the administration of the government or bureaucrats, but what they do want is an elevated status, and they want some of their concerns to be relevant and included in moral education and other things. It's not a State Shinto they're trying to duplicate, but elements of that world where Shinto had a more prominent role, somehow can we get that back? That's what it's about, but Yasukuni symbolizes, unlike Ise Shrine would, symbolizes some of these agenda items.

Matthew McMullen: I'll just add too that as the editor of Mark's book, the original title he submitted was much longer. It was *Yasukuni Fundamentalism* and then a fairly long description, but editors and authors have to make these decisions and we wanted something catchy. I, the advisory board, and the editors at UH Press really liked *Yasukuni Fundamentalism* because it was catchy. From an editor's perspective, I like this about Jolyon's title as well. It kind of jumps out at you when you're looking at books in the bookstore. That's also important.

Moving along. We had some long questions, but there's one I think that's quite relevant to what we were just discussing, which is from Clark Chilson: "What do you think of Woodard's idea of *kokutai* cult rather than State Shinto? We're talking about this terminology, so I thought this was relevant. I'll throw that out to both of you whoever wants to answer: *kokutai* cult as opposed to State Shinto.

Jolyon Thomas: For those of you who aren't familiar, William P. Woodard was the research officer in the Religions Division. He wrote a book in 1972 called *The Allied Occupation and Japanese Religions, 1945–1952*. It's actually a really valuable source. I kept going back to it as I was working on *Faking Liberties*.

Woodard is interesting because when you combine that book along with his archives that are held at the University of Oregon, you can see his thought process changing a lot during the time he's in the Occupation, and then also in the years afterwards when he, along with Kishimoto Hideo, eventually established things that became the basis of why we're all here today.

They established the International Institute for the Study of Religion, which is in Tokyo, but then they also established this journal, *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, which was the precursor to the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*.

They helped to structure the Anglophone study of Japanese religions, and without Woodard we wouldn't have a lot of the infrastructure that we currently enjoy.

Clark Chilson was asking, in that book that I mentioned, Woodard had this idea where he said State Shinto is a bit of a misnomer. It doesn't describe what's going on. He's like, "Bunce is a great guy." Woodard obviously thought the world of Bunce, but he also thought that Bunce was sometimes a little single-minded in his pursuit of the disestablishment of State Shinto, because Woodard thought that Shinto was divided into a *kokutai* cult, which was a top-down enforced notion of Shinto: veneration of the emperor and school children bowing in the direction of the imperial palace, and that sort of thing, *kokutai* being the quasi-mystical body politic. Woodard said that stuff should go—that stuff is anathema—but he was like, "If we are talking about what these shrine priests are doing, they're shrines." I can't remember what word he used for it. It was something like Shrine Shinto. I think he distinguished between *kokutai* Shinto, Shrine Shinto, and Folk Shinto.

I'm not sure if I'm remembering that correctly, but he's like, "What the shrine priests are doing at their shrines, no problem, that's not our problem here." I think I appreciated that, not because I thought the *kokutai* cult was a huge improvement on State Shinto. I think there are still some interpretive issues there. It certainly doesn't have the same ring; we were just talking about titles. Part of the reason that State Shinto works is that it has a resonance. People are like, "Ooh, state and religion together. Well, I think that's bad." *Kokutai* cult doesn't have that, and there's a problem with the word "cult" too because that's just religion we don't like. I think we shouldn't use the term here, but I do appreciate Woodard's attempt to disaggregate something that so many other occupiers were trying to lump together as one thing. He kept trying to do this to his credit, not only through the course of the Occupation but also afterwards. Journalists of the *New York Times* were regularly writing about groups like Tenrikyo and they're like, "The Shinto Cult has risen again in postwar Japan," and Woodard was generally pushing back on that and saying, "You guys have no idea what you're talking about." If we're talking about Woodard's impulse to disaggregate complicated ideas and to help people see them with more nuance, I'm 100 percent in support of that.

Matthew McMullen: Well, I thank Woodard for my job. He created the *Contemporary Religions in Japan* journal, which became the *JJRS*. That's how I know him. I'm going to read a question from Bryan Lowe. I'll just read it verbatim. It's directed to both of you.

"Listening to Jolyon's comments about how secular projects do not necessarily make us more free made me wonder if what both books share is an ideological and perhaps even normative agenda that values freedom as inherently good

and beyond critique. Is this an accurate statement of commonalities between the two books? Is this perhaps a weakness?”

Mark Mullins: I don't see this as an agenda of the book, this promotion of religious freedom, per se. I'm certainly putting my cards on the table that I am in favor of legislation that protects individual rights, freedom of conscience, and freedom to practice or not practice. I'm not making that argument in my book. I'm trying to document how Japanese are struggling with these kinds of ideas. Personally, I prefer to live in a society that allows me to stand and sing or sit or kneel and not be arrested.

If that seems twisted or too value-laden, hey, I'm an Anglo-Protestant American who's become a New Zealand citizen and finding my way here. I prefer to create a system of legislation that will protect minorities as well to freely practice or not practice if you're secular. That got blurred, I think in the wartime period of Japan, it got blurred partly during the Occupation period, but the ideals incorporated into the United Nations Declaration, to me, are a far-away ideal, but something I would think it's worth aspiring to.

Jolyon Thomas: Bryan, I appreciate this question, in part, because I don't think that my book sees freedom as beyond critique. In fact, the purpose of the conclusion and the epilogue is to show that I have spent my entire life wrestling with why freedom doesn't work. That's because I'm a Black American, right? I am very explicit about that.

Freedom is not free for me the same way it is for you, Bryan. I'm not saying that to be mean or aggressive or anything like that. It's just like, my body is policed differently. Yet, if we go by the law, you and I have the same rights. That's not right. That's not just.

I'm talking from the personal experiences of a Black American, but for all the women on the call, oh my God, you're not free, right? You're free, you're technically free, but whatever country you're in, I guarantee you heteronormative patriarchy is ensuring that you are not free. I think that my book is a sort of meditation on religious freedom, and it uses an examination of the Allied Occupation of Japan to say that we need to think—even as we celebrate these ideals—that Mark was just talking about and which I share—we need to think about whether our models of freedom as they're written in our laws are the models of freedom that we're experiencing in bodily fashion on a quotidian day-to-day level. The problem that I see is that it's never worked. It always has exceptions. There are always people who are rendered as not sufficiently human to have rights. There are always those of us who are not free.

My book is not a celebration of that freedom. It is actually saying, “We need to step back and think about what we mean when we use that term.” Maybe that

means that I can already imagine you, Bryan, pushing back and saying, “Well, then that means that you like freedom.” In that case, maybe so, and maybe it’s just an approach where we’re always going to be striving for something but never actually getting there. I think that that’s kind of good enough.

Matthew McMullen: Thomas Plant has a question: “Surely an alternative, ideal future to the increasing atomism and division of Western societies, not least in the academy, is needed. Now, as someone ordained in a national, Church of England, I don’t share the American allergy to close church-state relations and wonder whether, despite historical failings but with due checks and balances, a renewed sense of normative religious identity in Japan might offer greater support to other religions in the supposedly neutral and ‘secular public sphere’ in which all truth claims are formally denied in a contribution towards solving the problems based particularly in Western and especially Anglosphere nations.”

Mark Mullins: My acknowledgment and appreciation of Bunce’s newer and upgraded version of religious freedom is not a celebration of atomization and excessive individualization. The free practice of religion to me is also the free practice to join, become a part of a collective, a group, a community, to celebrate and practice your faith and possibly shape the public sphere in some way as you negotiate your way along with other religious groups that have their convictions and concerns.

I’m a member of the Anglican Church, by the way. It kind of puts me in between some of the groups that you may be thinking about. In terms of a vision, I think there are lots of people who as scholars or as interfaith people are working to promote new ways of collaborating and how to more fairly share public space. It’s become a big issue here in New Zealand now as well. We have an incredible growth of immigrants coming in from all over Asia and other parts of the world, an increase in Hindus, Buddhist, Muslims into what was an Anglican Church of England dominated colony at one point.

How do you renegotiate public space in a way that shares these rights and freedoms? It’s an ongoing struggle and experiment. I think I don’t have any quick solutions, but I’m not in favor of excessive individualization. I am for free practice that might involve involvement in a faith community. In spite of COVID, my ideal is being part of community.

Matthew McMullen: Thank you. We have about three minutes left. I’d like to ask a quick question, maybe somewhat of a personal question. So both of your books deal with, I think we can agree, somewhat controversial themes. As you both mentioned regarding the title of the books, there was an effort to be slightly provocative. I’m wondering in your research since your books came out if you’ve experienced any type of backlash? For example, if you’re trying to get access to

materials from the Diet Library or from within the Shinto establishment after your book came out, someone might say, “Oh, these people are *dame na mono* ダメな物 (no good), we don’t want to work with them anymore.” Have you had any experiences like that? Either political or personal.

Mark Mullins: Jolyon, do you have anything to add?

Jolyon Thomas: I’ll just be very brief and say that I haven’t had anything overt from anyone. I do think that for some of the critiques that Mark raised on my book, I think that some people share this, and I’ve talked with some colleagues in Japan who fear that my book would be misused by the Shinto apologists. That they would say, “Oh, well, look, this American guy is saying that things weren’t a problem.”

If that’s the case, then they’re just not reading the book carefully. Nevertheless, I haven’t been ostracized as far as I know, yet. I’ll just say, for the most part, my expectation is that if we don’t have open lines of communication with people, including the people with whom we may politically disagree, then we miss out on a lot of opportunities to learn about what’s motivating them. Like the question about what they want to get back to, if they’re imagining going back to some ideal time.

I’ll just give a shout-out to Levi McLaughlin here, who’s doing some really good ethnographic work on some of the groups that we’ve talked about already today, where he is talking with them and he is just like, “What motivates you?” “What’s going on?” That’s really important, and we need that work out in the world. That’s a sideways answer to your question.

Mark Mullins: In my case, if I respond to that, I’ve not had any of that experience, but I’m in isolated New Zealand. I’ve been unable to travel back to Japan since the book came out. I had received a gentle warning earlier from a Japanese acquaintance when they heard what I was researching, and I said, yes, *ki o tsukenai to* 気をつけないと (better watch out).

I had great conversations with the archivist at Yasukuni Shrine. I’ve had a lot of conversations and received lots of materials from lots of different sources. I’ve had great access to very many people and very many resources. I don’t think my book is on the radar screen yet in Japanese. I anticipate there’s probably going to be some blowback.

As Jolyon points out, I’m all for good communication and discussion. I hope I represented people fairly and accurately in my treatment, and, if I didn’t, I come to learn how I misrepresented a group or an individual. I was working closely with lots of different sources and documents and I was trying to be fair, but I won’t be surprised if there’s some critical feedback coming from certain quarters in Japan. I hope it doesn’t stop me at the border. COVID managed to do that.

Matthew McMullen: Everybody's stopped at the border now. Thank you for addressing that question. For any of our Japanese colleagues who are joining us today, we would welcome a Japanese translation of the book. If you do want to reach out to the Japanese population or possible critics who wouldn't read the English, we can arrange that.

I want to thank you, Jolyon and Mark, for joining today and giving us your thoughts on each other's books, as well as engaging in what I thought was a very interesting conversation. I'd also like to thank Moriya Tomoe and Tim Graf; they were my co-hosts and my backup during this event. Most of all, I would like to thank everyone who attended.

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