

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

**DIJ History and Humanities
Study Group**



Tuesday, 22 April 2014, 18.30 h

Akiko Takenaka
(University of Kentucky)

Historical Legacies of Yasukuni Shrine

Yasukuni Shrine is well known for the political controversies its presence has generated both within Japan and between Japan and its neighbors. International critics fault the shrine for symbolizing Japan's desire to remilitarize. Japanese critics argue that the shrine encouraged reckless militarism during the Asia-Pacific War. But what exactly was Yasukuni Shrine's role during that war? How could one shrine impart such significant and lasting influence throughout Japan and beyond? In my talk I follow one army private who was stationed in Northern China in 1933, only to be killed the following year. Through a reconstruction of the postmortem fate of his body and spirit – including his cremation and return of ashes back home, memorials in his hometown, and the lavish memorial service conducted at Yasukuni Shrine – I demonstrate the particular ways in which private grief for war death was institutionalized into a national experience. The experience of various events and rituals hosted by the shrine – whether directly at the Tokyo site or vicariously through media representations – functioned as a training ground for those involved to practice an acceptable brand of grief: one that was coupled with pride and gratitude. Modern media further reproduced and disseminated sounds and images from the shrine events to involve the entire nation in the institutionalization of grief.

Akiko Takenaka is an assistant professor of Japanese History at the University of Kentucky. She specializes in the social and cultural history of modern Japan with a research focus on memory and historiography of the Asia-Pacific War. She is the author of *Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's Unending Postwar*, forthcoming from the University of Hawai'i Press. She is currently a Japan Foundation Fellow, affiliated with the University of Tokyo, working on her second book project on the influence of trauma on memories of the Asia-Pacific War.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum for early/mid career researchers and Ph.D. candidates in the field, organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

Jōchi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō 102-0094, Phone: 03-3222-5077.

For a map please refer to www.dijtokyo.org