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## THE WORD OF GUEST EDITOR

This issue of PRJ presents six articles on religion and politics in Japan. The first two articles are introductory ones on the situation of religion and social thought respectively and the four others are pieces of research on present-day interaction of religion and politics. Three of the latter focus on the controversies of Shinto and the Yasukuni Shrine and the fourth is an account of the successful political action of the Buddhist denomination Soka Gakkai. Metaphorically speaking, these contributions are complementary 'narratives' or scenarios of what presently is occurring on Japan's religious-political stage. Stretching the metaphor a bit, the two introductory essays concern the backdrop of this stage, sketching Japan's religious situation and social thought.

Briefly summarized, these contributions are as follows. As editor of this series, I describe various strands of traditional religion within Shinto and Buddhism, which have shaped Japan's religious consciousness. The religious awareness of the Japanese people appears to be privately and publicly weak, and as such, in general, it reflects interpersonal and social relations in this country: being respectful of others but modest and reserved about self.

Fujimoto Ryuji draws a broad picture of postwar Japan, suggesting that the country reinvented itself after World War II, again transforming itself, beginning in the early 1970s. He traces the influence of various strands of political thought on the intelligentsia: existentialism and Marxism as well as the significance of structuralism, psychotherapy, and thought related to a new religious consciousness that emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century. Japan, in the meantime, developed into a consumer society. Various instances of social change affect the positions concerning Yasukuni too.

Shinya Masa'aki attempts a sociological clarification of the Yasukuni problem by focusing on the roles of the parties involved in social practice and on the nature of the state-Shinto ideology that matter-of-factly blends religious and political meaning and therefore conflicts with the Constitution that separates religion and the state. He suggests that a solution is possible only through realignment among the dissonant protagonists of this clouded conflict.

Tsushiro Hirofumi discusses the notion of 'public religion' and highlights Yasukuni's complexity. Using a typological approach for understanding the various modes of interaction between three categories of the social: religion, politics, and the culture, Tsushiro demonstrates that the notion of public religion is multidimensional. Depending on which actors in which social sphere (there are six) mobilize which resources of the social, the effect is considerably different. As for Yasukuni Shrine, he reasons that various interpretations indeed reflect a political, or a cultural, or a religious standpoint, suggesting that reconciliation is not yet in the make.

John Breen, as a historian, focuses here squarely on Shinto culture and the Yasukuni controversy. Breen elegantly explains how several rulings of the Supreme Court solved Shinto-related disputes, meaning that politically non-informed 'conventional wisdom' prevails, while the controversy itself remains. The Shinto establishment and influential LDP politicians endeavor explicitly or implicitly to keep alive a yearning for imperial

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Shinto culture.

Finally, Okuyama Michiaki presents a substantial contribution to this series, reporting on Japan's latest general election in 2009 and discussing the major research on Soka Gakkai. Okuyama illustrates the importance of this religion-based political party, the only really successful one. Interestingly, the success and the limits of this party is conditioned both by religious and political factors, but the author concludes that, notwithstanding its latest setback, the Soka Gakkai's religio-political momentum is still a thing to be watched and to be learned from.

Since this series is not a result of a joint research project but only of a common interest of the authors, it is evidently limited in scope. Nevertheless, the various chapters show remarkable complementarity. The chapters that discuss cultural aspects (Bachika, Tsushiro) imply continuity; the chapter on social thought (Fujimoto) is a tale of discontinuity; and those that focus on political action (Shinya, Breen, Okuyama) show, or otherwise suggest, how the relationship between religion and politics is negotiated and/or manipulated, and how interconnections shift back and forth between positions of the past and alternative views for the present. Regretfully, sufficient insight is not yet available as to how the scales of history might oscillate into balance.

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